The Pursuit of Quality in the Process of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia: A Study across Three Stakeholder Groups in Two Public Universities

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ABSTRACT

In 2004, the Saudi Higher Education Supreme Council (HESC) established the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA). According to the Secretary General of the NCAAA, introducing this system at the national level was essential for economic and social development in Saudi Arabia. The emergence of the NCAAA represents the central focus of this thesis, specifically in relation to the NCAAA's role in improving the educational process in Saudi higher education institutions (HEIs). The overarching objective was to explore and describe the present engagement within Saudi higher education with the recommendations made by the NCAAA directed towards the enhancement of the quality of student learning, with the intention of identifying whether the attributes of the Saudi higher education system were consistent with these recommendations. This overarching objective was further divided into the following three more specific objectives:

a) To explore administrators' (i.e. faculty deans') perceptions of the extent to which the recommendations made by the NCAAA have been adopted in two public Saudi universities.

b) To explore teachers' perceptions of their practice, considering comparisons between the two institutions.

c) To explore the students' experiences, again considering comparisons between the two institutions.

The above objectives drove the data collection process, and these data constituted the empirical base of the study. The research was conducted in two public universities located in two geographically distinct provinces of Saudi Arabia. Data were collected from three groups of stakeholders, including senior administrators, teachers and students. This was done by means of individual interviews with 11 senior administrators and the collection of survey data from 78 teachers and 430 students, who were recruited from 11 faculties across the two institutions. Semi-structured interviews with senior administrators focused on their personal views and opinions of the educational process with respect to student learning, in order to identify the extent to which their faculty/unit was engaged with

the NCAAA recommendations. The questions in the teacher and student surveys were derived from the recommendations published by the NCAAA with regard to the improvement of the educational process, and focused on their teaching practice and learning experiences respectively. The qualitative analysis of the administrators' data suggested some differences in terms of how the two institutions engaged with the NCAAA's recommendations and thus I adopted a comparative approach to the analysis of the teachers' and students' responses. A factor analysis was carried out to further clarify the themes present in the surveys from the perspectives of both teachers and students, and descriptive analyses were then used to explore the extent of resonance with the recommendations of the NCAAA. Inferential statistics were applied to investigate any differences between the two institutions against the outlined themes.

The administrators' responses at both institutions indicated that there was room for improvement in adopting the NCAAA's recommendations. While the perceptions of teachers at both institutions seemed to suggest compliance with these recommendations, the statements of the students were more congruent with those of the administrators. The findings of the study indicate that there is yet some way to go towards the realisation of the aspirations of the NCAAA. They further suggest the desirability of a greater degree of student involvement in the evaluation of the quality of the educational process. Finally, the transformation of a series of recommendations for quality enhancement into a culture of quality within an individual institution is a process that can be expected to take some time. The study, while indicating a degree of commitment to, and espousal of, the recommendations of the NCAAA, suggests that there is some considerable way to go before this will be seen to impact directly and significantly on the student experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

completed our academic goals as research students, we were under huge pressure in terms of looking after our family and managing our research. I would also like to thank my parents, Ayisha and Dafer, who have always supported and encouraged me with their best wishes. This research is dedicated to my parents, my wife, and my children, Jouri, Rima, and Amjad, who are the joy of my life.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by me, and that has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Muhammed Dafer Al-Shehri

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LIST OF ABBRIVATIONS

Enhancement-led Institutional Review .... **ELIR**

Higher Education Institutions .... **HEIs**

Institutional Review .... **IR**

Learning Environment .... **LE**

Quality Assurance .... **QA**

Quality Assurance Agency .... **QAA**

Quality Enhancement .... **QE**

Reflective Analysis .... **RA**

Saudi Higher Education .... **Saudi HE**

Saudi Higher Education Institutions .... **Saudi HEIs**

The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and

Assessment .... **NCAAA**

The Saudi Higher Education Supreme Council .... **Saudi HESC**

Times Higher Education Supplement .... **THES**

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the Saudi higher education (HE) system. It discusses the challenges encountered within the system and eventually refers to the emergence of quality assurance through the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), established in 2004 to improve the quality of Saudi higher education institutions (HEIs). It then describes the role of the NCAAA in providing recommendations for the improvement of the teaching and learning processes. The chapter then turns to the motivation, purpose and objectives of this present study. The last two sections detail the significance and structure of this thesis.

1.1 Overview of the Saudi Higher Education System

According to the Saudi Higher Education Statistics Centre (2010) (see Appendix 1), there are 24 public universities and 8 private universities in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Unlike public state universities, private universities in Saudi Arabia receive no direct subsidy from the state and their income largely depends on students paying the cost of tuition. All universities, public and private, are subject to the general policy of the Saudi Higher Education Supreme Council (HESC) which regulates all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The major policies of the Saudi HE system are shown in Appendix 2. It is policy, for example, that each university should have its own high council (Al-Hamed, Mustafa, Al-Otaibi, and Mitwali, 2007). The organisational structure of the Saudi HE system functions

through a centralized management approach that is governed by the HESC. Al-Shehri (2003, p. 28) lists the main tasks of this council as follows:

> Planning, developing higher education policy, governing higher education affairs, monitoring and directing all the Saudi HE system's activities, coordinating all its organisations, and allocating appropriate funding to all its institutions.

The figure below shows the administration hierarchy of the Saudi HE system:


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Ministers' Council
        ↓
Higher Education Supreme Council
        ↓
Ministry of Higher Education
        ↓
University Council
        ↓
University President
        ↓
College Board
        ↓
College Dean
        ↓
Department Chairman
```
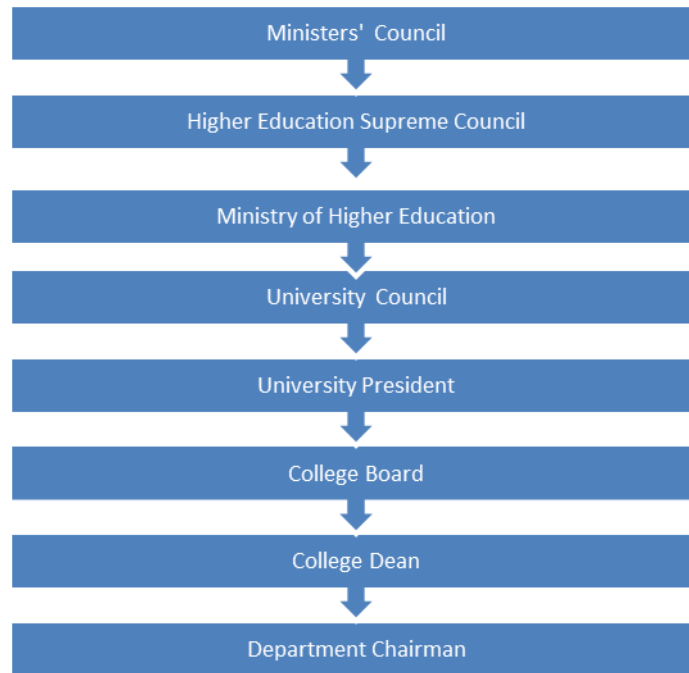
Figure 1: The administrative hierarchy of the Saudi higher education system

This figure indicates that the implementation of the Saudi HE policy is through a hierarchical approach. Al-Hamed et al. (2007, p. 123) explain that in order for HE policy to be implemented there are five related authorities (see Figure 2 below) that function through the hierarchical system to supervise and review the implementation procedure of HE policy. The responsibilities of each of these authorities are explained in Appendix 3.
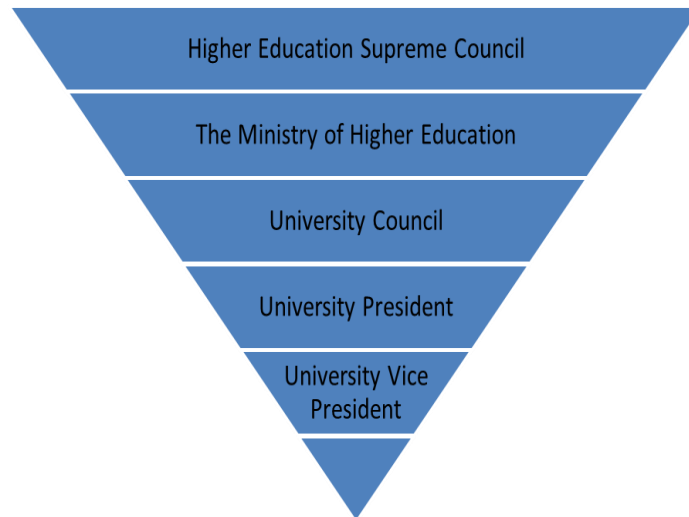
Figure 2: The hierarchy of authority in the Saudi higher education system

In 1970, the six main objectives of the Saudi HE system were defined by Al-Hamed et al. (2007, p. 120) as follows:

a) Advancing loyalty and belief in Allah (Lord) through providing the student with knowledge of Islam.

b) Developing and supporting both post and graduate students in order to enhance their skills and knowledge in various specialized fields, and thereby to enable them to complete their higher degrees.

c) Providing the society with qualified manpower which has the ability to develop and achieve their society's needs.

d) Promoting both authorship and research approaches with a view towards underpinning Islamic meaning and supporting the role of the state (Saudi Arabia) in leading and creating human civilization based on Islam's original moralities, so as to avoid materialistic and atheistic deviance.

e) Translating various beneficial sciences into the language of the Koran, aiming to enrich the Arabic language with terms to meet the needs of

Arabization, by which it will contribute to providing knowledge for the citizens.

f) Providing students with placement experiences during their studies to prepare them for employment upon graduation.

1.2 Overview of the Challenges within the Saudi Higher Education System

This section first describes the general challenges the sector faces. It then focuses more specifically on the challenges related to the quality of the educational process and the potential influence these challenges have on the quality of student learning.

1.2.1 General challenges

According to the organisational structure of the Saudi HE system, which functions through a centralised management approach that is governed and fully controlled by the Higher Education Supreme Council (HESC), individual Saudi HEIs must respond to dictated HESC policies and do not have full control over the development of their own academic policies, staffing and budgeting. AL-Khazem (2003) argues that this minimises the independence of, and competition among, Saudi HEIs. This bureaucratic nature of Saudi HEIs that functions through centralisation and a strict regulatory process represents a major drawback of the system that requires reforming. In this vein, Al-Eisa and Smith (2013, p. 34) point out that:

The current governance model in Saudi universities, in which the Ministry of Higher Education has significant direct control over all aspects of university education and administration, may no longer be appropriate in meeting the range of important challenges now facing universities and the Kingdom. Universities need much greater autonomy over their operation and direction if they are to adequately and appropriately serve the diverse emerging needs of all their stakeholders and to properly service the needs of the Saudi economy and job market into the future. In particular, universities need much greater autonomy over the way they allocate resources and promote quality teaching and learning.

Other authors (e.g. Al-Hamed et al., 2007; AL-Khazem, 2003; Darandari et al., 2009; Al-Harbi, 2010; Smith and Abouammoh, 2013) have identified further generic challenges the sector faces. These include: the rapid population growth and the increased number of applicants who seek HE; the challenge of HEIs to comply with the need for economic development; the lack of a system to monitor quality for HEIs; the rapid expansion of private and public HEIs; the limited access to e-learning and poor research performance of HEIs. With respect to this latter point (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013, p.184) list a set of factors related to this challenge, including:

a) "The lack of any formal and rigorous research training infrastructure, either at the system or institutional level"

b) "A general lack of engagement in formal mentoring arrangements between Saudi academic and established international researchers"

c) "An inability of most Saudi academics to have their work published in high profile international journals"

d) "The reality that the system is comparatively young while establishing an international reputation takes considerable time".

1.2.2 Challenges specific to the educational process

Some challenges are more specifically related to the quality of the educational process and its potential influence on learning in Saudi HEIs. In their introduction to the HE system in Saudi Arabia, Smith and Abouammoh (2013) point out that achieving high standards of learning and teaching in HEIs, such as enhancing the "student's ability to acquire learning skills, efficient interactive delivery of knowledge, contemporary developed curriculum and advanced technological teaching facilities" (p. 6), is a major challenge for this system. This view is supported by Al-Mosi (2010) who, in his article about his experiences as a lecturer, criticises the educational process in Saudi HEIs from two perspectives. First, he argues that the educational process does not support creativity in learning; instead, it encourages the learner to apply a surface approach to learning because the major function of this process is to transmit subject content to students, thus promoting a reproducing orientation to studying (Entwistle, 1988). Second, the university system is restricted concerning lectures' approaches to teaching encouraging the teacher to adopt a style which is focused and oriented toward the transmission of content because the system does not allow the lecturer to go beyond the syllabus bounds of a subject. A more comprehensive discussion of approaches to learning and approaches to teaching will be offered in Chapter 4.

Noting further challenges in relation to enhancing teaching and learning in Saudi universities, AL-Khazem (2006) describes in his book two reasons for the modest performance of teaching in particular. One is the lack of appropriate support of staff to improve teaching performance. The other is the lack of appropriate involvement of the teaching staff in decisions aimed at improving the educational

process. Although there is at present little empirical evidence for these observations, it seems critical that educational researchers in Saudi Arabia become engaged in activities directed at exploring these issues systematically. As Al-Sahli (2012, p.32) has observed: "(in) the absence of sound research investigating these issues (the challenges), these remain mere speculations".

To deal with the challenges associated with enhancing the educational process, Zeadh (2007, p.371) proposes the following set of recommendations:

a) Focus on the comprehensive development of the student in terms of personality, and social and economic development needs.

b) Enhance the quality of education.

c) Change the student learning approach through meaning by using the educational process to change it.

d) Improve course objectives, teaching methods and assessments to promote students' intellectual thinking skills.

In relation to the last point, it should be emphasised that assessment of student learning in Saudi HEIs is still dominated by traditional approaches whereby assessment is used principally for summative purposes. Little attempt is made to use assessment for formative purposes. In other words, the emphasis continues to lie with assessment of learning while little consideration is given to assessment *for* learning (Boud, 2014; McDowell, Sambell, and Bazin, 2006). In part, this could relate to the fact that in most Saudi HEIs there is a dearth of professional development directed towards improving assessment practice (Darandari and Murphy, 2013). I shall return to the notion of assessment in Chapter 3, where I will offer a more comprehensive discussion of this topic.

To improve the outputs of the educational process and the performance of graduates, Al-Ghamdi and Abd Aljawad (2005) argue that teaching strategies, testing systems and academic advice systems must be improved. Darandari and Cardew (2013) suggest that improving the teaching and learning process requires a strategic plan at the institutional level specifying approach to faculty development and the development of academic programmes for students). A similar analysis by Al-Nasser and Dow (2013) concludes that enhancing the effectiveness of teaching within HEIs would require supporting this process by providing professional development, effective leadership and commitment at all institutional levels (e.g. at the college and department level). In addition, a recent article by Darandari and Murphy (2013) which appeared in a special issue of the journal Higher Education Dynamics suggest various practices to improve the traditional assessment culture, which I summarise here as follows:

a) Teacher training and development of teacher performance in applying appropriate forms of assessment to enhance the quality of learning is required.

b) Constructive alignment should be observed in a sense that the assessment methods employed need to be linked to the intended learning outcomes (e.g. critical thinking and problem solving skills) of the course (Biggs, 1996).

c) A flexible approach of negotiation is required at both the ministry and university level in relation to the imposed mode of assessment and examination roles.

d) The process of assessing student learning and the intended learning outcomes must be integrated explicitly throughout the institution's strategies, plans and policies.

e) Involving students in reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the assessment system and process is important.

1.3 Emergence of Quality Assurance within the Saudi Higher Education System

The challenges and recommendations discussed above reflect the need to improve the quality of the HE sector. This section explains in more detail the ambitions of Saudi policy makers to improve the HE sector so as to overcome both the external and internal challenges that the sector faces, particularly those associated with the teaching process and student learning. Over the last decade, the Saudi Higher Education Supreme Council (HESC) has taken several major steps to address some of these challenges. In response to the rapid growth in the number of applicants and increasing demand for higher education, the HESC encouraged the establishment of private HE colleges, post-secondary medium-level diplomas and community colleges offering programmes that run from 1-2 years (AL-Khazem, 2003).

As mentioned earlier, until relatively recently Saudi HEIs had no quality assurance system and no national mechanism to monitor the quality or consistency of educational standards across Saudi HEI. In 2004, the HESC recognised the necessity of such a system for all HEIs and established the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) (Darandari *et al.,* 2009).

According to the General Secretary of the NCAAA, introducing this system at the national level was essential for economic and social development in Saudi Arabia (Al-musallam, 2009). The emergence of the NCAAA represents the central focus of this thesis, specifically in relation to the NCAAA's role in improving teaching and student learning in HEIs.

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the NCAAA's role. It also outlines the recommendations made by the NCAAA on how Saudi HEIs should improve the learning process. The terms "recommendations" or "guidelines" are used instead of "policies", given the fact that the actual implementation of the "policies" is not closely monitored or reinforced and no penalties or consequences are yet in place for instances of non-compliant HEIs. The "policies" therefore are really just "recommendations", "guidelines", or "suggested principles" until more stringently reinforced. At the time of writing, no such enhancements of the powers of the NCAAA have been announced.

The NCAAA was given autonomy by the HESC to establish criteria, recommendations and procedures for accreditation and to develop the process by which to enhance the quality of HEIs and the programmes they offer. The NCAAA's mission[1] is to encourage, support and evaluate the quality of HEIs and their programmes by focusing on the following dimensions:

a) The quality of student learning (the focus of this thesis) but also

b) The management and support services provided within institutions, and

c) The contributions to research and the communities.

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[1] http://www.ncaaa.org.sa

The NCAAA outlined a set of principles underlying this system of quality enhancement (Al-musallam, 2009, p. 5). The principles linked to the study themes are as follows:

a) HEIs are responsible for the quality of programmes they offer and the quality of all their facilities and activities, whereas external authorities (here the NCAAA) can provide support and verify, but cannot deliver quality;

b) The NCAAA and HEIs must establish supportive relationships;

c) HEIs should establish an appropriate standard of quality performance according to NCAAA policy;

d) Stakeholders (here teaching staff and students) must be involved in the quality enhancement in order for this process to be effective;

e) Quality improvement processes require effective leadership.

To achieve high quality, the NCAAA designed two forms of self-evaluation scales, one for higher education institutions and one for the various programmes they offer. It is intended that HEIs use these scales to assess the quality of the programmes they offer and to use the collected data to support them in their continuing monitoring of quality enhancement performance. Darandari et al. (2009, p. 42) explain in detail the accreditation review process to be followed by HEIs. Specifically, they wrote:

> This procedure is based on performance in relation to accepted standards of good practice and fitness for purpose. The Commission developed standards in 11 broad areas of activity and a national qualifications framework that specifies generic standards of learning outcomes for each level of qualification. Institutions are required to establish internal quality assurance systems that ensure high levels of quality in all of these 11 areas. These internal systems must include processes of strategic planning in relation to institutional mission statements, short- and long-term planning and reporting procedures based on evidence of

quality of performance. Periodic comprehensive self-studies must be undertaken to assess performance and plan for improvement.

The 11 broad areas of activity are[2]:

a) Mission Goals and Objectives

b) Governance and Administration

c) Management of Quality Assurance and Improvement

d) Learning and Teaching

e) Student Administration

f) Learning Resources

g) Facilities and Equipment

h) Financial Planning and Management

i) Employment Process

j) Research

k) Institutional Relationships With the Community

In his introduction, the General Secretary of the NCAAA explains the key concepts underlying the 11 areas of activity as follows (Al-musallam, 2009, p. 8):

> The 11 standards have been identified, comparable to those used in many other quality assurance systems. Each standard is then broken down into sub-sections that provide greater detail. The standards are presented in two forms. In one, there is a statement of requirements for processes and other requirements for accreditation. In the second form the standards are presented as self-evaluation scales in which institutions are asked whether the things asked for are done at the institution and if they are done, how well they are done. Responses to this quality judgment are requested using a five point starring system with provision for verification by an independent observer and priorities for improvement

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[2] http://www.ncaaa.org.sa

Although the NCAAA associated the areas of activity with certain standards, and often simply refers to these activities as "standards", I choose to refer to them here as an area of activity as the NCAAA, as previously noted, does not yet have enough influence, at this point in time, to enforce these standards.

As already mentioned, the area of activity of interest in this study is teaching and learning , and this has been studied from the perspective of three stakeholder groups (deans, teachers and students) at two public universities in Saudi Arabia. The NCAAA suggests that high quality of the teaching-learning process[3] can be achieved if the following conditions are in place:

> The institution must have effective systems for ensuring that high standards of learning and teaching are achieved in all programmes offered, and for supporting their improvement. Institutional processes must be in place to monitor and report on the extent to which the requirements included in the standard for learning and teaching are met for all the programmes across the institution. Appropriate action must be taken by the institution to deal with problems and support improvements through general institutional strategies or support for initiatives within particular organizational units where they are needed.

According to the NCAAA's website, the learning and teaching theme is broken down into several categories. Using their own internal quality assurance processes, HEIs evaluate the quality of the teaching-learning process, investigating whether good practices are carried out and how well this is done. For this purpose, as noted earlier, they are expected to make use of the programme evaluation scale to determine whether recommended practices are followed to ensure a high level of quality. The following paragraphs describe the seven categories of the learning and teaching theme that relate to the study's objectives. I outline the principles that

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[3] http://www.ncaaa.org.sa/standards for quality assurance and accreditation of higher education institutions.

NCAAA suggested to be followed in Saudi HEIs in relation to the quality of the teaching-learning process. Appendix 4 provides a detailed description of these principles. The seven categories are[4]:

a) **Programme Development Processes:** "Programmes must be planned as coherent packages of learning experiences in which all courses contribute in planned ways to the intended learning outcomes for the programme".

b) **Quality of Teaching:** "Teaching must be of high quality with appropriate strategies employed for different categories of learning outcomes".

c) **Student Assessment:** "Student assessment processes must be appropriate for the intended learning outcomes and effectively and fairly administered with independent verification of standards achieved".

d) **Programme Evaluation and Review Processes:** "The quality of all courses and of the programme as a whole must be monitored regularly through appropriate evaluation mechanisms and amended as required, with more extensive quality reviews conducted periodically".

e) **Educational Assistance for Students:** "Effective systems must be in place for assisting student learning through academic advice, study facilities, monitoring student progress, encouraging high-performing students and providing assistance to individuals when needed".

f) **Support for Improvements in the Quality of Teaching:** "Appropriate strategies must be used by the programme administrators and teaching staff to support continuing improvement in quality of teaching".

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[4] http://www.ncaaa.org.sa/standards for quality assurance and accreditation of higher education institutions.

g) **Student Learning Outcomes:** "Intended student learning outcomes must be consistent with the National Qualifications Framework[5] and with generally accepted standards for the field of study concerned, including requirements for any professions for which students are being prepared".

The above seven categories work as a platform for this study, which attempts to explore whether teaching and learning practices in two public Saudi universities are congruent with the recommendations made by NCAAA, which are aimed at improving student learning.

1.4 Study Motivation

There are two reasons for choosing this topic. First, whilst studying at a higher education institute (Teacher's College) in Saudi Arabia between 1995 and 1999, the researcher experienced some of the negative influences of the educational process on his own attitude towards learning. For example, the didactic method of teaching did not promote an understanding of the subject and the assessment method that emphasised memorizing of the content of the course encouraged a surface approach to learning. Second, since then the NCAAA has been established (2004) with the aim of improving the quality of education in HEIs. However, no research has been carried out that surveyed stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of the teaching practices and student learning that might have been brought about by the recommendations made by NCAAA.

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[5] The term refers to the structure of qualifications in postsecondary education system in Saudi Arabia, Al-musallam (2009).

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore whether teaching and learning practices in Saudi universities are congruent with the recommendations made by the NCAAA. To this end a descriptive study was carried out involving three stakeholder groups: deans, teachers and students at two public universities. The study explored deans' perceptions of the extent to which selected recommendations made by NCAAA had been implemented at their own university, and also teachers' and students' perceptions of the teaching and learning processes they were engaged in. Data were collected at one point in time only and therefore no direct causal connection between perceived practices and the NCAAA's endeavour to improve teaching and learning practices could be established. However, the study provides a rich descriptive account of stakeholders' perceptions after the establishment of the NCAAA in 2004 in Saudi Arabia. The underlying purpose for the study was to explore whether the quality assurance processes recommended by NCAAA make a difference to student learning; however, as already noted, although this question is of interest, it is not possible, based on the data collected for this study, to identify a causal relationship between observed (or rather perceived) practices and these recommendations.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

The research objectives addressed here are stated in the form of the questions (a-c) below. The overarching objective is to explore and describe the present engagement within Saudi higher education with the recommendations made by NCAAA directed toward the enhancement of the quality of student learning, with the intention of

identifying whether the attributes of the Saudi higher education system are consistent with these recommendations. This overarching objective is further divided into the following four more specific questions:

a) What are the administrators' (faculty deans') perceptions of the extent to which the recommendations made by the NCAAA have been adopted in two public Saudi universities?

b) How do the teachers perceive their teaching practice, considering comparisons between the two institutions?

c) How do the students perceive their learning experience, again considering comparisons between the two institutions?

d) What do these findings suggest about the likely effectiveness or impact of recommendations made by the NCAAA on institutional practices and quality of students' learning across the two participating institutions?

The above questions drive the data collected, which constitute the empirical base of the study.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This present study is original and significant because no research has been found to date which surveyed the perceptions and experiences of internal stakeholder groups (deans, teachers and students) at Saudi HEIs in relation to the extent to which the recommendations made by NCAAA, which are aimed at improving student learning in Saudi HEIs, have been implemented. By understanding the perceptions

and experiences of the three groups of internal stakeholders, this research will provide recommendations to other Saudi HEIs on how the improvement initiative can be further developed so as to enhance the quality of learning at undergraduate level.

This study will also be beneficial to the administrators of the NCAAA as it seeks to shed light on potential strengths and weaknesses associated with the improvement initiative and the implications of building on the strengths and tackling the weaknesses. It is argued that the study findings might also offer useful guidance to the administrators of the two participating universities as it will provide some suggestions on how to promote the effectiveness of student learning.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 has provided a general introduction to the Saudi HE system regarding its policies, organizational structure, main objectives and the challenges faced by this system mainly in relation to the quality of the educational process and student learning. Additionally, this chapter has discussed the objectives associated with the establishment of the NCAAA in 2004 that reflects the ambition of the Saudi Higher Education Supreme Council (HESC) to tackle the challenges related to the quality of student learning through improving the quality of education in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The chapter also has presented and discussed the study's motivations, purpose, objectives, and significance of the thesis. The final part of this chapter now provides an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 discusses the concept of quality in HE. It is divided into four parts. The first part discusses the meaning of quality in HE with references to student

learning. The second part reviews the growth of the QA system in the UK's higher education context, and then addressed two quality model approaches: the QA model and the QE model. I explained the transition from quality assurance to quality enhancement in the case of the UK context. This discussion is important as the quality assessment practices in place in Saudi Arabia can then be better contextualised in reference to these two models. The third part discusses the importance of students' voices in the self-quality enhancement process. The forth part briefly reviews the factors underpinning the introduction of various quality systems in the neighbouring Gulf States to compare them to the Saudi case.

Chapter 3 discusses the notion of 'teaching practice' in the HE context. The chapter is divided into three main related sections. The first section offers an overview of the concept of teaching effectiveness, followed by a review of the literature on six issues related to teaching in HE with some reference to student learning; (i) the importance of the learning environment; (ii) teaching methods and attributes of good teachers; (iii) the quality of curricula and constructive alignment; (iv) student assessment; (v) evaluation of courses; and (vi) the impact of technology on teaching practice in the case of the Saudi higher education context. The second and third sections address teachers' conceptions and approaches to teaching, respectively.

Chapter 4 focuses on the student experience. It reviews literature on the concepts of learning in the HE context, which is decomposed into a section each on quality of learning and the conditions that are needed to achieve quality in student learning. It then discusses orientations, conceptions and approaches to learning. The

last section of this chapter focuses on the influence of the learning environment on students' orientations, conceptions and approaches to learning.

Chapter 5 presents the research methodology employed in this study. It describes the three phases of the research design and explains the rationale behind applying two types of data collection methods: semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires. The chapter also describes the data collection procedure, addresses the validity and reliability of the data collection methods, and discusses the extent to which the findings can be generalised. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the ethical aspects of the study.

Chapter 6 is divided into three main sections. The first section presents and discusses the findings from the semi-structured interviews with the deans of the participating faculties, along with the deans of the quality assurance unit at the same two universities. The objective is to identify the procedure that the faculty follows to accomplish the NCAAA recommendations to improve student learning. The purpose of the interviews with the deans of the quality assurance unit was to understand the procedure that their unit applied to assure that the NCAAA recommendations to improve the teaching-learning process were met. The second section presents and discusses the findings from the survey questionnaires distributed to a sample of 78 teachers and a sample of 430 undergraduate students in 11 faculties from the two public universities. This section explores whether and how teachers employ some of the recommendations made by NCAAA. It also explores students' experiences of the teaching-learning process. The third section examines the differences and congruencies between the three stakeholder groups in their perceptions and experiences of the teaching-learning process, with an emphasis on student learning.

Chapter 7 discusses the major findings obtained from identifying the perceptions and experiences of the three groups of stakeholders exploring whether teaching and learning practices in the two Saudi universities are congruent with the recommendations made by the NCAAA. This includes a reflection on the effectiveness of the specific efforts undertaken by each of the two institutions to enhance student learning, thereby addressing the research objectives.

Chapter 8 offers recommendations and suggestions for enhancing student learning through the educational processes applied. It also outlines the limitations associated with this study along with the potential scope for further research.

CHAPTER 2

QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This chapter addresses the topic of quality in the higher education (HE) context. It is organised into four parts. The first part discusses the meaning of quality in HE with references to student learning. The second part addresses how the quality of higher education in the UK context, where the researcher carried out his doctoral studies, is monitored by reviewing two aspects, quality assurance (QA) and quality enhancement (QE) approaches, recognising that these two aspects are present in the systems in the UK – both England and Scotland. The purposes are: (a) to address the differences between these two aspects and the reasons behind the transition from one aspect to the other; and (b) with reference to the Saudi HE system, to develop an understanding of whether the quality approach used by the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), as explained previously in Chapter 1, is similar to one of these two aspects applied in the UK higher education context. The third part discusses the importance of students' voices in the self-quality enhancement process. The forth part focuses on various quality systems introduced in other countries in the Gulf States in order to locate Saudi's quality system within other local practices.

2.1 Quality in Higher Education

First of all, the notion of quality in the HE context is a contested concept; according to Gvaramadze (2008, p.445), ―quality is not an absolute but rather compromising and relative to the processes and local contexts presented in terms of

desired outcomes. Harvey and Green (1993) use the term quality in HE to refer to:
"excellence", "perfection" (or consistency), "fitness for purpose", "value for
money". and "transformation". Corresponding with the study theme and objectives,
quality in HE is defined from 'external and internal stakeholder perspectives'.
Hence, definitions of quality vary and depend on each stakeholder's perspective and
position. For the teachers and the students, as 'internal-stakeholders', the concept of
quality is more likely to be related to the educational process (e.g. quality of
teaching), whereas for the employers, as 'external-stakeholders', the notion of
quality is related more to the outputs of higher education (e.g. quality of the
graduates produced by the system and research productivity) (Harvey and Green,
1993). Generally speaking, and as far as student learning is concerned, Harvey and
Green argue that the differences in conceptions of quality among different HE
stakeholders must be understood in order to comprehend how those conceptions
relate to improving the quality of student learning. As an example of what is meant
by quality as "transformation", Harvey and Green (1993) point out that the
educational process should transform students' learning in the sense that it
contributes to adding value to their learning. Quality enhancement in students'
learning would involve enriching learning experiences that would lead to gains in
meaningful knowledge and cognitive learning skills[6]. This indicates the importance
of Quality Assurance (QA) being introduced in HE as it is all about fulfilment of
governments' interests and need to develop this sector. With respect to student
learning specifically, QA is a means of ensuring the effectiveness of educational
institutions' performance, where the institution applies its internal self-evaluation of

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[6] See Chapter 4, § 4.2 Quality of Learning.

the quality of its teaching-learning policy, course design and delivery, professional staff development, and student evaluations of the teaching learning process (Chadwick, 1995). According to Sallis and Hingley (cited in Harvey and Green, 1993, p.20):

> Quality assurance is about good management practice. It is a systematic approach to doing the right things in the right way, and getting them right. It is about making certain there are systems in place so that the organisation continues to deliver the right things every time to meet customers' requirements.

2.2 Quality Assurance System in the UK

The growth of quality assurance systems was the result of the UK's ambitions for higher education as a public sector to be more responsive to Britain's economic, social and cultural needs. A set of factors in the UK's higher education context contributed to this growth—including, (a) financial constraints on the system; (b) high demand for public accountability in terms of value for money; (c) a defence for institutional autonomy; (d) stakeholder involvement and (e) the demand for assurances that higher education institutions are able to cope with the increasing globalisation and the deregulation of the market (Hodson and Thomas, 2003). Given the need to monitor the quality in the UK's higher education institutions, various processes were applied, including an external examiner system, professional accreditations of programmes, inspection of provisions, quality audit of institutional processes, assessment of programmes and research assessments (Harvey, 2005).

This situation led to the establishment of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) as an independent body that aims to enhance the quality and secure the standards of the UK's higher education, including supporting the

improvement of students' learning experiences and working with higher education institutions. In this respect, the issues and activities outlined in the QAA's mission statement included: (a) promoting and supporting the continuous improvement of quality of education, (b) developing and managing the qualifications framework, (c) widely promoting the codes of practice and examples of good practice, (d) conducting performance reviews at the institution and programme levels and (f) providing relevant stakeholders with the needed information for the quality and standards of higher education provision (Hodson and Thomas, 2003). Regarding the two elements of quality assurance (QA) and quality enhancement (QE) that co-exist in the UK's higher education system, I will explore whether QA can be distinguished from QE specifically in terms of the role of each approach in improving the students' learning experiences. It is necessary here to clarify first exactly what is meant by these two aspects. QA means "making judgments against defined criteria" (Filippakou and Tapper, 2008, p. 85) whereas QE means "the continuous search for permanent improvement" (Gvaramadze, 2008, p. 445).

With regard to the QA approach, as our first example, this aspect was originally considered as "self-policing but conducted within a framework that was formally the responsibility of the central state" (Filippakou and Tapper, 2008, p. 88). One advantage of QA is that it focuses attention on purposes, operations and responsiveness (Harvey, 2005). One drawback of this approach is that QA, given that it is based on an externally regulated system, fails to take into account how the students' learning experiences can be improved. Commenting on this issue, Harvey (1997, p. 68) argues that "external quality monitoring makes no attempt, in most countries, to encourage quality learning". In her review of QA, Horsburgh (1999)

concludes that, to transform student learning, an internal quality system is more likely to have a good impact on student learning than focusing merely on external quality monitoring, She argues that such an internal evaluation process is more likely to support learning by focusing, for example, on how teachers should support their students and how the assessment practices they employ are effective. Other criticisms raised by observers include that there is an imbalance between regulation and improvement (THES, 2002b); a failure to engage with transformative learning and teaching; and a decline of autonomy and academic freedom compounded by a lack of trust in a system that does not provide ownership of, and responsibility for, the quality improvement process at an institutional level in addition to the multiple overlapping layers of audit, assessment, accreditation and external examining that drive the institution away from a real engagement with learning process (Harvey, 2005). Harvey cites a social scientist criticising the QA approach (2005, p.271):

> Everything has to be documented. All the marking has to be moderated with written reports. We spend a lot of time remarking on other people's stuff and all for the sake of a QAA visit. Every new initiative has to be seen in terms of how it will be seen at the next QAA visit. We have to keep attendance registers to show that we are trying to monitor non-attendance. All this adds to the administrative burden and creates systems that don't make a hoot of difference to what the students get. No money comes in to improve things, it's just pressure to make us do more bureaucracy. I haven't seen any real changes since the last visit: it's all cosmetic.

This leads to a question of how a QA procedure in the UK context can be improved with respect to students' learning experiences. Researchers have suggested the need for this procedure to embrace real staff development and the encouragement of genuine quality enhancement, both for the assessment agency and the institution.

An appropriate procedure to fulfil these objectives can be achieved by (a) directing the institution's effort and focus on supporting enhancement activities to prioritise the improvement process of enhancing learning without neglecting the required standards, and (b) supporting the active engagement of individual institutions in the audit process (Hodson and Thomas, 2003; Harvey,2005).

Having addressed the first approach to quality assessment in the UK's higher education context, the following paragraphs describe our second aspect—namely, the QE approach that represents a transition from QA to QE. Initially, the concern with quality enhancement of HE systems (and eventually teaching) was initiated by the European Bologna Process[7]. This strategy considered HEIs as autonomous bodies that have responsibilities in terms of maintaining quality in each institution within a national quality framework; continuing quality enhancement; and demonstrating transparency in the nature and quality of education provision in the sense that there is access to public information and this demonstrates the appropriate use of public funding (Gvaramadze, 2008).

For an institution to improve its performance or the quality of a study programme, this requires designing quality enhancement mechanisms at institutional level in a way that fosters an internal quality culture and accomplishes an institution's missions and objectives (Harvey, 2004). Speaking of the importance of an institution's internal quality culture throughout this process, Gvaramadze, (2008) provides us with a model called "Internal Quality Culture Mechanism", Figure 3. This model works as a continuous process of quality development at institution level and it emphasizes two important issues: (a) enhancing and transforming the character

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[7] http://www.eua.be/eua-work-and-policy-area/building-the-european-higher-education-area/bologna-basics.aspx / accessed in 14 April 2014.

of the quality culture within an institution; (b) requiring the full engagement of all
relevant stakeholders (administrators, teaching staff and students) who share
responsibility for quality at each stage of the enhancement process. This model
follows two management approaches: (a) a bottom-up approach where the focus is to
promote the kind of culture that fosters stakeholders' participation to accomplish the
institution's objectives that relate to quality enhancement (here, in particular,
students for example, in Scotland is of particular concern that students are considered
an important stakeholder group that participate in the quality assurance and
enhancement process ; (b) a top down approach by an institution's administration
where the focus is to create a common vision, values and strategy for the quality
enhancement process.
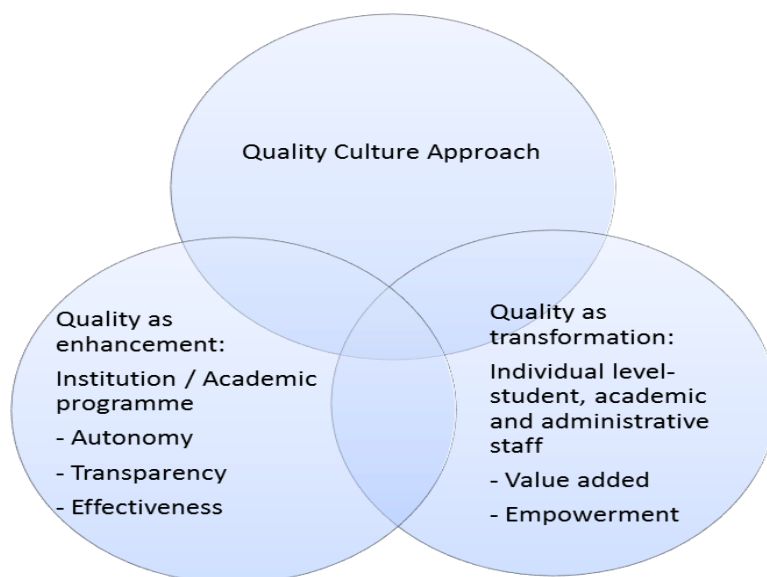
Figure 3: Internal Quality Culture Mechanism
(Adapted from Gvaramadze, 2008, p. 447)

One of the reasons behind the transition from external quality monitoring to
the enhancement-led quality approach in the UK's higher education context is the
encouragement and support for higher education institutions in their efforts to secure

improvement and transformation in the students' learning experiences. This transition from an external evaluation approach to an institution enhancement-led approach was driven by well-established accountability in the area of quality assurance. To pursue a quality enhancement agenda for teaching and learning, many of the UK's higher education institutions have undertaken a set of actions, including the revision of institution learning and teaching strategies and the establishment of educational development units (Harvey and Newton, 2004).

To illustrate how the enhancement-led quality approach has been introduced, we have to look at two establishment systems in the UK's higher education—that is, those in England and Scotland—which adopted this aspect and establishments in their practice. In England's HE, there has been a process of change in the role of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), during which the system has broadened its agenda of improving the quality of HE institutions by currently embracing QE (Filippakou and Tapper, 2008). According to Harvey (2005), in England, the first full programme of institutional audits began in February 2003 and was completed in 2005 (QAA Strategic Plan, 2003-2005). This development of an amended audit process by the QAA in England proposed "to allow institutions to test, in cooperation with QAA, the strength of their internal review procedures at discipline level…or programme level… and the robustness of the evidence they use in those procedures" (QAA, 2003, cited in Harvey 2005 p.270). This review method was replaced by Institutional Review (IR), introduced in 2011-12 as an alternative review method for universities and other higher education institutions in England, and it is based on a Six-year cycle. According to the QAA[8] website, the main objectives of

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[8] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx/accessed in 10 April 2014.

the IR method are to examine whether universities and higher education institutions: (a) 'provide higher education qualifications of an appropriate academic standard and a student experience of acceptable quality'; (b) 'exercise their legal powers to award degrees (where relevant) in a proper manner'. In the review process, the review team makes a judgment on a set of issues. With reference to our focus of interest here in student learning in particular, the focus is on: (a) how the institution manages the provision for quality in student learning including, as an example, teaching, assessment and academic support; (b) how the institution systematically improves the ways in which students learning is supported.

With respect to the Scottish HE, a radical approach to quality assurance and enhancement was introduced in Scotland in 2003 called 'Enhancement-led Institutional Review' (ELIR) which is based on a four-year review cycle. According to the QAA (2003, cited in Gvaramadze, 2008, p.448), the objectives of giving HEIs autonomy in designing their internal quality are to: (a) 'promote a culture of continuous quality enhancement'; (b) 'create a flexible and accessible higher education sector that is responsive to the needs of the learners, the labour market and society' and (c) 'encourage participation of students in higher education in order to achieve their full learning potential, and appropriately resourced learning and teaching'.

The Enhancement–led Institutional Review (ELIR) approach considers an institution's strategic quality enhancement activities and emphasizes two main issues: (a) 'improving the student learning experiences'; (b) 'examining the institution's ability to secure the academic standards of its awards'. In the review process, an ELIR team that consists of six external reviewers, including a student reviewer,

carries out a review process in the institution, based on a self-evaluation document called a Reflective Analysis (RA), contributed by the university, to examine the institution's approach to managing and enhancing the quality of related activities (e.g. how student learning experiences are being improved). The framework of QE falls under five interconnected elements – see Figure 4. These are: (a) the individual institution identifies the character of an inclusive internal review system at subject level; (b) the individual institution provides to the public, accurate, complete and authentic information on the quality of educational provision, e.g. academic support for students; (c) students are included in the internal and external quality management process, which means they are represented at all levels within the institution including the review team responsible for the institutional visit; (d) the individual institution holds an annual reflection on quality enhancement strategies and development activities for selected themes; (e) every five years an institutional review process is conducted on the institution's strategies management for continuous quality enhancement (Gvaramadze, 2008).
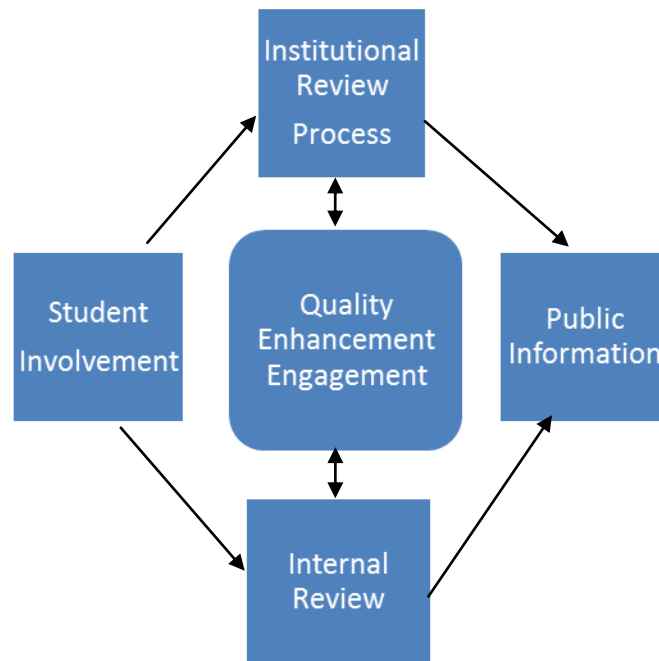
**Figure 4: Enhancement-led Institutional Review in Higher Education
(Adapted from Gvaramadze, 2008, p.449)**

The success of this approach depends on a set of principles that have to be considered at the institution level during the self-evaluation process. These principles include a good understanding of what is involved in terms of both quality evaluation and quality enhancement, well-established accountability, defined codes of conduct, an institution's culture which is supportive of enhancement initiatives, a well-structured and established system to develop its practice, and the necessary continuous improvement (Harvey and Newton, 2004; Filippakou and Tapper, 2008).

Having analysed the experience of the UK's system in terms of the quality assurance process and its transition from a QA to a QE model that supports the self-continuous improvement process, I am now in a position to answer the question proposed in the introduction to this chapter—namely, whether what is happening in the Saudi HE context is more like the QA or more like the QE model. As previously

explained, the purpose of NCAAA[9] is to encourage a sense of self-evaluation practice in all post-secondary institutions and in all programmes offered in Saudi Arabia to ensure that practice meets international standards, paying particular attention to the student learning experience; thus, the kind of quality enhancement model used by the Saudi HE system is similar to that of the QE systems in place in the UK that support continuing quality improvement. However, we noticed that, for example, with the Scottish HE approach and throughout the Enhancement-led Institutional Review process, students' involvement is a fundamental element whereas in the Saudi HE context, students' involvement in the institution's self-evaluation process at either the programme or institutional level is restricted to only identifying students' perceptions of the educational process (i.e., the quality of teaching). Such a lack of recognition of the importance of the student's role in this self-evaluation process and at the programme or institutional level, in contrast to that of the QE systems in place in the UK, might weaken the quality enhancement process the NCAAA aims to fulfil within Saudi HEIs. Thus, the importance of students' voices in the self-quality enhancement process is addressed in the following section.

2.3 Students' Voices in the Quality Improvement Process

With respect to taking students' views into consideration in the quality improvement process, we should keep in mind that the notion of the 'student as customer', such concept is contested and also problematic. Indeed, the view of the student as customer seems to be based on the premise that students are the best

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[9] http://ncaaa.org.sa

judges of their needs, and several authors question how realistic this notion is when it is applied to the HE context. Brookfield (1986) in particular, questioned this assumption, emphasising the difference between real and felt needs, arguing:

> Accepting adults' definition of their own needs (their 'felt' needs as they are sometimes called) is clearly premised on the idea that people are always the best judge of their own interests. In practice, learners often express a desire for programmes that are familiar and recognizable and decide what to learn by reviewing what others in their peer group are learning. Such an approach to programme development certainly expresses 'a power of resistance to anything that does not conform' (Brookfield, cited in Kreber, 2013, p.44).

Similarly, Michael, Sower, and Motwani (1997, p. 106), state that:

> Defining the students as customers, and thus allowing them to have what they want, may not necessarily lead to high-quality education because there is a huge difference between providing what students want and education based on informed judgments about individual student needs.

Nevertheless, I believe that, as was mentioned in Chapter 1, the notion of students as customers is useful in the Saudi HE context as it gives the student a voice in a system that traditionally has been hierarchical and where the student voice is still neglected. This was addressed in the previous section, where we saw that there is still a lack of student involvement in the institutional self-evaluation processes. To have a chance of success, specifically in relation to improving the educational process, it is important for NCAAA to give students a voice without relinquishing all control to students. In support of what I just argued, I outline briefly some elements indicating the importance of the student voice and why the notion of the 'student as customer' is still a useful one within the Saudi HE system.

In the literature, several authors discuss the student voice in HE. Seale (2010, p.996) describes the two most important purposes of this notion in the higher

education context. These are: '*quality enhancement and assurance,*' and *'staff or professional development'*. For this to be addressed in a meaningful way, the student voice has to be empowered and listened to. Including students' voices in the quality improvement process requires that the HE policy not be interested only in the kind of voice that mainly expresses views. It must also engage in authentic recognition of students' voices, taking students seriously and engaging with them to improve the quality of the educational process as well as empower the students' role throughout this process (Seale, 2010). To foster the student voice effectively, McLeod (2011, p.188) concludes that, 'The challenge for equity initiatives in higher education will not be in inciting student voice, but in converting that opportunity into meaningful and practical recognition'.

One approach to understanding the importance of the notion of viewing students as 'customers' is to acknowledge that a fundamental principle of adult education[10] is to develop a sense of personal power and self-worth in the individual learner. By recognising that an adult learner should have a sense of empowerment in the learning process, this action strengthens the learner's position to become a critical learner of what he/she perceives this process to be in terms of, for example, values and beliefs (Brookfield, 1986). Another important point to highlight here, as explained in the previous section, is that the Saudi HE system follows an enhancement approach to improve aspects of HEIs, and student learning is one feature of this theme. Thus, it can be argued for the quality enhancement approach that there are two factors that need to be considered: transparency and external accountability for public resources, and an institutional internal quality culture

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[10] See Section 4.1, for principles of adult education.

institute. The latter has to be effective in the sense that the relevant stakeholders (here mainly students) are effectively and significantly involved in the decision-making process. This means that students are at the centre of the learning and evaluation processes as an important source of information that can help enhance the quality of the educational process (Gvaramadze, 2008).

We have seen that taking into account students' views is important for the success of the quality improvement process. Coates (2005) argues that student engagement in the quality improvement process at the institutional level is important for two main reasons: (a) it provides insight into the students' learning experience; (b) it enables an evaluation of the impact of such experiences on student learning. In practical terms, students' involvement in this process can occur through the expression of their perceptions of inputs and outputs of the learning process. Frazer (1992) suggests that the two aspects of the learning process, inputs and outputs, have to be assessed from the students' perspective. Inputs have to do with a student's own experiences and aspirations towards learning, whereas outputs relate to understanding the obstacles that a student might encounter when studying a particular subject. The purpose of this involvement is also to ensure that quality objectives have been met during the learning process. Further, Frazer (1992) suggests another form of student involvement, which is student representation at department meetings. This would seem to support Cyert (1993), who argues that a meaningful educational institution regards student involvement of the quality improvement process as fundamental for success because student feedback provides a significant resource of information.

Thus, continuous feedback from stakeholders (here students) is another significant requirement for quality enhancement to be implemented successfully at the institutional level. This feedback of quality assurance process can be obtained via a questionnaire, as Coates (2005) suggests, which would enable the student to express his/her own views on the quality of their learning experience. Coates assumes that data gathered this way would be more likely to be considered objective data that can be used as an indicator of the effectiveness of the quality improvement process. This practice of recognizing the importance of students' involvement in, and perception of, the quality enhancement process is related to QA philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of understanding and recognizing student needs (Cyert, 1993). Therefore, the policy of educational institutions has to be designed from a constructive perspective that should be sound, reliable and valid concerning student engagement in this process (Coates, 2005). Such an engagement can be found in the form of student empowerment (Vazzana, et al., 2000). As explained earlier, in the Saudi HE system, which traditionally has been hierarchical, the student voice is still neglected. Speaking of the importance of student empowerment, Sutton (1995) suggests that via the learning process student empowerment focuses on promoting the students' role from a passive one to an active one. This can occur through shifts in the student-teacher relationship from the authoritarian model to the kind of relationship that treats the student as an equal or as a colleague. This relationship can promote a sense of cohesiveness between the teacher and the student (Gilbert *et al.,* 1993). Another approach is to establish the concept of teamwork at the classroom level in order to underpin the notion of cooperation between the students during the learning process (Sutton, 1995). In this respect, Chickering and Gamson (1987, p.3)

argue that the student–faculty relationship is a key factor in developing an encouraging environment for good practice in undergraduate education, where students' voices are heard and listened to. This relationship is also critical in applying a set guidelines including, but not limited to, (a) encouraging contact between students and faculty and (b) giving prompt feedback.

The above examples illustrated briefly the importance of the student voice in the quality improvement process. While it was recognised that the notion of the student as customer is contested, it was argued that it has nonetheless some plausibility and importance in the Saudi HE context.

2.4 The Emergence of Quality Assurance in Gulf States

In Chapter 1, I provided detailed information on Saudi Arabia's quality management system introduced in 2004 to enhance the quality of higher education institutions. In this chapter, I briefly review various quality systems introduced in other Gulf States. The central point of this comparison of these six member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is to look at the ways in which each country pursues its own route to improve and measure the quality of higher education. Such a comparison helps locate Saudi Arabia's quality system within other local practices in the other Gulf States. These states are, both politically and geographically, the natural points of cultural comparison for Saudi Arabia.

2.4.1 Sultanate of Oman

Oman has 4 national universities and 10 private international institutions, is among the most active of the Gulf States in the area of quality education, according

to Al-Bandary (2005). In 2001, the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman began its process of quality assurance by assigning this task to an external consultant from Edinburgh University- Professor Margot Cameron–Jones. Initially, HE institutions were required to apply a four-step model to assess thier quality performance by (a) producing an evaluation report in which the institution outlines areas of excellence and difficulty, (b) producing an independent report outlining the external team observations, (c) providing the institution with a feedback report and (d) monitoring the improvements and developments process being introduced in the institution (Jones, 2001). The outcomes of this process were a set of recommended actions that should be taken to support the institutions in their efforts to improve their self-assessments and ensure the continuity of the QA process. Such recommendations included the need to (a) involve Omani staff in key positions at all steps in the QA process, (b) build trust in the QA process throughout HE institution seeking to imply a degree of devolution down into the college level to embrace it, and (c) promote the responsibility and ownership of the QA process at the college level (Al-Bandary, 2005). This phase was followed by the establishment of the Oman National Quality (ONQ) network in 2006, which focuses on quality enhancement in higher education. The ONQ's role involves: incorporating both programme licensing to verify that the programme was likely to meet minimum standards as well both of national economic and social needs and programme accreditation to provide an independent verification that the programme meets acceptable standards with a strong focus on students' learning outcomes. According to Al-Atiqi and Al-Harbi (2009), this quality monitoring system ensures that both public and privately run institutions in Oman

have the general capabilities, capacity and competencies to effectively provide high-quality education.

2.4.2 The United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has 3 national universities and 73 private international institutions. In 2000, the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) was established to promote educational excellence in higher education institutions in the UAE to ensure its practices are in line with international standards. To achieve such an objective, the commission—as a member of the international network of quality assurance agencies in higher education[11]—was concerned with maintaining active ties with other international quality agencies (e.g., the quality assurance agency for higher education in the UK, the Australian universities' quality agency in Australia)—with a view of benefiting from the experiences of these other national agencies of enhancing the quality of higher education. One lesson introduced is that both public and private institutions are required by law to be licensed by the commission and its operating programmes must be accredited. In 2004, the commission was the first local quality assurance agency in the Gulf States to establish the code of practice for licensing and accrediting standards for e-learning institutions (Al-Atiqi and Al-Harbi, 2009).

2.4.3 Kingdom of Bahrain

The Kingdom of Bahrain has 4 national institutions and universities, along with 18 private international institutions. According to Al-Alawi, Al-Kaabi,

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[11] http://www.inqaahe.org/

Rashdan, and Al-Khaleefa (2009), the high rate of unemployment was one problem contributing to Bahrain's fragile economic situation; these authors argue that this was due in part to the quality of education. Thus, Bahrain's authority established the Quality Assurance Authority (QAA) in 2007 to support good practices of higher education institutions in Bahrain. The goal was for this agency to become the body responsible for improving this sector to bring it in line with international standards. The applied quality assurance mechanism was directed towards ensuring the quality of education—namely, students' learning experiences, academic courses, staff and quality of administrative services. Our example here is the University of Bahrain (UoB). In their article, the authors argue that this university is a good example of applying quality assurance in colleges. This process covers (a) course and instructor evaluations, (b) total quality management, (c) academic practice training programmes, (d) e-learning centre, and (f) support for under-prepared students. The authors argue that the implementation of quality assurance practices at the UoB has helped the university deliver more reliable graduates for the employment market and meet the demands of various economic needs in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

2.4.4 State of Kuwait

The state of Kuwait has only one national university (the University of Kuwait) and 7 private international institutions. According to Al-Atiqi and Al-Harbi (2009), to meet Kuwaiti society's needs, particularly in the private higher education sector, a quality management initiative was established between 2002 and 2004. The authors argue that the rational success of Kuwait's model stemmed from two factors. First, this system was able to connect international principles with local conventions,

thereby advancing the performance of the system and enhancing the institutions'
effectiveness to adopt global practices with reference to how the institution's
objectives were effectively being monitored and achieved and how their policies
could be advanced; this factor further helped assess how the applied measures were
effective in order to achieve, maintain and manage the quality of the institutions'
performance. Second, the institutions were required by law to follow the regulated
guidelines that should lead to the enhancement of quality improvement process. The
authors argue that this measure reinforced stakeholders' confidence in the
appropriateness of higher education in terms of both its objectives and outcomes.

2.4.5 State of Qatar

Qatar is home to 12 private international universities; our example includes
only the national university, Qatar University (QU). According to Al-Attiyah and
Khalifa (2009), developing a quality management and assurance system for Qatar's
higher education system requires broad reforms in governance, administration and
organisational structure. Such reforms are required to promote QU's role in serving
Qatar's society and its economic needs. The outcomes of the reform initiative plan in
2003 outlined three fundamental principles guiding QU's reform process: autonomy,
decentralisation and accountability. The issues underpinning these principles include
evaluation of the effectiveness of staff and administrative performance, budget
control, review of policy and decisions procedure at the university level and
accountability towards relevant stakeholders. Although some steps have been carried
out in this manner, the authors argue that—to support continuous improvement—the
process of quality assurance and enhancement still require more time as well the

application of coherent systems at various university levels. They suggested that this process can be achieved through (a) an annual evaluation of the university's performance, (b) regular programme review, (c) the use of interactive feedback for all relevant stakeholders including students, (d) The use of an approach that serves the needs of Qatari society which requires effective engagement with the university's vision and its mission to determine how effective the process is in meeting the social and economic needs of Qatar.

2.4.6 Overall View of the Emergence of Quality Assurance in Gulf States

This brief overview of quality assurance and enhancement in the other five of the six Gulf States clearly indicates that the higher education systems in the Gulf States (similar with the Saudi case, as previously discussed) have been responsive to local needs, national concerns and global issues (e.g., high unemployment rate and market needs). This was seen through the various and similar steps taken by these systems in the last decade to introduce and address the needs of quality assurance and enhancement as a mechanism for the continuous improvement of quality of higher education. In reality, we observed that in some countries the QA requirements are enshrined in law (e.g., in the case of UAE higher education system), while in others they are not (similar with the Saudi case). As previously discussed in Chapter 1, the NCAAA policies on how Saudi HEIs should improve the learning process are not closely monitored or reinforced, and no penalties or consequences are yet in place for non-compliant HEIs. Due to such a lack of monitoring, determining how far the NCAAA's recommendations can be applied to the learning context could undoubtedly be a major challenge for NCAAA, particularly if we consider that Saudi

Arabia has more national universities[12] than other Gulf States. For HE systems in other Gulf States with fewer national universities, it could be easier to monitor the process of enhancing student learning considering that NCAAA has more work to do given the size of the Saudi HE system. The overview also indicates that the higher education system in the Gulf States including Saudi HE, still has room for improvement for the quality assurance system to become a norm for these systems and to become more accountable in meeting the needs of both the society and economy of the Gulf States.

2.5 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has explored the meaning of the concept of quality in HE and its relation to the educational process and student learning in particular. I reviewed the growth of the quality assurance system in the UK's higher education context and then addressed two quality model approaches: the QA model and the QE model. I explained the transition from quality assurance to quality enhancement in the case of the UK context. This chapter also addressed the importance of the QE model used in the UK HE system as an example of an approach that focuses on continuing quality improvement at both institution and programme level. One of the fundamental principles for this model is to improve the students' learning experience. An important practical implication of applying this model is that students have to be effectively involved in the institutional self-evaluation as a partner in this process. This chapter showed as well that in the Saudi HE context the NCAAA applied a QE approach, which is similar to that used in the UK HE system. However,

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[12] Appendix 1: Government Universities of Saudi Arabia.

I argued that compared to the UK model, the NCAAA's policy reveals a significant lack of recognition the importance of students' involvement in the institutional self-evaluation process. Thus, I believe the lack of a student role may weaken the effectiveness of NCAAA guided quality enhancement process. Consequently, this chapter discussed the importance of acknowledging student voice in the quality enhancement process. I emphasised that the notion of students as customers is useful in the Saudi HE context, as it gives the student a voice in a system that traditionally has been hierarchical and where the student voice is still neglected. Lastly, I reviewed the factors underpinning the introduction of various quality systems in the neighbouring Gulf States to compare them to the Saudi case. This review clearly indicated that, to some extent, these systems share common social and economic needs that drive the introduction of quality assurance systems, one of which is the need to enhance the quality of higher education, particularly student learning. The following chapter discusses the issue of teaching practices in the HE context.

CHAPTER 3
TEACHING PRACTICE

This chapter discusses the notion of 'teaching practice' in the HE context. The chapter is divided into three main related sections. The first section offers an overview of the concept of teaching effectiveness, followed by a review of the literature on five issues related to teaching in the HE context with reference to student learning; (i) the importance of the learning environment; (ii) teaching methods and attributes of good teachers; (iii) the quality of curricula and constructive alignment; (iv) student assessment; (v) evaluation of courses; and (vi) a brief account of how wide spread is the use of ICTs in Saudi HE practice. The second and third sections address teachers' conceptions and approaches to teaching, respectively.

Initially, before discussing teaching practices in detail, there are two points I would like to draw the reader's attention to. The first point is that all pedagogy discussed in this chapter related to teaching practice in HE context is based strongly on Western research and theory (the UK, US, Australia). The question here is whether these Western pedagogical models concerning teaching are appropriate and relevant for other educational research literature applied for HE in Islamic countries (here, the case of Saudi Arabia's HE). While writing my thesis, I noticed in the literature a considerable volume of published studies describing teaching practice in HE in the Islamic context that were largely based upon Western practices, while relatively little has been written on the development of a specific Islamic pedagogy in teaching practice in HE context (see Molly, 2004). Thus, there is little could be find on teaching practice in HE developed by Saudi or Gulf region scholars, to

suggest that there is a truly Islamic perspective on HE (see Krieger, 2007 and Zachariah, 2007 respectively), and all research on teaching in HE which addressed Saudi HE context is based largely on Western models.

The second point that I would like to address here is the extent to which the very hierarchical structure of Saudi HE is compatible, supportive, or neutral towards teaching practice and the pedagogies discussed. As noted in sections 1.1 and 1.2, one of challenges facing this hierarchical system and its policy related specifically to the educational process was relatively recently identified as a lack of a mechanism to monitor and enhance the quality of teaching practice and the pedagogies described herein. As we have seen earlier in section 1.3, through the establishment of NCAAA, more concerns were raised about monitoring and supporting the continuous improvement of teaching practice and related pedagogies at the institution level to be in line and equivalent with good international practice, where we found the NCAAA is willing to follow and apply such practices in both public and private HEIs in Saudi Arabia, as illustrated in the committee's general policy for improving HE sector. Throughout the process of this reform, the Saudi HEIs started to gain more control and freedom over their own internal affairs, including teaching practice along with the related pedagogies and how they should be improved as outlined in NCAAA's recommendations (see Appendix 4). Therefore, the following sections include a comprehensive review and discussion of teaching practice and of these related pedagogies that emerged in the educational literature in Western countries (mainly the UK, US, Australia).

3.1 Teaching Effectiveness

Teaching effectiveness is a multi-dimensional concept that has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Biggs and Tang (1999) associate effectiveness in teaching with teaching approaches that encourage a student to apply a type of cognitive learning skill, such as critical thinking, which promotes a student's adoption of the meaning orientation to learning. Similarly Hunt, Chalmers, and Macdonald (2013, p. 24) remind us that: "effective teachers care about their subject and their students and understand how effective learning happens". Encouraging the student to independently interpret the teacher's instructions and take on an effective role in the learning process has been described by Brockbank and McGill (1998) as another aspect of teaching effectiveness. Effectiveness in teaching should be also considered as a process of enhancing a student's level of understanding through supporting the student in understanding a concept rather than insisting that students learn by rote (Voss, 1987). This can be achieved through the teacher's recognition of his/her students' approaches to study (Hativa, 2000). The teacher's ability to help a student recognise the relationship between the individual study subject and the whole programme of study is important. Harvey and Knight (1996) also argue that effective teachers provide students with meaningful feedback on their learning performance.

Hounsell (1997) added that the teacher's ability to demonstrate enthusiasm for, and commitment to, exploring the subject is crucial for effective teaching. From the student's perspective, effectiveness in teaching happens when the teacher is well-organised, interested in teaching the course, and has a clear grasp of the learning materials, the learning objectives and the teaching methods (Hativa, 2000). The teacher has to understand the difficulties the student may encounter in studying the

subject, stimulating the student's motivation to learn and perform well in the learning process (Ramsden, 1991).

3.1.1 The importance of the learning environment

There is an emphasis on the importance of understanding the learning environment's function in a university in order to highlight its influence on students' learning performance (Gaff, Crombag, and Chang, 1976). The LE can be defined as a powerful environment when it: 'provides students with optimally supported possibilities for high-level learning, improving students' adequate self-regulation and facilitating the advancement of their conceptions of knowledge, learning, and instruction' (Lowyck, Lethtin, and Elen, 2004, p. 404).

A learning environment can be described as an ideal learning environment when the student is appropriately involved in the learning process. In an ideal learning environment there is a good relationship established between the student and the teacher (Wierstra et al., 2003). In this kind of learning environment, students' own experiences and perceptions of various aspects of the educational process are explored, such as identifying students' perceptions of the effectiveness of teaching methods and the extent to which it enhances their learning. This can be assessed through students' own evaluations of the educational process (Hounsell and Hounsell, 2007). An ideal learning environment emphasises the accomplishment of learning objectives rather than exclusively the application of innovative teaching methods (Bowden and Marton, 1998). It also gives a student more freedom in learning; however, that freedom is structured in a way that ensures the student gains and develops various learning skills (Ramsden, 1997). It supports students in

applying appropriate learning strategies to successfully complete the learning task, encouraging self-direction or independence in learning. In this kind of learning environment, teachers carefully consider the learning materials used and the impact of those materials on student learning – both the learning process and learning outcomes (Dart, 1998). An ideal learning environment promotes high-quality student learning by enhancing conceptual understanding and both cognitive and metacognitive skills (Vermunt, 2003). It also supports students in taking more responsibility for their learning achievements (De Corte et al., 2003). Thus, a learning environment should be viewed as a means of fostering meaning learning (Tynjala, 1997). In this paragraph I have discussed how the learning environment in the HE context is related to effective teaching. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss in more detail how the learning environment should be seen as effective and constructive in enhancing students' learning performance.

It has been suggested that teachers design the learning environment in ways that support each of their educational goals. While there may be some goals that are common across disciplines (for example, the goal to foster independence in learning, intellectual maturity or critical reflectivity), there are also many more specific goals which have been shown to vary by discipline. For example, in mathematics the students learn to solve problems, invent, and prove; in history, they learn to search and evaluate; in science, they learn to observe and examine (Donald, 2002). Creating an effective learning environment will help students to acquire these skills (ideally for use beyond the course itself). The transfer of skills learned within a disciplinary context to one's professional (or civic) life has been referred to by Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) as a valuable quality called the 'adaptive expertise' that

makes students beneficial in their society. In addition, there are graduate attributes that students are expected to acquire regardless of their discipline. According to Bowden, et al. (as cited in Bridgstock, 2009, p.32), the term refers to:

> … the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and, consequently, shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as a citizen.

These valuable skills can be achieved if a number of factors are aligned, one of which is an effective learning environment. Bransford et al. (2000) argue that an effective learning environment should be a combination of features from four different perspectives: learner, knowledge, assessment, and community, as shown in Figure 5.
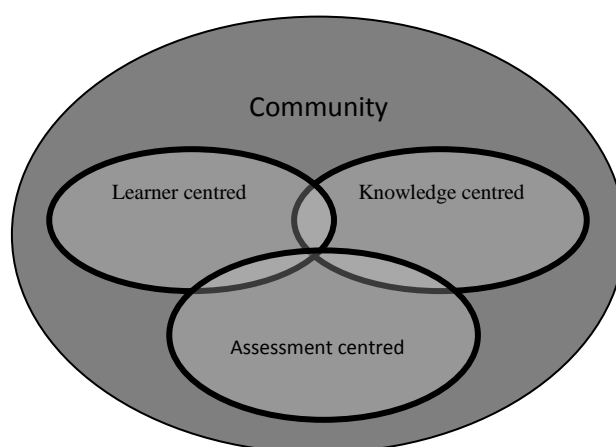
Figure 5: Perspectives on learning environment
(Adapted from Bransford et al., 1998)

It is also important to mention that Bransford et al.'s (2000) argument is within a school context, but in the higher education literature one also finds the argument that these perspectives on the learning environment are applicable at university level. Notably, McLoughlin and Luca (2000) discuss a learner-centred

approach and Hunt, Chalmers, and Macdonald (2013) emphasise the importance of teachers organising the content well to facilitate knowledge construction for the student. In this section, I shall review characteristics of four kinds of learning environments and then discuss the importance of them being aligned to support each other.

a. Learner-centred environment: In this environment, students' attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and skills brought to the educational setting are key factors, and teachers' practices are essentially built on them (Bransford et al., 2000). In other words, the teacher acts as a bridge-maker between the subject matter and student's prior knowledge and conceptions. The key principle of this environment stems from a theory of knowledge called the constructivist epistemology which is contrasted with another theory called the objectivist epistemology (Philips, 2005). The philosophy behind a constructivist epistemology is that the 'learner constructs their own knowledge', while the philosophy behind the objectivist epistemology is that 'the learner is an empty vessel to be filled with content' (Philips, 2005, p. 3).

According to Bransford et al. (2000), the teaching practice in such an environment is seen as diagnostic. Through methods such as observation, conversation, questioning and students' outputs, the teacher can discover students' conceptual and cultural knowledge, and identify if there are any misconceptions needing to change. The change here does not occur directly; the teacher may provide various ways that help students to re-think and re-adjust their ideas. Moreover, learner-centred teaching promotes learning by involving students in making predictions about certain situations and explain their reasons for these predictions.

By doing so, the students may experience conflicting views which, by discussing them, may lead to a reconstruction of previously held conceptions.

Finally, Bransford et al. (2000, p. 136) state that, in this environment, "accomplished teachers "give learners reasons" by respecting and understanding learners' prior experiences and understandings, assuming that these can serve as a foundation on which to build bridges to new understandings".

b. Knowledge-centred environment: This kind of learning environment emphasises one main goal: the students should become knowledgeable, and enabled to employ thinking strategies to solve problems and to extend what they have learned in one context to new contexts (i.e. transfer of learning). The learner- and knowledge-centred environments agree on the importance of building on students' prior conceptions about the subject matter.

The role of the teacher in this environment is to introduce the subject matter, and ensure that the students develop an understanding of it (why is it taught?), and to grasp what the subject domain looks like (Dinham, 2008). The question 'why is it taught?' highlights the importance of the critical examination of the curricula, whether the activities and information support learning with deep understanding. For example, a textbook may have left out crucial information that is necessary for understanding and this would encourage students to memorise. With regard to sense making, Cobb et al. (as cited in Bransford, 2000, p.137) illustrate that students, when learning mathematics in a knowledge-centred environment, also learn how to make sense of the subject matter and think mathematically. A later section (3.1.3) of this chapter addresses the quality of curricula and the teacher's role in planning a good curriculum.

c. Assessment-centred environment: Besides being learner- and knowledge-centred, an effective learning environment should also consider the importance of assessment. The aim of this kind of learning environment is to assess students' learning goals by providing feedback and revision. It is argued that assessment through tests, assignments and discussions is very important because it makes students' thinking visible which should enable teachers to provide students with the appropriate feedback. Bransford et al. (2000) argue that formative assessment is vital in the learning environment because it provides feedback at regular intervals and opportunities for revision. It also helps students to develop their thinking and understanding. The notion of student assessment is addressed in more detail later in this chapter.

d. Community-centred environment: Bransford et al. (2000) argue that the previous three environments are very important for effective learning but yet they should be embraced by a community-centred environment or, in other words, should promote a sense of community as demonstrated in Figure 5 above. The term 'community' in the learning context has two senses: narrow and broad. In its narrow sense, it refers to the classroom and the school, while the broader sense is the world outside the school including, for example, 'homes, businesses, states, and the nation'. This kind of environment establishes a connection between people inside the school (i.e. students, teachers, and administrators) with the broader aspects of community. Why is this kind of environment important?

The key principle of this learning environment is to promote lifelong learning by fostering values and norms. An environment having the norm that everybody can make mistakes, encourages students to ask for clarification and not to

be embarrassed to say, 'I do not know.' Students in a classroom with a strong community find no problem in showing to their peers that they don't know everything. Moreover, in this kind of learning environment, the teacher presents students with a problem and they are required to work together to find solutions for it, which will lead to a class discussion led by the teacher who gives feedback on the ideas suggested by the students. Hence, an effective community-centred environment encourages students to solve complex problems, a skill that is vital for students in their life outside the educational setting, and this is what makes students connected to the broader sense of community.

In a community-centred learning environment, the students' and the teachers' expectations are aligned, which encourages a collaborative climate. The teacher explains explicitly the aims and the expectations of the course and encourages students to speak about their own expectations. Taking students' views and needs into consideration is more likely to motivate students to be active individuals and that will create a strong classroom community where students and the teacher are connected with each other, and who together aim to achieve the learning goals (Bransford et al., 2000).

Having discussed the characteristics of each learning environment, the main point here is the importance of alignment among the four kinds of learning environments proposed by Bransford et al. (2000) who argue that the learning environment becomes effective if it underlines three important questions: what is taught, how is it taught, and how is it assessed? Four examples demonstrate this argument: first, learner-centred or community-centred learning environments are important for developing students' thinking and problem-solving skills, but without

alignment with a knowledge-centred environment, the student will not become knowledgeable, a quality that is, in fact, needed for learning those skills. Emphasising this point, Bransford et al. (2000, p. 153) state, *"It is not sufficient only to attempt to teach general problem solving and thinking skills; the ability to think and solve problems requires well-organized knowledge."* Similarly, a knowledge-based environment without alignment with learner- or community-centred learning environments will create a student who may lack vital life skills needed outside the educational setting such as thinking and problem-solving strategies. Moreover, without the alignment with an assessment learning environment, the teacher will find it impossible to know what students learned.

3.1.2 Teaching methods and attributes of good teachers

In the HE literature, teaching effectiveness is often conceptualised as the effective use of teaching methods. For example, a teaching method is effective if it achieves the objectives of the course efficiently and effectively (Cox, 1994). As Biggs (1996, p.361) reminds us, *"Good teachers should know and enact ways of getting their students to learn effectively at the desired cognitive level, to be more student-centred in their teaching-learning activities."*

Moreover, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, teaching effectiveness is essentially linked with students' understanding. Biggs (1996) argues that the right choice of a teaching method will help to create this link. A good university teacher employs a teaching method in a way that not only motivates students' interest in the subject but also helps them to think critically and generate ideas; for example, to analyse, synthesise, and evaluate evidence and conclusions, as these skills greatly

promote understanding (Biggs, 1996; Bain, 2004; Strong, Gargani, and Hacifazlioglu, 2011). Moreover, Fisher, Alder, and Avasalu (1998) and Hativa, Barak, and Simhi (2001) suggest that understanding is facilitated if the teaching method involves presenting the materials in an interesting way and providing students with a meaningful explanation by associating proper examples and illustrations.

In the higher education context, various teaching methods commonly used are lectures, tutorials, discussion groups, laboratory classes and fieldwork (Cox, 1994). As an example, I shall explain how teaching methods such as lectures and discussion groups can be effective.

A good teacher takes seriously into consideration a number of aspects that render a lecture effective (Entwistle, 2009): a) clarity, in the sense that the teacher can be heard clearly and the student is able to see easily the supporting material used; b) the delivery of lectures requires an appropriate level of speed for presenting the materials and for introducing new ideas and concepts; c) components of the lecture should be well structured in a logical manner; d) key concepts should be explained clearly and be linked with students' prior knowledge; e) the delivery of lectures requires the teacher to show enthusiasm in presenting the materials and engagement with the topic; f) the lecturer should be aware of possible difficulties that might be encountered by students in their learning, as well as students' perceptions of the teaching process. Moreover, Hunt and Chalmers (2013) suggest that good teachers should identify clearly the objectives and milestones of their lectures, encourage students' participation, and establish links between key learning points presented in the lecture with the students' assessment.

With respect to the main characteristics of successful discussion groups, Entwistle (2009) suggests that the teacher: a) makes an appropriate choice of topic to promote active discussion; b) creates a good atmosphere to encourage student participation; c) clearly outlines the focus of discussion; d) encourages academic debate; e) promotes students' interest in the subject; f) challenges students' understanding without damaging their self-confidence; g) enhances mutual respect between the student and teacher.

Biggs (1996) argues that if teaching methods are to succeed, they need to be carefully aligned with a construction process for enhancing student understanding through four interrelated steps the teacher should follow: a) having a clear understanding of how he/she wants students to learn, which must be associated with the use of a mode of assessment based on measuring students' understanding of the learning task; b) identifying learning performance objectives that are represented in a hierarchical order, from unacceptable to competent performance; c) guiding a student through the learning process to achieve the learning objectives; and d) requiring students to prove that they are capable of achieving the desired learning objective that reflects his/her understanding of the study subject. The key idea to hold on to here is that, to promote learning, one feature of being a good teacher is that of applying effective teaching methods, Unless a teacher adopts methods that have been carefully aligned with the learning process for enhancing student understanding, student learning will not be improved.

3.1.3 Quality of curricula and constructive alignment

Teaching is effective if it achieves the desired learning outcomes, and one way of making this happen is through planning a good curriculum. For Kember (1997, p. 270), the way the curriculum is designed affects students' approaches to learning. He states:

> At a departmental level, those departments where the knowledge transmission orientation predominates are more likely to have a curriculum design and employ didactic teaching methods which have undesirable influences on the learning approaches of the students. Whereas departments with a greater propensity toward learning facilitation are more likely to design courses and establish a learning environment which encourages meaningful learning.

However, having a quality curriculum will not achieve coherent learning unless there is alignment of "what to teach, how to teach and how to assess" (Hunt and Chalmers, 2013, p. 92). In this section, I will discuss the impact of a university's philosophy of teaching on planning its curricula, the general criteria of a good curriculum, and the importance of the notion of 'constructive alignment'.

At university level, the kind of the curricula implemented in an institution depend on its philosophy of the relation between teaching and research. One view believes that research has the priority over teaching because the former will have a great impact on learning. And here, the most likely kind of curricula will be research-led; the students learn about research conducted in their disciplines including their teachers' research.

Another view argues that teaching and research are interrelated, and here a research-based curriculum is coherent with this view as the students learn through giving them the opportunity to do some forms of research. Each of these views has its proponents who provide evidence for their claim and suggest criteria for planning

a good curriculum design (see e.g. Jenkins and Healy, 2013 for research-based curriculum; Davies and White, 2005 for research-led curriculum in multimedia).

On the other hand, some universities are more concerned with a kind of curriculum through which students achieve professionalism and acquire employability traits (e.g. generic skills), and here such universities seek to employ teachers who are not required to conduct any form of research (Jenkins and Healy, 2013).

In general, curricula must broaden students' knowledge of the subject (Clanchy and Ballard, 1995; Powell, 1982), be coherent and up-to-date (Krause, 2007), and balance subject content with professional concerns (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2007). Ramsden (2008) adds that the design of a curriculum should meet the challenges for the future and enhance students' understanding of obtained knowledge in relation to its application in different contexts.

Bath et al. (2004) argue that a quality curriculum should also be embedded with opportunities for the development of graduates' generic skills[13]. They maintain that the importance of such skills to be developed by a university is derived from two principles. First, 'education is a lifelong learning' process, hence linking graduates into the wider community. Barnett and Coate (2005) suggest that a curriculum should promote the notion of responsibility for learning associated with the desire to continue learning, and enable the students to critically assess their own learning performance. Here, according to Candy (2000), the desired outcome is the 'incremental development of self-directed learning' or what Peach (2010) called the approach of a 'student-directed independent learning'.

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[13] See § 3.1.1, for the definition of generic skills.

Further, there is a relationship between education and employment or, more specifically, graduates with generic skills such as leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking are more competitive. Accordingly, Bath et al. (2004) emphasise the importance of a department's role in accomplishing those desired learning outcomes through appropriate curriculum design.

Teaching effectiveness will be achieved if university teachers are aware of their responsibility to develop generic learning skills through students' engagement with curriculum content, and assess students' achievement to make sure that these objectives are fulfilled, a process called curriculum alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011; MacDonald and Horst, 2007; Bath et al., 2004). Leaving this notion for a moment, there is rather a component towards developing or planning a good curriculum design: the students' voice.

Seale (2010, p. 996) asserts that the student's voice is important for *'quality enhancement and assurance'* and *'staff or professional development'*. HE curriculum design is one of the areas where students' opinions play a role in its effectiveness. They maintain that regular review, strategic and appropriate involvement of students in the curriculum design process is a way of engaging and empowering them, and thereby further enhancing their academic learning (Bovill, Bulley, and Morss, 2011; McLeod, 2011; Bath et al., 2004). The inclusion of students in the curriculum design process reflects the effectiveness of HE curricula where students are adequately engaged in the process. It is equally important in order to help students achieve given learning objectives, that personal transferable skills and academic outcomes should be defined clearly and early on (Allan, 1996). It is also essential to let the student know the standard of work that is expected of him/her while studying the course

(Ramsden, 2003). This view is supported by Breen and Candlin (1980, p. 95), who point out that:

> However vague a learner's initial interpretation of the demands of the target repertoire and its underlying competence may be, he is not going to learn anything unless he has an idea of what he is trying to achieve

3.1.3.1 Curriculum design and constructive alignment

Constructive alignment is an approach to curriculum design that supports and maximises students' quality of learning (Biggs, 2002). Angelo (2012, p. 96) defines 'constructive alignment':

> The 'constructive' in 'constructive alignment' refers to constructive theory, which posits that students must actively construct rather than passively receive learning if it is to be meaningful and lasting. 'Alignment' refers to the explicit linkage of teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks to promote achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The definition reveals that the notion aims at ensuring coherent learning. As far as HE is concerned, Jenkins and Healy (2013) argue that the teacher's ability to create a learning environment that optimises the conditions for students to achieve the learning outcomes, through a series of activities that are aligned with the teaching methods used and the assessment tasks, is essential for teaching effectiveness. Biggs (2002, p. 2) points out, "the learner is 'trapped' and cannot escape without learning what is intended." Biggs explains how the teacher applies this approach successfully.

a) What to teach? And here the teacher should plan a good curriculum that achieves the intended learning goals.

b) How to teach? The teacher should use the teaching methods that are most likely to help to achieve the learning outcomes.

c) How to assess? As will be explained in the following section, there are assessment tasks that teachers use to evaluate how well the students have performed with regard to the learning outcomes. The teacher will finally arrive at the final grade.

To sum up, it can be seen from the above discussion that, in order to enhance students' quality of learning in HE, curricula must be planned carefully. A good quality curriculum is one that promotes a deep approach to learning through a series of well-designed activities. In contrast, a poorly designed curriculum is one that is concerned merely with covering a wide range of topics and is less likely to enhance the quality of learning (Peach, 2010). Most importantly, good teaching practice recognises and applies the approach of constructive alignment to the curriculum design.

3.1.4 Student assessment

Assessment practice has a number of purposes: for certification, learning, sustainable learning and also for fostering lifelong learning (Boud, 2014). The purposes of assessment, in broad terms, are "assisting a process towards learning; determining what learning has occurred; and providing evidence regarding the success" (Yorke, 1998, p. 108). Assessment is thus about both improving learning and determining whether learning has been achieved—assessment methods must be matched to learning objectives (Brown and Knight, 1994). This view is supported by Boud (1995), who states that the appropriate mode of assessment is one that delivers the desired learning objectives, in other words, one that has a positive, effective influence on student learning. This also means that it should enhance the

level of understanding when students are more focused on constructing knowledge (Biggs, 1996). Furthermore, any appropriate mode of assessment should provide a valid and reliable picture of a student's capability to learn (Brown and Knight, 1994). From a student's perspective, it should enable the development of a range of learning skills, reward the effort put into learning with meaningful results, encourage the student's independence in learning, and provide the long-term benefits of learning (Sambell McDowell, and Brown, 1997). Indeed, assessment design should actively involve students in assessment tasks in ways that advance high cognitive learning skills that should be linked to lifelong learning (Boud and Falchikov, 2007).

Regarding the impact of assessment on learning, Boud (1990) points out that assessment has more impact on student learning than any other aspect of a curriculum. Thus, assessments directly influence students' approaches to learning. Boud (1990) argues that students' understanding of the content of a course is influenced by what they expect the assessment is designed to elicit. As Biggs (1996) points out, students learn according to what they perceive the assessment requires. Assessments which leads the student to reproduce the same content have been criticised for preventing him/her from applying the critical thinking skills that underpin meaningful learning and understanding of subjects (Boud, 1990). Biggs (1996) shows that, given the negative effects of quantitative assessments (such as multiple choice tasks) on student approaches to learning, the longer the teacher or an institution encourages such forms of assessment, the more likely it is that students will adopt a surface approach to learning rather than a deeper approach. The influence of assessment methods on student approaches to learning is discussed in more detail in chapter 4. Student assessment may be divided into three main

categories: a) assessment for certification, b) assessment for learning, c) assessment for lifelong learning. In the following paragraphs, I shall describe the general character of each type.

a) Assessment for certification: this kind of assessment is called summative which takes the form of an unseen end-of-year examination by which the teacher arrives at a final degree for students' performances. However, any given assessment may serve both formative and summative purposes. Summative assessment to some extent may not serve fully the purpose of meaningful learning. According to Hinett (1997), this type of assessment determines how much knowledge a student has obtained rather than how well such knowledge is constructed at a student's level of understanding; hence, it classifies students rather than improves their learning. This does not mean that summative assessment should be eliminated; it is still essential for degree transcripts. But yet, without considering other forms of constructive assessment as in the early 1960s, students will be more likely to study not for the purpose of learning but for passing their exams (Boud, 2014). Similarly, it is argued by Brown and Knight (1994) that exams as sole forms of assessment hinder students from taking responsibility to construct meaningful learning and initiative in learning, promote extrinsic motivation for learning, and empower the teacher's role in the learning process at the expense of the student's role.

Another form of summative assessment is called 'continuous assessment' which refers to a series of exams or tasks during the year that will contribute to the final grade. According to Boud (2014), continuous assessment was largely supported by students in the late 1960s and early 1970s because it was seen as fairer than end-of-year exams that only determine their degree performance. Again, the serious

drawback of continuous assessment is that the purpose of learning is greatly inhibited. As reported by Boud (2014), students' main concern with the series of particular tasks is whether or not it contributes to the final grade. Moreover, without feedback, students are more likely to repeat their mistakes, resulting in poor grades at the end of the semester or year.

b) Assessment for learning: formative assessment is the kind of task that serves the purposes of assessing learning as described earlier (Brown and Knight, 1994; Hinett, 1997; Sambell et al., 1997; Boud and Falchikov, 2007; and Boud, 2014). A case study by Sambell et al. (1997) has shown students considered formative assessment to be greatly contributing to their learning. On the other hand, they perceived that summative assessment was a task for obtaining grades that encouraged them to reproduce facts and details. Despite the significant discussion in the literature of the positive side of formative assessment, Boud, (2014) questions whether this form of assessment has in reality been integrated into courses; he believes this issue is still imperfectly defined.

As was mentioned earlier, in the HE context, assessment tasks may have dual purposes, i.e. summative and formative. For example, the teacher gives the grade accompanied with comments which interpret that grade. However, Boud (2014) argues that the conflict of purposes compromises the benefits of the formative task. For example, the interpretation of the grade tells students what they have achieved, but without providing them with meaningful feedback in the sense that suggests what they should do to improve their performances in their future tasks; this means this assessment does not help students to improve their learning and they may repeat the same mistakes. Furthermore, formative and summative purposes are conflicting

in respect of timing. Summative tasks most often come at the end of the year because they summarise the performance of students in the form of a grade, while formative tasks should be earlier in the year so that students can benefit from the feedback to make changes in their learning and consequently affect positively their performance in the final exams. However, any comments or suggestions paired with the result of the summative task could be neglected by the students, and in this case the information coming with the result should not be called feedback. Feedback is the kind of information that transforms students' learning. I will discuss later in this section the concept of feedback since understanding the accurate meaning of feedback is very important for both teachers and students (Boud, 2014).

(c) Assessment for lifelong learning: Boud (2014) suggests another form of assessment called 'sustainable assessment'. Boud (2000, p.151) writes that "sustainable assessment meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of students to meet their own future learning needs." Why is it important? Boud (2014) argues that this form of assessment prepares students to become effective lifelong learners, in which the design of assessment activities is related to what those students encounter throughout their real lives. Further, in this process, students are less dependent on teachers as sources of advice but are encouraged to work with other group members (Boud, 2000). For an assessment task to be regarded as part of sustainable assessment, Boud (2000) identifies a set of features, for example: assessment activities should promote students' confidence that new learning tasks can be mastered; students should be informed of criteria and standards that have to be applied suitably to any given learning task, and assessment activities

should also direct students to apply such criteria and standards of a given learning task to the learner's own work.

To fulfil students' learning requirements, Boud (2014, p.35) proposes an agenda for assessment change that responds to future challenges. The main features of such an approach are as follows: a) "it positions students as active learners, seeking an understanding of standards and feedback"; b) "it would develop their capacity to make judgements about learning, including that of others"; c) "it would involve treating students more as partners and less as subjects in assessment discussions"; d) and "it would contribute to building learning and assessment skills beyond the particular course".

For the assessment to support students' learning, this requires the provision of meaningful feedback (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004). In the literature, there is a common view of the importance of this aspect: feedback is important for students because it helps them identify the strengths and weaknesses of their learning performance. Weaknesses can then be revised and improved (Sadler, 1989). In the HE context, Hounsell (2007) argues that meaningful feedback can contribute to enhancing learning in three important ways: "accelerating learning, optimizing the quality of what is learned, and raising individual and collective attainment" (p. 101). He suggests that meaningful feedback should be promoted throughout an institution's structure and teaching-learning process.

A far as teaching practice is concerned, the role of the teacher becomes effective if he/she gives students feedback in its wide sense. Academic teachers must understand the types of learning skills to be learned and be able to recognise and describe a good learning performance before offering suggestions on how to improve

learning (Sadler, 1989). Hounsell et al. (2008) assert that effective assessment involves not merely providing students with constructive comments but it also "entails assisting students to come to hold a conception of what counts as good quality work in the subject area" (p.55). Drew (2001) shows that students recognise that feedback is meaningful feedback if it improves their learning; one student stated: "I feel as if I could have done better in the exams if I'd had the essays marked in advance with areas of improvement marked out" (p. 319). In the same vein, Hounsell et al. (2008) suggest that students value meaningful feedback when it assists them to be involved with their subject in ways that will promote the quality of their learning outcomes.

In fact, it is recommended that the teacher should hold a clear conception of feedback because it has implications for teaching practices. Boud (2014) suggests three implications: a) the student as an individual should be the central focus of attention who we should influence; b) the focus should be not only on the information given to the students but also how and when this information influences students' learning; c) students, as the central focus in the education process, should have an active role in the process of feedback. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the role of the teacher in improving students' learning through assessment tasks.

It is recommended that teaching staff should approach assessment tasks as a process of developing students' learning skills rather than as a competitive activity. To achieve this, students' views on the assessment process (e.g. their perceptions of the assessment tasks they do) should be taken into consideration, the design of an assessment task should be linked to enhancing the quality of learning, and an

appropriate form of assessment should be used (Race, 1995). Furthermore, Boud (1990) suggests that students should be supported in becoming self-motivated learners rather than teacher-directed learners, and should be guided to search for meanings in, and understanding of, the learning task. As Heron (1988) reminds us, the ideal teaching-learning process should result in the emergence of a learner who is self-determining, able to identify his/her own learning objectives and assess his/her own produced work against a set criteria of excellence. Heron (1988, pp. 57–58) states that:

> The traditional educational process does not prepare the student to acquire any of these self-determining competencies. In each respect, the staff do it for or to the students. An educational process that is so determined by others cannot seriously intend to have as its outcomes a person who is truly self-determining.

Farmer and Eastcott (1995) suggest that the nature of approaches to learning (both surface and deep) should be discussed with students as a way of explaining to them the importance of adopting the right approach to apply to the assessment task. And here it should be noted that the method of assessment influences students' approaches to learning. In the research literature, there is an argument that students' understanding of the content of a course is influenced by what they expect the assessment to be designed to elicit (e.g. Struyven et al., 2005; Biggs, 1996).

Moreover, Race (1995) and Hinett (1997) assert that teachers should explicitly explain the assessment criteria process to the students, and this should be shared with students before assessment takes place. Without this practice, Hinett (1997) argues that students' motivation to learn might be lowered. As Drew (2001) points out, students' themselves recognise the importance of knowing such criteria

for their learning. Such a practice illustrates what Leach, Neutze, and Zepke (2001) describe it as a process shared between teachers and students.

The relation between assessment practice and teaching effectiveness raises questions about the role of an institution in improving teachers' practice in relation to assessment. At the department level, it is suggested that teaching methods and assessment practices should be used in concert to signal to the learner what the learning task is and how it will be assessed. Such components help the student apply the desired learning approach to the learning task (Biggs, 1996). At the institution level, for the assessment to be managed effectively, this requires that three particular conditions be met, defined by Yorke (1998): "a clear definition of the purposes to be served"; "a strategy designed to lead to the fulfilment of purposes"; and "an operationalisation that works" (p.108). For example, assessments should be given a high profile in the process of designing and implementing curricula, and there should be a continuing process of supporting and developing teachers in assessment practice (Yorke, 1998). Policy decision-makers and teachers should reassess any assessment process which tends to undermine student learning (Boud, 1995). For instance, if the primary objective of the assessment is to achieve high-quality learning, institutions should avoid assessments underpinned by grading (Biggs, 1996). Further, accountability for assessment policy should be directed not only towards external bodies (e.g. market needs) but also towards the student body (Yorke, 1998).

Collectively, these views outline an additional critical role for teaching effectiveness in HE that is about determining whether the assessment methods used are matched with, and capable of accomplishing, the learning objectives. Such assessment methods should provide meaningful feedback, develop student learning

skills, support a deep approach to learning, and promote alignment between the used teaching and assessment methods. This requires an institution to support the development of teacher practices in how student learning can be assessed effectively.

3.1.5 Evaluation of courses

The last part of this section discusses the importance of students' evaluation of course quality (e.g. the evaluation of teaching effectiveness). I will review the relevant literature to give an account of the purposes of course evaluation in relation to improving learning, measures that should be taken to ensure correct practices in course evaluation, the importance of student involvement in the course evaluation process, and the role of institutions in providing the right environment for such processes. In broad terms, Kogan and Shea (2007) offer two reasons why courses should be evaluated: to improve the educational process; and to provide a valuable resource of information to course directors in order to gain accreditation. Dressel (as cited in Ellis, 1993, p. 109) argues that the main aim should be: "to improve the quality of learning and increase the percentage of students who attain the important and agreed goals of learning. All else flows out of and is secondary to that goal."

There is a set of good practices that should be employed in the evaluation of courses. Lomax (1985) states that the course evaluation process should: be a collaborative process that involves participants' perspectives (teaching staff and students) on good practice of course evaluation; include and fairly represent students' views; and constructively benefit from students' perceptions in order to improve the quality of a course. The purpose of course evaluation should be clarified for teaching staff at the beginning of the course, and the method for collecting

feedback and when it will be used determined; also, the importance of leadership must be emphasised throughout the evaluation process in order to enhance students' trust of such processes (Hendry and Baur, 1998).

There are different aspects of a course evaluation that can be considered, one of which is related to students' evaluations of teaching effectiveness. This view is supported by Ellis (1993), who argues that the student should be regarded as the judge of the effectiveness of teaching. McKeachie (1980, p. 193) states that: "Student ratings are the best validated of all the practical sources' of relevant data." Student rating is a source of information to recognise and reward excellence in teaching and to develop the course (Aleamoni, 1999), to inform the teacher of his/her teaching performance and to identify potential weakness where improvements could be made to make changes to teaching practices (Saroyan and Amundsen, 2001). This view is supported by Murray (1997, p.18) who concludes that, "under certain conditions, student evaluation of teaching does lead to improvement of teaching".

Students' ratings of teachers' performance can be also used as a source of data for in-service training programmes (Menges, 1991). Furthermore, it had a good impact on student learning in the study conducted by Murray, Rushton, and Paunonen (1992), which indicated that there was a positive relation between students' evaluation of effectiveness in teaching with their learning and achievement in studying the course. It also provides useful information to students when they are selecting study programmes and instructors (Cohen, 1980, 1981). This illustrates other authors' belief that students' written evaluation of teaching effectiveness is valid, reliable and a good indicator of effective teaching (for example, Ramsden, 1991; Murray et al., 1992; and Cohen, 1980, 1981).

This raises the importance of the students' role in the course evaluation process. Many scholars argue that students in HE contexts should be regarded as primary stakeholders. To improve the quality of the educational process, Barnett (1992) argues that, if an institution adopts the principles of quality assurance, there is a need to identify students as influential stakeholders in the educational process. Not doing so may weaken the principles that the institution aims to achieve, one of which is enhancing students' learning. Student feedback is thus a significant factor in the course evaluation process. It is a good indication of an institution's performance, as well as a necessary source of information to improve the learning process (Harvey, 2001). Other researchers describe student feedback as a formal acknowledgement on the part of the university system that students' perceptions of course quality are an integral part of the educational process (Stringer and Finlay, 1993). Similarly, Marsh (1987, p.369) argues that "student ratings are clearly multidimensional, quite reliable, reasonably valid, relatively uncontaminated by many variables often seen as sources of potential bias, and are seen to be useful by students, faculty and administrators." Rowley (1995, p.19) states that "gathering relevant, representative and useful student opinion is a necessary part of the process." From the perspective of taking advantage of students' feedback, it is argued that an aspect of good teaching practice in higher education is teachers' ability to listen and to value students' opinions and suggestions, and to take action to change teaching practice that results in improving students' learning (Brookfield, 1990). For these reasons, student feedback should be addressed properly.

Regarding the benefits of student feedback, Harvey (2001) argues that students' perceptions of the educational process should be integrated into a

continuous cycle of analysis, reporting, action and feedback. Speaking of the importance of informing students about any actions resulting from their inputs, Leckey and Neill (2001) emphasise the importance of closing the loop in the course evaluation process, believing that this aspect is an essential factor in total quality management, as otherwise students would be unwilling to participate in future surveys if they did not observe any improvement resulting from their feedback. In their survey of students' opinions of the use of rating for teaching evaluation purposes, Spencer and Schmelkin (2002, p. 406) found that students were unsure whether their opinions mattered and that this was due to the lack of a) confidence in the use of the results; and b) knowledge of just how to influence teaching. Powney and Hall (1998, p. 12) conclude that "this could leave students feeling disempowered and potentially disinclined to take responsibility for improving the provision made for their learning." Solving this problem requires including systematic course evaluation within the university's structure, where students' feedback is reported back to those who are responsible for delivering, developing and administering the course (Stringer and Finlay, 1993).

The management and structure of an institution undoubtedly play a role in enhancing the effectiveness of student evaluations on course quality. It important to emphasise that the quality of courses has to be monitored for the purpose of assuring that the desired learning objectives have been met and to identify course shortfalls that need to be improved (Stringer and Finlay, 1993). Barnett (1992) argues that it is a university's responsibility to enhance the quality of student learning through formal systematic processes of course evaluation. In the same way, a university should be proactive with respect to course evaluations and make them a source of

realistic data with a view to improving learning, along with providing the right conditions for course evaluation. These conditions include: establishing trust among those who participate in course evaluations (the teacher, the student and the course manager), providing the needed time and resources for course evaluation, and identifying practical solutions to improve the course (Rolph and Rolph, 1989). Another matter that requires the institution's involvement is the need to design such surveys correctly. Harvey (1999, p. 29) suggests three essential factors that need to be included in such a survey, which are: (a) "students must be able to raise issues that are important to them"; (b) "there must be an assessment of what is important to students as well as what is satisfactory"; (c) "there must be an explicit action cycle with clear structures for delegating responsibility for change and for providing feedback on action to students".

Together these views provide important insights into the subject of the evaluation of courses; one aspect of its value is to rate the effectiveness of teaching. The key idea to hold on to here is that the success of this process with reference to improving learning depends on a set of factors: students' involvement is essential, teachers' awareness of the importance of this process at least for enhancing their teaching performance, and an institutional culture that supports the success of this process.

3.1.6 ICTs in Saudi HE practice

The past decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) in the HE sector, making it necessary to review ICTs' impact on teaching practice. This section provides only a short review of the

extent to which ICTs have been applied in the HE sector, assessing in particular the extent to which ICTs are addressed in Saudi HEIs to improve the educational process. However, given that no attention has been focused on ICTs in the outlined research objectives[14] of this study and because, at the time of the study, the use of ICTs in the educational process and at both participating public universities has been comparatively rare, this section and the study as whole cannot provide a comprehensive review of the use of ICTs in the Saudi HE context and their impact on improving the educational process.

Initially I provide a brief examination of the history of ICTs in the HE context. At the international level, ample research has explored the adoption and important use of ICTs in universities. One of the first major studies conducted by Kulik (1991, in Alkhatnai, 2013) highlighted the importance of ICTs, as well as their flexibility and accessibility, as a transformative force for the future of the HE sector. Such major positive aspects of benefiting from ICTs are evident in the establishment of distance-based universities (such as The Open University in the United Kingdom or India's Indira Ghandi National Open University). Clearly, there are several advantages to using ICTs in universities, including but not limited to: (a) ICTs are an effective tool for supporting teachers with various choices of multimedia and other applications to create more exciting and interactive learning environments; (b) they facilitate the acquisition of basic skills; (c) they help enhance teacher training; (d) they facilitate distance learning (DL); (e) they support tools for improving library delivery systems and services to the public; (f) they are a reliable source for providing information to users faster than before; and (g) they can be a good solution

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[14] See Chapter 1, § 1.6 Objectives of the study.

for increasing a university's capacity more rapidly than depending only on building physical solutions through classrooms or laboratories (Tinio, 2003; Marengo and Marengo, 2005; Bingimlas, 2009; Alturise and Alojaiman, 2013; Alkhatnai, 2013). On the other hand, the use of computer and internet-led components of ICTs in the HE context can pose their own threats, as evident in the challenges that traditional institutions face with from the increasing amount of international competition from other universities. Another threat to traditional universities is the competition from corporate HE institutions that are becoming more capable of facilitating and integrating ICTs into the workplace for those interested in attending higher education; consequently, by taking into account workers' social and other responsibilities, these institutions enable more users to have access to online courses than before (Berkens, 1999, in Alkhatnai, 2013).

The Saudi HE system can be seen as a microcosm of the wider context of the Arab educational contexts, thereby enabling us to look briefly at the use of ICTs. A number of authors have reported positive attitudes being brought to Arab educational contexts that were attributed to the implementation of ICTs in these contexts (see Alkhatnai, 2013). Yet Ali and Hijazi's (2005, in Alkhatnai, 2013, p. 46) case study found that, for instance, in terms of accessing knowledge sources as a form of benefiting from ICTs, a gap still exists in this area between developed and developing countries (here, Middle Eastern nations). The authors attributed this gap of ICT implementation in these contexts to different factors, including economic poverty, organisational, technological, scientific, infrastructural, legislative and political gaps.

Although this study focuses primarily on the Saudi HE context, the following paragraphs briefly look at the degree to which ICTs are being used in the Saudi context. NCAAA[15] provides a set of recommendations for how ICTs and other related support services should be available, particularly for supporting student learning. Regarding the Saudi HE context and the implementation of ICTs, Alkhatnai's (2013) review of this issue demonstrated that several researchers (e.g., Alaugab, 2007; Al-Far, 2004; Alshehri, 2005) have reported that participants (i.e., students, teachers and administrators) held positive attitudes towards the benefits of instructional technologies in the educational process, whether by applying such technologies in distance learning or online courses or through other alternatives perceived to provide benefits.

Nonetheless, these studies and others have indicated that gaps remain in the Saudi context in terms of the availability of ICTs and how they are used. A number of authors have reported different barriers to the implementation of ICTs in the Saudi HE context at three different levels: individual, organisational and infrastructure levels. Such barriers include but are not limited to inadequate instructional design skills to effectively integrate Internet technologies in the curriculum, support in terms of training and fostering innovative environments, and the availability of PCs/basic technology (see Al-Wehaibi et al., 2008, in Alkhatnai, 2013, p. 43). Alkhatnai (2013) recently found a shortage of sound research into the use and integration of ICTs in Saudi HEIs, he recommended that successful implementation of ICTs in educational contexts required looking at the implementation process from all perspectives to allow all related stakeholders (here, students) to be involved in

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[15] http://ncaaa.org.sa

this process. Successfully managing the implementation process requires changing Saudi HE policies and in-service training policies and strategies (Al-Ghadyan, 2004, in Alkhatnai, 2013). Al-Ghadyan (2004, in Alkhatnai, 2013, p. 41) concluded that *"new models of the universities and of learning and training are needed to reap the benefits of the new technology".* In this vein, and to benefit from the new technology in the form of distance education, the Saudi Higher Education Ministry launched the Saudi Electronic University (SEU) in 2011 as a government educational institution representing one of the modalities of higher education. According the university's website,[16] one of its goals is to support the mission and concept of lifelong e-learning and distance education for all members of Saudi society.

The brief description provided of the use of ICTs in the Saudi HE system suggests that more time is still needed for mainstream Saudi universities to adopt and integrate ICTs into their daily practices to improve the educational processes and teaching practices, particularly considering the previously noted barriers, which might restrict successful implementation of ICTs in this system.

3.2 Conceptions of Teaching

In order to fully appreciate the meaning of teaching effectiveness in HE it is helpful to explore its relationship to teachers' conception of teaching. The term 'conception' is best defined by Pratt (1992, p. 204):

> Conceptions are specific meanings attached to phenomena which then mediate our response to situations involving those phenomena. We form conceptions of virtually every aspect of our perceived world, and in so doing, use those abstract representations to delimit something from, and relate it to, other aspects of our world. In effect, we view the world through the lenses of our

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[16] https://www.seu.edu.sa

conceptions, interpreting and acting in accordance with our understanding of the world.

In the teaching context, it is argued that individual teachers have their own thinking (assumptions, values and beliefs) about teaching, but may or may not be aware of it, let alone how it may influence the learning of their students (Gow and Kember, 1993). For Kember (1997), understanding teaching conceptions is seen as an important issue for two reasons: a) it is linked to measures of the quality of student learning; b) it is needed for the success of quality assurance measures designed to enhance the quality of teaching. Gow and Kember (1993, p.31) conclude that "the methods of teaching adopted, the learning tasks set, the assessment demands made and the workload specified are strongly influenced by the orientation to teaching." According to Kember (1997), in his review of research into university academics' conceptions of teaching, the concept is classified into two broad orientations which can be placed on a continuum as shown in Figure 6 below. On one pole, teaching is seen as the facilitation of student learning (student-centred orientation), a concept that is underlined by two subordinate conceptions. The first one is 'facilitating understanding', where the emphasis is on facilitating the students' development of understanding. The focus is on the intended learning outcomes rather than on defining subject content. According to Kember and Gow (1994, p. 63), one individual teacher comments that:

> You've got to be able to make an environment where students really want to learn. If you do that, they are much more likely to understand why they learn. And then I think after that, the teacher should be a resource person, generally to guide the students, I don't see it as spoon-feeding.

The second sub-conception is 'conceptual change'. With regard to this sub-conception, Biggs and Tang (2011) emphasise that education is not an act of

acquiring information but rather a process of conceptual change that directs students to structure the obtained information and think what it does mean. Kember (1997, p. 268) cautions that is not an easy process to change student conceptions and to do so this may need "the establishment of a sympathetic and supportive environment".

On the other pole of the continuum, teaching is seen as transmitting information (teacher-centred orientation); this concept is also underlined by two subordinate conceptions. According to Kember (1997) the first one is 'imparting information', which emphasises the teacher's intention to transmit the subject content rather than encouraging the student's interest in learning. This can be seen, for example, in situations where the teacher considers that his/her primary goal is to train the student for a future career (Gow and Kember, 1993). According to Samuelowicz and Bain (1992, p. 101), one individual teacher states that:

> ...[aim in teaching is] to get information across to students...
> [teaching is] I guess it means to act as a vehicle or an agent by
> which the people can increase their knowledge and you are the
> vehicle, you are one of the vehicles by which they can do it.

The second sub-conception within the general conception of teaching as transmitting information is 'transmitting structured knowledge'. This concept, as did the previous one, emphasises transmitting knowledge but here the presented knowledge is structured and arranged in a way that can be understood by the student. According to Samuelowicz and Bain (1992, p. 101), a teacher comments that:

> Teaching is transmission of concepts and skills in such a way that
> the students can acquire them…that sounds a very rudimentary
> sort of approach, but I think there is a body of knowledge and
> skills that students need to start off with.
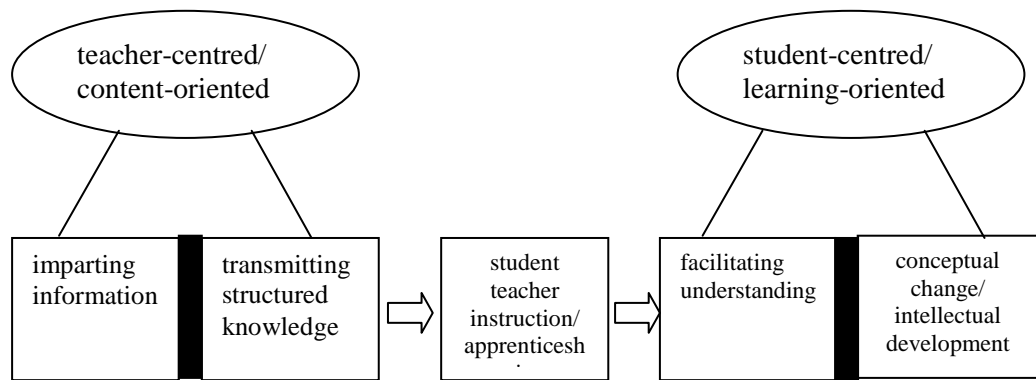
**Figure 6: Continuum of teaching conceptions
(Adapted from Kember's 1997 p.264)**

As discussed above, a student-centred conception is the polar opposite of a teacher-centred conception. Thus, it is important to emphasise here, as was mentioned previously in this chapter, that one aspect of teaching effectiveness is the teacher's capacity to enhance students' levels of understanding. To do so this requires a shift in a teacher's conception from one that teaching is solely for imparting information to that one structuring it. As Prosser and Trigwell, (1999) remind us, a good aspect of teaching in higher education is teachers' awareness of conceptions of teaching and its relevance to improving learning. Entwistle (2009, p.75) likewise argues that:

> Teaching is no longer seen as a set of techniques, but as an act of imagination that translates 'dead' information into the more engaging ways of thinking that bring it to life, creating an expanded awareness of the effects of teaching on learning. It encourages students to think for themselves and to be critical about both evidence and theory.

Kember (1997) demonstrated that the way a teacher conceives of the notion of teaching has an influence on his/her approach to teaching and thereby on students' approaches to learning and their learning outcomes. Biggs and Tang (2011) suggest that, to support meaningful learning, the teacher should offer the student the

opportunity to use higher-level cognitive activities (e.g. critical thinking), which, so goes the argument, may imply aligning their conceptions of teaching with teaching approaches that bring about these desirable outcomes. This view is supported by Gow and Kember (1993) who argue for the need for teachers to change their conceptions of teaching in order for student learning to be improved. It follows that teacher-centred orientations are usually felt to be ineffective because they are seen to encourage a student to adopt a passive approach to their studies, and thus can weaken a student's learning achievement (Brown and Atkins, 1988). This relation between teachers' conceptions of teaching and students' approaches to learning is discussed in more detail in chapter 4. Having said that, the important idea to hold on to here is that, in order to understand sufficiently teaching effectiveness in the HE context, we also need to understand the way a teacher conceives the meaning of this notion. Unless the teacher understands this relationship, one may suppose that the teachers' lack of awareness of the principles underpinning this concept may be considered detrimental to improving student learning.

3.3 Approaches to Teaching

As already intimated in the previous discussion, which highlighted the linkages between conceptions of teaching and the closely related notion of approaches to teaching, a final aspect of teaching practice is, of course, the approach the academics adopt to teach students. In this section, I shall briefly discuss a number of approaches followed by teachers in universities, and how the choice of a particular approach is influenced by the type of discipline, teachers' perception of the learning situation and of teaching. I will then highlight the impact of these approaches on

students' learning. I conclude by discussing the strategies that can be followed to encourage teachers to use the approach that is most likely to support students' learning.

In the research literature, it has been argued that one of the central attributes of good university teaching is teachers' commitment to apply an active teaching approach that supports learning (Hativa, 2000; Entwistle and Tait 1990; Arthur and Zelda, 1987, amongst others). It is suggested that it can be helpful if teachers are aware of their students' perceptions of, and preference for, certain teaching approaches used, and the potential influence this might have on students adopting a certain approach to learning. Indeed, Trigwell, Prosser, and Taylor (1999a & b) found that teachers' approaches to teaching are related to the quality of students' learning.

In universities, various approaches to teaching might be adopted by teachers. Interviews with twenty-four academics in physical science carried out by Trigwell, Prosser and Taylor (1994, p. 79) have revealed five different approaches to teaching embraced by those academics, each demonstrating a particular intention and strategy:

a) *'A teacher-focused strategy intended to transmit information to students':* Here the focus is on what the teachers do and on their intention of transmitting the knowledge of the subject to students.

b) *'A teacher-focused strategy intended to enable students to acquire the concepts of the discipline':* It is an approach that the teacher adopts to transmit the concepts of the subject and how they are related. However, the

approach does not require student involvement in the teaching-learning process.

c) *'A teacher/student interaction strategy intended to enable students to acquire the concepts of the discipline':* In this approach a teacher is more concerned about the student's involvement in the learning process. The objectives are to support the student in learning the main themes of a subject and to enable the student to establish connections between these aspects. This approach requires a student to take on a more active role in the learning process.

d) *'A student-focused strategy that allows students to develop their own conceptions':* The primary concern of this type of teaching approach is to support the learning performance. The teacher is keen to support the student in constructing his/her own understanding of the subject of study.

e) *'A student-focused strategy that allows students to change their conceptions':* The main aim of this approach is to transform students' understanding of the subject. The teacher who follows this approach focuses on training students to reconstruct their understanding of the contents so that they are able to produce a new hypothesis.

These five approaches can be broadly grouped into a teacher-focused transmission approach (a and b) and a student-focused conceptual change approach (c, d and e), and, of course, parallel the conceptions of teaching identified by Kember (1997) described earlier. Given that there is variation in the way teachers in the higher education context approach their teaching, it is important to look at whether teaching approaches adopted by teachers are related to teachers' disciplines and

whether teachers' perceptions of their teaching and learning situation can affect the way they approach their teaching.

Lindblom-Ylänne et al. (2006) and Lueddeke (2003) argue that teachers' choice of, or preference for, a particular approach can be affected by the nature of the subject they teach. Lindblom-Ylänne et al. (2006) and Neumann, Parry, and Becher (2002) point out that teachers from 'hard' disciplines (e.g. biology, astronomy, medicine, and engineering) were more likely to apply a teacher-focused transmission approach. Conversely, a student-focused conceptual change approach is more likely to be used by teachers from 'soft' disciplines (e.g. psychology, linguistics, education, sociology, history, geography). A hard discipline can be found in large lectures or workshop sessions and here the teacher would find it easier to present a large volume of materials to a large group of students, so in such a teaching context there is a clear lack of student to be professionally involved in the teaching-learning process. With the 'soft' disciplines that are based on technical professions that can be found in smaller groups or discussion groups, in such face-to-face teaching settings, the teacher is more likely to facilitate discussion and thereby the teaching approach used is to be of that one student-focused approach in which students are encouraged through this approach to teaching to take part in this process, to present their thoughts and be involved affectively in the learning process.

Another factor that affects the use of a particular approach is linked with teachers' perceptions of the learning situation, as identified in the following quotation (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999, p. 152):

> [teachers'] feeling of freedom and control over how and what they teach; their perceptions of the size of their classes; their views on how well they think their students can cope with the subject matter that they are teaching; how well they think their department values

teaching; and their perceptions of their own workloads are among the aspects of the context which they say relates to the way they approach their teaching.

Similarly, their perceptions of teaching are also showed to affect the approach to teaching. Trigwell and Prosser (1996a) found that one group of teachers, who viewed learning as a process of transmitting information in order to meet external demands, believed that teaching was a process of transmitting information to students and thereby their teaching approach was based on a teacher-focused orientation. Another group, who perceived of learning as a process of developing and changing students' conceptions, believed that teaching was an act of improving learning, and therefore their teaching approach was based on a student-focused orientation. As far as students' learning is concerned, it has been argued that there is a strong relation between approaches to teaching and students' approaches to learning (Trigwell, Prosser, and Waterhouse, 1999; Trigwell and Prosser, 1996b). This relation is addressed in the next chapter about students' perceptions of teaching approaches and its influence on their approaches to learning.

Since the teaching approach can affect students' learning, researchers are concerned with improving learning through encouraging a more learner-centred teaching approach (e.g. Ylänne et al., 2006; Trigwell and Prosser, 1996b; Biggs, 1989). Trigwell and Prosser (1996b) suggest that this goal can be achieved through assisting teachers to improve or change their perceptions of teaching and learning by encouraging them to enrol in well-designed programmes. Ylänne et al (2006) suggest that a learner-centred teaching approach is more likely to be adopted if the teaching context and courses do not encourage teachers to apply teaching methods that depend solely on transmitting subject information to students.

Finally, Biggs (1999) outlines a set of strategies to improve a teaching approach that supports a deep approach to learning: a) focusing on shaping teaching skills that enhance deep learning; b) minimising any elements of teaching approaches that encourage a surface approach to learning; c) creating a motivational learning context that promotes students' interest in the learning task through creating opportunities to involve them in the planning and delivery of the learning task; d) encouraging students to engage actively with a variety of learning activities that support deep learning (such as preparing and delivering a seminar); e) enhancing deep learning by adopting a teaching approach that recognises the students' prior knowledge and experience. Overall, these views together provide a way of thinking about teaching effectiveness. This is seen through a teacher's competency in applying a teaching approach where the learner is at the centre of the teaching process. This should aim to enhance the students' level of understanding of studying the subject, and should be the ultimate goal underpinning this approach to teaching.

3.4 Summary

To conclude, the central theme of § 3.1 of this chapter is the argument that encouraging students to apply cognitive learning skills, such as critical thinking, and have them play an active role in the learning process, enhances the students' understanding, and are thus among the main features of teaching effectiveness in the HE context. An effective learning environment requires a set of factors to be met. This includes, for example, that the teachers have a good understanding of the learning environment and its role in making the achievement of knowledge a constructive process. With regards to teaching methods and attributes of good

teachers, I argued that teaching effectiveness in higher education is related to teachers' awareness of applying the right form of teaching method in a way that helps students learn. On the subject of quality of curricula and attributes of good teachers, I argued that another facet of teaching effectiveness is teachers' ability to achieve subject-desired learning outcomes, and one way of making this happen is through planning a good curriculum that follows the principles of constructive alignment in curriculum design. Concerning student assessment, I argued that improving learning requires the teacher to apply the appropriate modes of assessment which discourage extrinsic motivation and dependency in learning. Such assessment practices should provide a student with meaningful feedback, promote the desired learning objectives the course intends to achieve, provide a more valid and reliable picture of students' learning competency, and, most importantly, assessment practice should be for lifelong learning. On the subject of evaluation of courses, I have argued in this last part of the 'teaching effectiveness' section that, in order to enhance student learning through the course evaluation process, students must be acknowledged as the primary stakeholders in this process. The evaluation of course quality has to be associated with the educational process. Students' perceptions of course quality (e.g. evaluation of teaching effectiveness) should be represented fairly. This requires an institutional culture that supports this process (e.g. one that informs the student of his/her input), otherwise students' feedback will be detrimental. In the last two sections, §§ 3.2 and 3.3, of this chapter, I have argued that individual teachers in the HE context have their own conceptions of teaching. And for improving student learning, teaching should be seen as facilitating student learning (student-centred orientation) (Kember, 1997), and this requires a shift in a

teacher's conception from one that teaching is solely for imparting information to that one structuring it. Further, as there are a number of teaching approaches followed by teachers in universities (Trigwell, Prosser, and Taylor, 1994), I have argued that the teaching approach the teacher should adopt to improve student learning is one related to a student-focused conceptual change approach. The following chapter reviews the literature concerning student experience.

CHAPTER 4
THE STUDENT EXPIERENCE

This chapter discusses the student learning experience. The chapter is divided into six related sections. The first section begins by exploring the concept of learning in the HE context as compared to learning at lower levels. The second section, addresses the concept of quality in learning and the conditions that are needed to achieve quality in student learning. Sections three, four and five discuss orientations, conceptions and approaches to learning respectively. The last section focuses on the influence of the learning environment on students' orientations, conceptions and approaches to learning. Initially, before discussing student learning in detail, there are two points I would like to draw the reader's attention to as I did in Chapter 3. The first point is that as will be shown later in this chapter, all discussed theories and practices towards enhancing the quality of student learning in higher education are strongly based on Western (e.g., the UK, US, Australia) research and theory. The question here, as we asked in the previous Chapter, is whether these Western theories and practices are appropriate and relevant for other educational research literature on student learning applied to higher education in Islamic countries (here, the Saudi HE context). As demonstrated with the teaching practice issue in the previous Chapter, a considerable volume of published studies describing the quality of learning and how it can be improved in the Islamic higher education context has largely been based upon Western studies theories and practices (e.g., Boyle, 2006; Rugh, 2002; Barber, et al. 2007 and Maroun, et al. 2008). These studies address Islamic, Arabic, Gulf and Saudi context respectively. Thus, the answer to the

previously stated question is that the issue of student learning in the Saudi Arabian HE context and how this topic is discussed and dealt with to improve the practice being introduced in this context are based on Western theories and practices.

The second point that I would like to address here as I did in the previous Chapter regarding the extent to which the very hierarchical structure of Saudi HE is compatible, supportive, or neutral towards improving student learning, As noted in sections 1.1 and 1.2, one of challenges facing this hierarchical system and its policy related specifically to the educational process was relatively recently identified as a lack of a mechanism to monitor and enhance the quality of student learning. As shown with the NCAAA policy to improve teaching practice, the same thing occurs with improving student learning; this was clearly indicated in the NCAAA's outlined recommendations where we found the commission is keen on and enthusiastic to follow and establish a good international practice for enhancing the quality of learning for those students by following and applying what is succeeding in Western institutions as good practice to enhance the quality of learning (see Appendix 4). Therefore, the following sections include a comprehensive review and discussion of student learning and how it can be improved such practice that emerged in the educational literature in Western countries (mainly the UK, US, Australia).

4.1 Learning in the Context of Higher Education

A common definition of learning among traditional psychologists is "relatively permanent changes in behaviour" and, in the school setting, learning has also been defined as "a relatively permanent change in verbal behaviour" (Schmeck, 1988, p. 320). These traditional definitions of learning are to some extent inadequate

for HE purposes (Brockbank and McGill, 1998): they assume that the concept of learning at higher levels differs from learning in earlier stages. According to Barnett (1990 p.149), "The learning that goes on in higher education justifies the label "higher" precisely because it refers to a state of mind over and above the conventional recipe or factual learning". Bartlett (as cited in Marton, Hounsell, and Entwistle, 1997) proposes that the concept of learning has to be defined in qualitative terms as a process of reconstruction of the meaning of the learning materials, rather than merely depending on memory as a 'storage mechanism' for reproducing the obtained knowledge, as this is perceived to be a quantitative form of learning. Commenting on a qualitative conception of learning, Dahlgren (as cited in Marton et al., 1997, p. 27), writes:

> It rejects the description of knowledge as discrete pieces of knowledge passed passively from teacher to learner, and tested in terms of whether or not the student can reproduce verbatim those elements. Instead of concerning itself with "how much is learned", it seeks to investigate "what is learned.

In this respect, Biggs (1994) points out that a quantitative form of learning is more about an accumulation of knowledge. In a learning context that promotes this conception of learning a good learner is one who is seen to have more knowledge and, at the same time, be able to reproduce this accurately. This can be found, for example, in the use of assessment methods that perceive the total score the student gains from an exam as an index of his/her competence in what is learned. Such practices are more likely to encourage a surface approach to learning. A more sophisticated view of learning is espoused by Barnett (1990), for example, who claims that the concept of learning in HE requires the student to apply various advanced skills towards the learning task, such as the ability to achieve a critical

distance from the knowledge obtained. This view – the importance of developing the disposition of a critic – builds on that of Bligh (1978), who argues that developing students' thoughts, attitudes and motivations in post-secondary education should be an educator's main objective, rather than focusing the learning process exclusively on the accumulation of information. Furthermore, learning in HE should be viewed as a period of transition for the student rather than a matter of acquiring information (Voss, 1987). This leads to a description of the characteristics of adult learners, as identified by Knowles (2000, p. 25), which is also instructive for learning in the context of HE. Knowles identifies the following attributes:

a) "As people mature, they become more self-directed"

b) "Adults have accumulated experiences that can be a rich resource for learning"

c) "Adults become ready to learn when they experience a need to know something"

d) "Adults tend to be less subject-centred than children; they are instead increasingly problem-centred"

e) "For adults, the most potent motivators are internal ones"

The above characteristics seem to suggest that adult students in HE have their own motivations for learning, which influence their approaches to studying.

4.2 Quality of Learning

This part of the chapter continues the discussion by focusing on the notion of "quality" in learning in the HE context. There are two objectives in discussing this issue: first, to understand the general characteristics of quality in learning and,

second, to highlight the necessary conditions to achieve quality in student learning. Discussing these two objectives helps us to develop a clearer understanding of the ideal type of learning that should be applied in the HE context.

Speaking about the quality of learning in the HE context, Harvey and Green (1993) describe quality as a transformative process consisting of two aspects: enhancing student performance and empowering the student's role in the learning process. Indeed, the literature suggests that high-quality learning may be facilitated by involving the student in the learning process in terms of thinking as well as action; the learning process is in itself integral and should be seen as both a transformative phase and a way of enabling the student to establish a link between practice and reflection via the learning process (Brockbank and McGill, 1998). For this, the students should be helped to have a clear perspective on what they are studying, why and how they are studying it (Chambers, 1992). This emphasises the importance of HE's role in ensuring the quality of student learning. According to Nightingale and O'Neil (1994), the aim of university education is to develop both personal and social qualities, and intellectual qualities, and therefore they argue that the educational process should develop communication skills, problem-solving abilities, interpersonal skills, and planning and strategic thinking along with the critical and logical skills of evaluation. Commenting on university education, Dearing (1997, p. 13) suggests that it should,

> inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society and achieve personal fulfilment.

Accordingly, this leads to a more detailed discussion of the characteristics of high-quality learning in HE at the individual level. Vermetten *et al.* (1999),

Nightingale and O'Neil (1994) and Ramsden (2003) identify these characteristics as: a deep approach to learning; a high level of self-regulation in learning; problem-solving skills; technical skills; a high level of critical thinking skills in studying the learning materials; and the student's ability to create new knowledge and to make more logical connections between old and new knowledge on a subject. Having considered some characteristics of the quality of learning, it can be argued that the quality of learning is "profoundly affected by the approach to learning that a student takes, and that this in turn is affected by, among other things, quality of teaching and forms of assessment" (Chambers, 1992, p.142). The impact of such elements of the educational process on students' orientations, conceptions and approaches to learning and, thereby, their quality of learning is discussed in some detail later in this chapter. It is reasonable now to look at the various conditions that must be satisfied in order to achieve these characteristics of quality in student learning. This can be done at the individual level – i.e. that of the student – and at the institutional level. According to Nightingale and O'Neil (1994, pp.56–57), high-quality learning occurs under the following various conditions:

a) *'High-quality learning occurs when the student is cognitively and emotionally ready to meet the demands of the learning task'*. Nightingale and O'Neil (1994) suppose that, in designing a learning programme, readiness is an important issue and it is therefore useless to ask a student to undertake a learning task before he/she has the appropriate skills to deal with it. Hence, the organisers of learning programmes at the institutional level need to assess whether students have these necessary skills and offer appropriate opportunities to learn them.

b) *'High-quality learning occurs when the learner has a reason for learning'.* This emphasises the importance of increasing students' motivation in their learning environment. Nightingale and O'Neil (1994) believe that learning programmes must be designed to mesh with students' past learning experiences, and that applied assessment methods should enhance the quality of student learning rather than just encouraging the memorization of facts.

c) *'High-quality learning occurs when the learner explicitly relates previously acquired knowledge to the new information'.* This requires both the programme planners and the academic teachers to encourage students to use past knowledge of a subject and apply it to the new information.

d) *'High-quality learning occurs when the learner is active during the learning'.* This requires more interaction between the student and the learning task. Nightingale and O'Neil (1994) suggest that, in order to apply this approach, it is necessary to introduce various types of activities through the learning process. For instance, a lecture must be presented in a way that is purposeful and meaningful for the student.

e) *'High-quality learning occurs when the environment offers adequate support for the learner'.* This emphasises the importance of the learning environment in providing the right support for the student, such as a study skills programme.

Indeed, as was shown earlier, the concept of learning at higher levels differs from learning in the earlier stages. The key idea to hold on to here is that, in the higher education context, to have high-quality learning there is a need to fully understand the characteristics of quality in learning and the conditions that must be

satisfied in order to achieve these characteristics. This has to be applied at both the individual and the institutional level.

4.3 Orientations to Learning

Another equally important aspect of learning in HE is the student's orientation to learning. The importance of this aspect is that it leads to an understanding of how students deal with certain learning situations in the HE context (Webber, 2004). Beaty, Gibbs, and Morgan (1997, p.76) define orientation to learning as:

> All those attitudes and aims which express the student's individual relationship with a course of study and the university. It is the collection of purposes which form the personal context for the individual student's learning. The idea of an orientation assumes that students have an active relationship with their studying. From the point of view of learning orientation, success and failure is judged in terms of the extent to which students fulfil their own aims

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) grouped four different orientations that a student might have to a learning task:

a) *'The meaning orientation':* Students with this orientation apply a deep approach to the learning task, relating ideas and using evidence during the learning process. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) also argue that the student is more likely to be comprehensive in his/her learning and have an intrinsic motivation to complete the learning task.

b) *'The reproducing orientation':* Students with this orientation are more likely to apply a surface approach. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) argue that the student with this orientation is more likely to be disorganized and unprepared

to begin the learning task. The student's main motivations in completing the learning task are both fear of failure and extrinsic motivations.

c) *'The achieving orientation':* Students with this orientation are more likely to apply a strategic approach towards the learning task. The student's main motivations in completing the learning task are associated with both elements of achievement and extrinsic motivations.

d) *'The non-academic orientation'*: Students with this orientation have a negative attitude towards learning tasks and a disorganized method of studying. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) report that students with this orientation are mainly concerned with social or sporting activities rather than academic tasks.

In his case study of students' orientations to learning, Eison (1982) found that students at the college level can be classified into two groups based on the issues of learning and grading. He identified one group, students who consider their learning environment as a resource of knowledge that is essential for them at both a personal and a professional level, as being learning-oriented. He identified the second group as being grade-oriented: these students are less concerned about the learning context itself, as their primary aim is to pass exams in order to get certificates and become professionals. Eison (1982) argues that learning-oriented students have a positive attitude towards their learning: they are imaginative, self-sufficient, and more likely to have a collaborative and participative style of learning than grade-oriented students, who are less likely to apply such attitudes to their learning. In brief, together these views of learning orientations provide important insights into how the

student learning experience may be influenced by the way students deal with certain learning situations.

4.4 Conceptions of Learning

Having discussed students' orientations to learning, this part of the chapter addresses students' conceptions of learning. It argues that conceptions of learning may limit the approach students can adopt to learning (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999). To better understand this notion, Marton et al. (1993) identify six qualitatively different forms of conceptions of learning based on qualitative research with HE students, which are:

a) *'Increasing one's knowledge'*: This form describes learning as a process of collecting or consuming information. The knowledge obtained through this process of accumulation is quantitative and discrete and more likely not to be easily applied in future studies.

b) *'Memorising and reproducing':* This category describes learning as a way of reproducing memorised knowledge for a test or performance. The difference between the previous process of experiencing learning and this is that learning depends on the formal learning situation in which the process of reproducing the memorised knowledge is a requirement.

c) *'Learning as applying':* This aspect of learning requires the student to use or to produce some of the obtained knowledge when it is required.

d) *'Learning as understanding':* This aspect of learning, as well as the following two aspects, emphasises the importance of the student's role in making knowledge meaningful.

e) *'Learning as seeing something in a different way':* This concept of learning emphasises the student's use of new ways of seeing as well as dealing with the learning situation. Marton *et al.* (1993) propose that learning situations are not just restricted to studying subjects or course materials; rather, students should be encouraged to use their view of things outside the learning situation, and this can be based on learning material accessed within the learning context.

f) *Learning as changing as a person.* This form focuses on how learning can contribute to the student's character. Marton *et al.* argue that when a student uses new ways of learning as well as of seeing things, this will result in changing him/her as a person.

As there are variations in students' conceptions of learning, in this respect, Prosser and Trigwell (1999) suggest that students who perceive learning as merely memorization of facts in their study are less likely to focus on meaning and understanding. On the other hand, students who consider learning as a process of extracting meaning are likely to approach their studies looking for the meaning to be extracted from the learning materials. Thus, it is argued that learning in HE may be considered in terms of two models: the passive model, in which a learner's perception of knowledge is a matter of fact, in that information needs to be memorised in the form in which it is presented; and the active model, where the learner's role is fundamental to the learning process — this process is more about promoting the learner's performance in order to construct his/her own understanding of the learning materials. These two models of learning enrich our understanding of whether learning in HE should be seen as a constructive process or a reproductive

one. When learning is seen as a constructive process, it describes a student's construction of knowledge on a subject, hence making learning more meaningful and more likely to enhance a student's level of understanding. In contrast, when learning is seen as a reproductive process, the focus is on reproducing the obtained information, which is less likely to result in enhancing a student's level of understanding of that information (Vermetten *et al*., 1999; Wierstra *et al.*, 2003). In spite of the fact that learning in higher education should be for understanding rather than solely depending on memorizing the learning material, it can be argued that learning as a reproductive process – *"rote learning"*–is still necessary for enhancing students' level of understanding, according to Entwistle (2009, p.32), who argues that "memorizing often plays a supportive role in building up initial understanding, but also later on, ensuring that understanding is firmly lodged in the memory".

4.5 Approaches to Learning

Having considered students' conceptions of learning, it is also important to look at students' approaches to studying. According to Entwistle and Peterson (2004, p.414), the term 'approaches to learning' was introduced "to signal how intention and process were combined in students' learning". Initially, it is argued that a student's adoption of certain approaches to learning basically depends on his/her intentions in dealing with the learning task (Entwistle, 2009). Two approaches are discussed in the literature review. The first is the reproductive strategy, where "the student gives back prescribed material intact"; in contrast, the second one is the transformational strategy, where "the student ranges widely over material and injects his own meaning and interpretations" (Biggs, 1976, p. 70). Marton (1976) identifies

two similar approaches. The first of these is the deep approach, in which the student is concerned with understanding the learning task — this requires an active approach to learning. This approach is associated with the student's ability to make connections between different points within the learning task. The second approach is the surface approach, in which the student is more concerned with meeting assessment requirements. In contrast with the deep learning approach, Marton claims that the surface approach represents passive learning. This approach can be associated with a certain attitude: one student in Marton's study stated, "I just read straight through without looking back at anything" (1976, p. 129). Marton emphasises that the student who applies a deep approach to learning is best at constructing his/her own knowledge based on logical thinking and is prepared to learn more than is required for the learning task. Accordingly, the student is more likely to be successful in both qualitative and quantitative learning. It is important, however, to note that student adoption of the deep approach varies between contrasting disciplines, according to Entwistle (2009, p. 37), who argues that the deep approach to learning cannot apply in the same form to each subject. Nevertheless, and irrespective of major differences between certain disciplines, e.g. physics and history, the author states that:

> Students adopting a deep approach will be looking for patterns and connections, and viewing the subject as a whole; they will also be alert to exceptions, looking for alternative interpretations and be aware of the types of learning the subject requires of them.

Having distinguished between approaches to learning, Entwistle (2009) suggests a set of factors that may influence students' approaches to learning. For the deep approach, this might occur through: a) an intrinsic motivation and interest in the subject; b) an adequate prior knowledge to link the new ideas and to make sense of

them. For the surface approach: a) a lack of interest in the subject; b) a high level of anxiety and fear of failure; c) teaching and assessment methods that lead to memorization or reproduction of the learning materials. The views presented thus far provide evidence that, to establish whether the student had a good learning experience, we need to acknowledge that in the learning process the ultimate goal of a particular learning approach has to be based on understanding the learning task. One way to achieve this requires the student to apply a deep approach to learning.

4.6 The Influence of the Learning Environment on Students' Orientations, Conceptions and Approaches to Learning

The objective here is to understand how orientations, conceptions and approaches to learning are affected by aspects of the learning environment, e.g. approaches of teaching. It should be acknowledged that there are various factors that might influence a student's learning orientation and approach to studying. Students' learning characteristics are an important factor in whether they develop a meaning orientation to studying (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983; Lizzio, Wilson, and Simons 2002; Wierstra, et al., 2003). Nevertheless, this study will not discuss these other factors as they are not related to the study's objectives.

Regarding how learning orientation is affected by the learning environment, Ramsden (1997, 2003) argues that when a study programme is more concerned with a heavy workload associated with inappropriate teaching and assessment methods, it encourages reproductive learning. He found that departments that give a student more freedom to learn in a way where he/she can construct his/her own understanding are likely to lead a student to apply a meaning orientation towards a

learning task. Conversely, when a department does not implement such a style of teaching and assessment that promotes a meaning orientation, it is more likely that a student will apply a reproducing orientation towards the learning task. This is illustrated in a case study by Meyer and Parsons (1989), which showed that that there was an association between the meaning orientation adopted in studying and the learning environment. This indicates that the type of learning environment can have an influence on students' orientation to studying. A case study carried out by Wierstra *et al.* (2003) showed that studying in a constructive learning environment encouraged students to take a constructive approach to studying. As a result of studying in this environment, the students were influenced to shift their prior reproducing orientation to studying to a meaning orientation. These examples suggest that the type of learning environment, whether reproductive or constructive, can influence a student's orientation to studying.

With respect to the impact of the learning environment on students' conceptions of learning, in the literature it is argued that the learning environment has an influence on students' perceptions of learning (Ramsden et al., 1989; Trigwell, *et al.,*1999b). This can be seen, for example, in the case of students' experiences of teaching where the focus is on transmitting subject information to students rather than promoting understanding. As Dart, *et al.* (2000, p.268) argues, "If teachers operate from quantitative perspectives on teaching and learning, then it is highly likely that their students will hold quantitative views on learning". In their empirical study, Trigwell and Ashwin (2006) reported that students' perceptions of their learning environment were aligned to their conceptions of learning. The study identified two groups of students. One group held a conception of learning that was

aligned with purposes of learning in a higher education context, e.g. learning for understanding rather than for testing the obtained knowledge. These students perceived their learning environment to be supportive of their learning in terms of: clarity of goals and standards; good teaching; appropriate workload and assessment methods. As a result of this relation between their conceptions of learning and their learning environment, the study found that those students reported they adopted a deeper approach to learning. On the other hand, the second group of students held conceptions of learning that were less in alignment with the purposes of learning in a higher education context, and thereby they did not perceive their learning environment to be supportive of their learning. The study found that those students were more likely to adopt a surface approach to learning as a result of how they perceived conceptions of learning and studying in a higher education learning context. Thus, for the learning environment to help its students to perceive the concept of learning as a process of developing meaning and understanding, Dart, *et al.* (2000) suggest that teaching and assessment methods have to be congruent, in the sense that the students deal with learning as a process for searching for meaning and understanding and not for just reproducing facts. Through the teaching-learning process the teacher should foster a deep approach to learning by promoting high cognitive learning skills (e.g. problem solving), besides providing a helpful and supportive learning environment (e.g. having a good relationship with the students that supports meaningful learning).

With regard to how learning approaches are affected by the learning environment, in general terms, there are various factors that might influence a student's approach to studying, such as his or her previous studying experience and

interest in the learning task, the subject content, the teaching methods used by their instructors, and the academic department's atmosphere (Ramsden, 1997). The main concern here is generally the learning environment's influence on a student's approach to studying. In a longitudinal case study focused on learning approaches in the HE context, Vermetten *et al.* (1999) reported that, in the first semester, the students' evaluations of the learning activities and the way in which the instructional activities were directed were found to be ineffective and low. In contrast, in the third semester, the same participants evaluated these activities as effective. Vermetten *et al.* (1999) pointed out that the students began to use different learning strategies as they became more self-regulating in their learning and more likely to apply the deep approach to studying. Once again, the authors related these changes in students' learning strategies to the changes that occurred in the educational process in this learning environment. Such changes can be related to the way that the learning environment improves the teaching-learning process. Ramsden (1997) argues that, when teaching and assessment methods are directed at enhancing a student's level of understanding, the student is more likely to adopt a deep approach to learning. Eley (1992) found that, when there was clarity in terms of objectives, the students participating were more likely to apply a deep approach to studying. In this respect, Vermetten *et al.* (1999) conclude that, when the learning environment provides the right support in meeting students' needs in relation to their learning process – for instance, by providing guidelines for studying – such actions can lead students to apply a meaning approach to studying.

Following this further, the coming paragraphs discuss specifically the influence of the teaching approach mode on the student's approach to learning. As

explained earlier in this chapter, learning should be considered as a constructive rather than a reproductive process (Vermetten *et al.,* 1999; Wierstra *et al.,* 2003). Therefore, certain teaching approaches are more likely to contribute to a student's level of understanding than others. Trigwell *et al*. (1999b) found that teachers who reported that their main focus was to transmit subject information, the students were more likely to adopt a surface approach to studying. In contrast, when teachers reported that their main concern was to help students construct subject information in order to enhance their students' understanding– for instance, by encouraging self-directed learning, assessing students' conceptual change, and promoting conversation in lectures – students were less likely to adopt a surface approach to learning. Similarly, Kember and Gow (1994) argue that, when a teacher believes that his/her main role in the teaching-learning process is merely to transmit information to students, students are not encouraged to adopt a meaning approach to learning. As Biggs and Tang (2007, p.54) argue, "where the teaching methods do not directly encourage the appropriate learning activities, students can easily 'escape' by engaging in inappropriate learning activities that become a surface approach to learning". Thus, as was pointed out in chapter 3, good teaching should be focused on involving students in the construction of knowledge. Here, the teacher plays an important role as a facilitator of students' learning, supporting them in constructing their understanding of a subject. Thus, the teaching approaches, as explained in chapter 3, that promote the student's construction of knowledge and thereby encourage the deep approach to learning, are approaches c, d, and particularly f.

Another significant factor that can influence students' approaches to learning is the teacher's awareness of his/her students' perceptions of the teaching approach

used. Entwistle and Tait (1990) found that students who followed a deep approach to learning preferred teaching methods that promoted this mode of learning, whereas students who followed the surface approach to learning preferred a mode of teaching that made use of the information-transmitting approach to teaching. Similarly, Hativa (2000) identifies students' perspectives on the information-transmitting approach to teaching, finding that not all students preferred this mode of teaching. Students' perceptions were classified into three groups: the first group was in favour of the information-transmitting approach and was described as a highly extrinsically motivated group whose main motivation was to obtain high grades. The students who preferred this mode of teaching said it eased the learning task and did not require a high level of critical thinking in the learning process. The second group was in favour of a teaching approach that supported their learning in order to overcome exam anxiety. The third group was classified as having a high level of intrinsic motivation and preferred a student-centred approach that required self-regulation in learning, encouraging critical thinking and promoting material integration. There is, therefore, variation in students' orientations to studying, and a link between learning orientations and studying approaches at the level of the individual student. In a case study by Rossum and Schenk (1984), differences were found among student participants in terms of their orientation to learning, related to the learning approaches they applied to the learning task. Rossum and Schenk (1984) found that students who applied a surface approach to the learning task considered the concept of learning as a matter of increasing their knowledge by memorising it, whereas the group who applied the deep approach to learning described it as a way

of extracting the meaning or as an interpretative process that allowed them to construct the meaning of the learning task.

Collectively, the views presented in this section outline a critical role for aspects of the learning environment in relation to the student's orientation, conception of learning, and approach to studying, which may have a negative influence on their student learning experience. Thus, for adult learning to be enhanced, there are changes that have to occur through the educational process that will lead a student to apply a meaning orientation towards the learning task, and for their concept of learning to be perceived as a process of searching for meaning and understanding in a way that fosters a deep approach to learning. Otherwise, the ultimate goal of achieving high quality in adult learning may not be accomplished.

4.7 Conclusion

To sum up, the main issues central to this discussion are the concepts of learning and students' experiences in HE. I argued that the concept of learning at higher levels has its own characteristics, and differs from learning in earlier stages; and adult students in HE have their own motivations for learning, which influence their approaches to studying. There is a set of conditions that must be implemented to ensure quality in learning, such as an appropriate learning environment to support students during their studying. In addition, understanding students' attitudes toward studying in terms of their orientations, conceptions and learning approaches was also examined, and it seems clear that there are differences among the views and practices of students concerning their approaches to studying. Finally, I argued that the learning environment in the HE context, e.g. teaching and assessment methods

used, can have a direct influence on students' orientations and conceptions as well as their approach to studying.

CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Objectives of the Study

As was mentioned in the introduction and background chapter, the overarching objective of this study is to explore and describe the present engagement within Saudi higher education with the recommendations made by National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) directed toward the enhancement of the quality of student learning, with the intention of identifying whether the attributes of the Saudi higher education system are consonant with these recommendations. This overarching objective is further divided into the following four more specific questions;

a) What are the administrators' (faculty deans') perceptions of the extent to which the recommendations made by the NCAAA have been adopted in two public Saudi universities?

b) How do the teachers perceive their teaching practice, considering comparisons between the two institutions?

c) How do the students perceive their learning experience, again considering comparisons between the two institutions?

d) What do these findings suggest about the likely effectiveness or impact of recommendations made by the NCAAA on institutional practices and quality of students' learning across the two participating institutions?

The above questions drive the data collected, which constitute the empirical base of the study.

5.2 Research Design

This is a mixed method design study which combined the use of semi-structured interviews (a qualitative method) with the use of a survey (a quantitative method). Bringing together the strengths of each research method, this research approach seemed most appropriate to answer the research questions. Bryman (2004) suggests that using mixed methods enhances the validity of research conclusions in cases where both methods provide broadly consistent or trustworthy data. Creswell and Clark (2007) add that mixed method approaches provide a better understanding of the problems being researched than is possible when applying only one approach, and Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) argue that mixed methods can be used to measure different facets of a phenomenon. It can be used to increase the generalizability of the research findings and in the same time it can yield important results to inform theory and practice (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). These advantages of applying a mixed method design helped the researcher to describe different internal stakeholders' (deans, teachers and students) perceptions and experiences of whether the current teaching and learning practices in two Saudi public universities are congruent with the recommendations made by NCAAA. The comparison was achieved by analysing faculty deans' and the two managers' of the quality assurance unit experiences and perceptions of this process, comparing these to those of teachers, and students. Notwithstanding the above-noted advantages of mixed method approaches to research, Creswell and Clark, (2007), argue that mixed methods research was challenging, requiring enough time and resources to collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data.

The research design incorporated three phases:

a)   A literature review in three parts: 1) on the concept of quality in HE (Chapter Two); 2) on the teachers' practice and its relation to students' learning and understanding (issues addressed were: teaching effectiveness, conceptions and approaches to teaching) (Chapter Three); 3) on the students' learning in HE and their experiences of aspects of the educational process and its potential influence on their conceptions, orientations and approaches to learning (Chapter Four).

b)   Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the deans of the participating faculties. The objective of conducting interviews with faculty deans was firstly to explore deans' perceptions of the extent to which selected recommendations in relation to the teaching-learning process made by NCAAA had been implemented at their own university, and secondly to identify from their perspectives any potential obstacles that they might encounter during this implementation process. Similarly, the objective of conducting interviews with the two managers of quality assurance unit was to understand three main aspects of their function: the role each of these two units plays in delivering the NCAAA objectives, the process each unit follows to assure these objectives are being achieved, and the potential obstacles that each unit might encounter in fulfilling NCAAA recommended policy that might diminish the quality of student learning.

c)   A survey involving two groups of stakeholders (teachers and students). The teachers' survey focused on the following two factors:

> i.   Identifying teachers' perspectives of their orientation toward teaching and the teaching strategies, they applied.

ii. Identifying teachers' role in fulfilling NCAAA objectives for improving the quality of teaching in order to enhance student learning.

The students' survey aimed to identify students' experiences of the teaching and learning processes they were engaged in through:

i. Identifying their perceptions of the quality of aspects of the educational process (i.e., teaching and assessment methods);

ii. Identifying their perceptions of their learning environment and the influence that these might have on enhancing or inhabiting the quality of learning (i.e., providing assistance when needed by individuals).

iii. Identifying their approaches to learning while studying (i.e., deep or surface approaches of learning)

5.3 Gaining Access and Sample Selection

All participants, deans, faculty and students, came from 11 different faculties selected from two public universities in two distant provinces of Saudi Arabia[17]. To maintain the anonymity of both institutions and the respondents, the two universities were labelled as University X and University Z respectively. University X has over 40,000 students and 16 faculties, while University Z has over 16,000 students and 11 faculties, Appendix 1. The reason for selecting these two particular public universities from among the total of 24 public Saudi universities is that the researcher has experience of studying and working in these two districts of Saudi

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[17] All three groups of participants (deans, teachers and students) of the study were male, which is due to the gender-segregated culture in Saudi Arabia. Given that the researcher is also male, it was easier for him to gain access to these participants.

Arabia. The choice of institutions, therefore, was not a function of the research questions, nor was it based on any performance-related data of the two institutions. The selection of the two universities could also be referred to as a 'sample of convenience'. The researcher obtained permission in full from both universities prior to the start of the research. The following tables present an overview of the nature of the 11 participating faculties and their composition (teachers and students) selected from the two public universities.

Table 1: Number of teaching staff of 5 participated faculties at University X (2010-2011)

No	Faculty	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Lecturer	Teaching Assistant	Teacher	Total
1	Computer Sciences	2	11	29	29	21	0	92
2	Management and Financial Sciences	3	7	29	0	28	0	67
3	Humanities	6	10	33	4	13	0	66
4	Engineering	0	9	34	18	15	0	76
5	Science	5	33	83	18	33	0	172

Table 2: Number of enrolled Bachelor degree students of 5 participated faculties at University X (2010-2011)

No.	Faculty	Number of enrolled students
1	Computer Sciences	1440
2	Management and Financial Sciences	867
3	Humanities	176
4	Engineering	2022
5	Science	1003

Table 3: Number of teaching staff of 6 participated faculties at University Z (2010-2011)

No.	Faculty	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Lecturer	Teaching Assistant	Teacher	Total
1	Education and Arts	5	15	82	26	33	12	173
2	Medicine	4	1	7	6	33	0	51
3	Computer Sciences	1	1	12	10	21	0	45
4	Engineering	6	5	5	5	10	0	31
5	Science	10	11	43	15	13	1	93
6	Applied Medical Sciences	1	1	4	14	18	0	38

Table 4: Number of enrolled Bachelor degree students of 6 participated faculties at University Z (2010-2011)

No.	Faculty	Number of enrolled students
1	Education and Arts	3247
2	Medicine	105
3	Computer Sciences	131
4	Engineering	184
5	Science	782
6	Applied Medical Sciences	162

5.3.1 Interviews generating qualitative data: the participants

Semi structured interviews were carried out with 11 faculties deans and two managers of quality assurance units, and were analysed qualitatively. As mentioned above, each of the two participating universities gave me an approved letter to conduct the study. This letter did not place any restrictions regarding the choice of faculties from which I could collect the data. I chose 11 different disciplines as shown in Tables 5 and 6. I then visited the faculties and met their deans to whom I explained the objectives of the study. I asked the deans to take part in the interview and many happily expressed their willingness. Tables 5 and 6 show the actual

number of interviewees. The tables also indicate why some deans were not involved in this process.

Table 5: The participants at University X

No	Name of Faculty	Position of Interviewee	Interviewed
**University X**		
1	Computer Sciences	Dean	Yes
2	Management and Financial Sciences	Deputy Dean	Yes
3	Humanities	Deputy Dean	Yes
4	Science	Deputy Dean	Yes
5	Engineering	Dean	No, because the dean was away from the university during the period of conducting the interviews. His deputy was not approached due to the fact that it was dean's responsibilities for implementing the NCAAA's recommended policy
6	Quality Assurance Unit	Dean	Yes

Table 6: The participants at University Z

No	Name of Faculty	Position of Interviewee	Interviewed
**University Z**		
7	Engineering	Dean	Yes
8	Science	Dean	Yes
9	Applied Medical Sciences	Dean	Yes
10	Computer Sciences	Dean	No, because the dean was unavailable during the period of conducting the interviews. His deputy was not approached due to the fact that it was

			the dean's responsibility to implement the NCAAA's recommended policy
11	Medicine	Dean	No, the dean declined to be interviewed for unexplained reasons. The deputy was not approached as the responsibility for NCAAA recommendations does not extend to the deputy in this faculty.
12	Education and Arts	Deputy Dean	No, the interviewee failed to attend two pre-arranged interview sessions during the period of conducting the interviews.
13	Quality Assurance Unit	Dean	Yes

Of the initially selected sample of 13 interviewees, 9 were interviewed. 5 were from University X (one Faculty Dean, three Faculty Deputy Deans and one Quality Assurance unit Dean) and 4 from University Z (three Faculty Deans and one Quality Assurance unit Dean), all with responsibilities for implementing the NCAAA's recommended policy to improve the quality of education.

5.3.2 Surveys generating quantitative data: the participants

For the surveys, which generated quantitative data, the sampling strategy adopted was quota sampling of teachers and undergraduate students from 11 different faculties from these two universities. The quota sampling approach is based on two criteria (Creswell, 2003): First, the sample should be restricted to certain aspects (e.g. to the year of study). Second, the process of selecting participants

should be random. Both requirements were followed during the research process. The targeted sample was restricted to undergraduate students who were in their last two years of studying. Furthermore, all students were selected randomly from this group. The purpose of adopting the quota sampling approach was to allow to some extent for generalisations of research findings to be made in the context of the population (Creswell, 2003).

The reason for concentrating on undergraduate students was that undergraduate education is the focus of the NCAAA initiative launched in 2004. It is of benefit to the research to focus on undergraduate students who are in their last two years of studying because this group will have had more experiences of the teaching-learning process compared to students in the earlier stages of their studying. The initial sample I approached for the survey included 100 teachers and 500 undergraduate students from 11 different faculties spread equally across the two universities (i.e. 50 teachers, 250 undergraduate students from each participating University). The participants are representative of the 11 faculties that participated in this research:

University X

1. Faculty of Computer Sciences

2. Faculty of Management and Financial Sciences

3. Faculty of Humanities

4. Faculty of Engineering

5. Faculty of Science

University Z

6. Faculty of Education and Arts

7. Faculty of Medicine

8. Faculty of Computer Sciences

9. Faculty of Engineering

10. Faculty of Science

11. Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences

5.4 Research Methods

This section presents a detailed description of the two methods used for data collection: the qualitative method of the semi-structured interviews and the quantitative method of the survey.

5.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

The first of the two research methods used was the semi-structured interview. Interviews were conducted to gather data from the deans of the 11 participating faculties and the two managers of the quality assurance unit at the two universities. The purpose was to understand the extent to which selected recommendations made by NCAAA had been implemented at their own university.

Denscombe (2005) argues that a semi-structured interview provides detailed information, which, in the present case, gives the researcher a good understanding of how the educational improvement process at these two universities functions in terms of delivering NCAAA objectives. It also provides valuable insight into how the managers of the quality assurance units perceive the current efforts to improve the educational process and their potential influence on enhancing the quality of student learning. The interviewing process gives interviewees a space to express and

develop their view of the discussed issue. In this study, the interviewees were asked to comment in detail about the procedure they followed to ensure that the NCAAA's recommended policy was met. The interviews also identified the administrators' perceptions of any potential obstacles that they might encounter in seeking to fulfil the NCAAA criteria.

Denscombe (2005) argues that recording the interview may inhibit interviewees from expressing their real view. Indeed, before each interview started I asked the interviewee if he generally approved the interview to be recorded. I noticed that the majority of the interviewees were not happy for the interviews to be recorded. I therefore made use of field notes during the interview, instead of digitally recording it. Following Denscombe's advice, and in order to maximise the reliability of the collected data, all interviewees were reassured of their anonymity to encourage them to talk as freely as possible.

The researcher applied the following two steps to enhance the quality of the semi-structured interview. First, at the pre-piloting stage, as Creswell (2003) suggests, the key participating interviewees were identified purposefully (the deans of the participating faculties and quality assurance managers) based on their ability to provide an overall picture of the present engagement with the recommendations made by NCAAA (directed toward the enhancement of the quality of the educational process). I believe that this group, owing to the importance of their management positions, are a key source of information in answering the research questions. Second, as Denscombe (2005) recommends, I informed all participants before the interview started of the objectives of this research and the topics that would be discussed during the interviews process by giving the interviewee an overview of

key issues to be discussed. This meant that the interviewee was encouraged to develop his ideas and speak widely on the issues being raised by the researcher. Also I informed all participants of the importance of their involvement in the interview.

To enable me to draft the interview questions, I conducted a preliminary interview via phone with the two managers of the quality assurance unit in both universities in January 2011. These interviews were aimed at achieving two objectives: First, to identify the process that each unit followed in order to achieve the NCAAA objectives; second, to identify the evaluation process that each unit applied to review the obstacles that might prevent the accomplishment of these objectives. The outcomes from these interviews helped me to prepare the final draft for the semi-structured interviews with the deans of faculties and the quality assurance managers. The language used for conducting the semi-structured interviews was Arabic as it is the mother language for all interviewees, including myself.

The semi-structured interviews with the deans of the faculties focused on four related issues addressed by 23 open-ended questions as featured in Appendix 5. Those questions were designed to identify the process that the faculties follow to meet the recommendations by NCAAA. The structure and the order of these issues were as follows:

a) The faculty's role in improving the quality of aspects of the educational process (i.e. teaching and assessment methods) in line with NCAAA's recommendations (8 questions).

b) The faculty's role in promoting the practice of students' evaluation of the educational process (8 questions).

c) The common approach that the faculty followed to take account of students' evaluation of the educational process (3 questions).

d) The relationship between the faculty and quality assurance unit in fulfilling NCAAA's objectives to enhance student learning (4 questions).

The semi-structured interviews for quality assurance managers also focused on four related issues addressed by 21 open-ended questions as shown in Appendix 6. Those questions were designed to identify the process that each quality assurance unit follows in order to fulfil NCAAA objectives. The four issues were:

a) The role that each quality assurance unit adopts towards the fulfilment of NCAAA recommended policy to improve the educational process along with assuring these objectives have been met in each faculty (7 questions).

b) The unit's role in promoting the practice of students' evaluation of the educational process, along with assuring the credibility of this process (8 questions).

c) The strategies that each quality assurance unit follows in order to improve the quality of the educational process (3 questions).

d) The nature of the relationship between the quality assurance unit and each faculty's management, and the relationship between the quality assurance unit and the NCAAA agency (to explore how the recommended principles outlined by the NCAAA can be delivered and reassessed to assure its objectives are met) (3 questions).

5.4.2 Semi-structured interviews: data collection and analysis methods

An interview schedule was followed (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The interview schedule consisted of a set of open-ended and probing questions. The protocol the researcher followed at the beginning of each interview was to explain the general purpose of the research. The interview then sought to identify from the participant's perspective the extent to which the recommendations made by the NCAAA had been adopted in his faculty. I took into account Davies' (2007) advice on the importance of the researcher being active during the interview process. He states, *"An interview is a conversation with a purpose"* (p.164). Hence, the conversation was conducted in the manner of an exploratory discussion in order to identify each interviewee's view of the present engagement with the recommendations made by NCAAA.

Two types of probing questions identified by Patton (1990), and cited in Maykut and Morehouse (1994), were used throughout the interview process. The first was a detail-oriented question, such as "As a manager, what do you think of the current procedure that the NCAAA follows to improve the educational process?" The second was a question designed to encourage the interviewee to elaborate further on the issue being addressed. For example, "Can you please give an example of programmes that this faculty offers for your academic teachers to improve their quality of teaching as recommended by NCAAA policy?" Section 6.1 details a range of questions asked during the interview process along with a set of responses provided by the deans and the managers of the QA unit relating to the outlined issues, as highlighted in earlier sections.

The analysis of qualitative data was based on data reduction and interpretation (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p.114). The interviews were coded and analysed based on the seven categories listed in section 1.3. The coding process followed four steps: (a) Reading the field notes linked to each category and clustering them into groups; (b) Comparing and contrasting the categories within and between the two universities; (c) Building a logical chain of evidence concerning the extent to which the NCAAA's recommendations were adopted in these two universities and for each category; and (d) Developing a conceptual coherence of the present engagement with the NCAAA's recommendations in each of the two participating universities. Further, two strategies recommended by Creswell (2003) were followed throughout the analysis. I was cautious about any personal bias while interpreting and discussing the data (e.g., the way of selecting and providing the examples). I presented and discussed any conflicting information provided by the participants as shown in sections 1 and 3 in Chapter 6. Along with those strategies, I also made it explicit how data were analysed.

5.4.3 Surveys: questionnaire design and pilot phase

Questionnaire survey method was the second method used in this research. This section identifies the advantages and disadvantages of using a questionnaire. It then explains in more detail the process that was adopted for designing the questionnaire, explains the piloting procedure and the total number of items and their order. The questionnaire survey was chosen because it has a number of advantages (Denscombe, 2005). It produces standardised answers as all participants received the same questions; it thereby diminishes the variations in the

wording of questions that may occur in interviews. This method requires pre-coded answers. This feature facilitates the participant in expressing his/her view more easily by selecting the most appropriate answer, rather than spending time thinking about how to express his or her view on the issue. Another advantage of surveys is that they are economical in that they save time. Nevertheless, there are potential disadvantages of using questionnaires. First, as Denscombe (2005) argues, the structure of pre-coded questions can be restricting and frustrating for the respondents because it requires making a choice from among preselected options which may not allow them to express their true belief. In order to avoid this problem, I added one question at the end of both teachers' and students' questionnaires giving the respondent the chance to express his view more freely upon any issue that had been raised. Second, Denscombe argues that pre-coded questions might reflect the researcher's thinking. To minimise this problem each item in both the students' and teachers' questionnaires was re-assessed several times by the researcher to make sure that it focused mainly on identifying the participants' own perceptions. This review process helped me to eliminate any instances of questions that might be leading in any way. Each item, in each of the two questionnaires as shown in Appendix 7 and 8, was either derived from key concepts discussed in the literature, adopted from existing questionnaires addressing issues such as conceptions of teaching, or approaches to learning, or created by the researcher to address a particular learning-teaching recommendation made by NCAAA. A detailed description of how items were derived in is given in Appendix 9.

The primary objective of this questionnaire was to address those areas of the teaching and learning process that relate to the NCAAA's recommendations to

improve student learning. The content of teachers' questionnaires focused on whether elements of good teaching had been used, as guided by NCAAA's recommended policy on improving the quality of teaching. With the students' questionnaires the same process was followed. The questionnaire identified their experiences of the learning-teaching process that included, for example, the quality of teaching and assessment methods.

The teacher questionnaires consisted of 26 items (25 closed questions and 1 open question). The 25 closed questions aimed at identifying the role of the teachers in enhancing the quality of student learning through the educational process. Specifically, the questions asked whether the teachers had adopted the objectives of improving student learning as recommended by NCAAA policy. For instance, the questions asked whether or not teachers believed that their teaching approaches did in fact promote the student's level of understanding. As described above, the purpose of the single open question at the end of the teacher questionnaire was to give the teacher a space to offer suggestions about the improvement needed for the educational process to enhance student learning. To maintain confidentiality, the teachers were asked to reveal just their faculty's name. The teacher version of questionnaire was already featured in Appendix 7. Of the initial sample including 100 teachers, in the end 78 completed and returned the questionnaire. All the questionnaires were usable.

Just as with the teacher questionnaires, the student version of the questionnaire was designed as a self-administered questionnaire using a closed question structure. A parallel structure of the two questionnaires (for teachers and for students) was maintained which later facilitated the making of comparisons between

the two groups on specific themes (Denscombe, 2005). The student version of the questionnaire was designed taking into account Davies' (2007) advice to prepare a survey in two stages. First, at the pre-piloting stage the researcher made sure that all questions were essential and related to the research theme and objectives; the respondents were given complete information about the questionnaire's purposes as well as clear instructions about answering the questions. Second, at the piloting stage a random sample of ten students in their final year of studying was selected. This sample was drawn from the five participating faculties of University X. The objective of piloting was to eliminate any ambiguous wording in the questions. To ensure respondents' comprehension of the questions, the students were divided into two groups, which enabled the groups to discuss among them any thoughts surrounding the questions. Thus, the respondents were able to ensure that they understood the items as intended by the researcher and to answer any questions they might have had. Furthermore, this helped verify that the survey was free of mistakes and included clear instructions. The respondents were given the time needed to complete this task. The piloting did not result in any changes for the student questionnaire, as there was no feedback from the respondents indicating problems or ambiguity of items (Davies, 2007). The researcher did not carry any testing prior to finalisation for each of the two questionnaires.

The total number of items in the student questionnaire was 71 questions (70 closed questions and 1 open question). The questionnaire was already featured as in Appendix 8. The number of questions was determined by the number of topics and issues on which data were required. These were then divided into two main sections. The first section concentrated on two aspects to be identified: the learning

approaches the students applied whilst studying, and their perception of the quality of four aspects of the educational process (course objectives, teaching strategies, assessment and course evaluation). The second section aimed to identify students' experiences of their learning environment. This allowed me also to explore whether there was a connection between this environment as perceived by students and their experience of learning (as observed in some of the related literature).

The purpose of the single open question at the end of the student questionnaire was to give the respondent a chance to express a personal view regarding the quality of the educational process in general, as well as offer suggestions for improvements needed to enhance the learning experience. By adding this question, the researcher hoped to increase the richness and complexity of the data obtained from the various respondents (Denscombe, 2005). To maintain confidentiality, the students were asked to reveal just their subject and year of study. Of the initial sample that included 500 students, 430 students completed and returned the questionnaire in the end. All the questionnaires were usable. The questionnaire was composed in English and then translated into Arabic as it is the mother language for all participants (teachers and students), including myself.

A standard Likert response scale was employed in this study. In educational research, the Likert scale is commonly used to measure different kinds of variables, such as school and teacher effectiveness, school climate and culture (e.g. Bangert, 2006; Wagner, 2006) and the like. There are certain advantages in using this response scale: (a) with a Likert scale, the coded items can be summed or averaged to give an indication of each respondent's overall positive or negative orientation towards an object; (b) as a multiple‑item measurement scale, it provides more

accurate readings, whether rankings or ratings, than could be obtained from any individual item; (c) it is a significant method in that responses can be compared across questions; and (d) it can measure broader attitudes and values. However, certain drawbacks are associated with use of the Likert scale, one of them being respondents' tendency to agree with statements in which asking questions might lead respondents towards a particular answer or opinion. Furthermore, without a neutral midpoint on the Likert scale, respondents are forced to come down on one side or the other, which is problematic for those who lack such a clear opinion (Johns, 2010). To avoid these two drawbacks, the clarity of question wording was verified as explained earlier, and to address the disadvantage of a neutral midpoint on the Likert scale, the participants were informed and encouraged to express their views freely in answering the questions.

5.4.4 Surveys: data collection procedure

The following process was undertaken at Universities X & Z to distribute the teacher and student questionnaires:

a) Sending a formal letter, approved by the Saudi Culture Bureau in London, to the administrators of each university asking for permission to conduct the survey.

b) Sending a draft of the teacher and student questionnaires to universities, as they requested, before they could issue the permission letter.

c) Conducting the survey at X University between 16/04/2011 and 30/04/2011.

d) Conducting the survey at Z University between 07/05/2011 and 22/05/2011.

e) At both universities, the following steps were undertaken during distribution of the questionnaires:

    i.   The teacher questionnaires were personally handed out to one or two members of the teaching staff from each selected faculty and retrieved within the fieldwork period.

    ii.   For the student questionnaires the participants were chosen on the basis that they were in the final two years of completing their studying. Choosing students from several faculties instead of one faculty provides richer information about students' learning experiences. I visited different classes representing at least three different courses in each selected faculty to gather the targeted sample. I personally met all respondents from all but two of the participating faculties to explain to them directly the purpose of the questionnaire and to emphasise the importance of their views in answering the questionnaire in a truthful manner. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that the information gathered would be kept confidential. Few students declined to participate in the study. Although there were 71 questions, the questions were direct and throughout the survey language was kept simple. Directions and instructions were given at the beginning, and clarifications were given by the researcher during the administration of the survey. The students were given the required time to complete the survey. The researcher remained with the students to collect the questionnaires once completed. These actions helped ensure high response rates from a representative sample of the study population in

a very convenient way. Furthermore, I believe such approaches might have enhanced the credibility of students' answers.

iii. The above processes were not undertaken at the Faculty of Engineering (at both universities) because the two deans of these two faculties requested that all questionnaires (for teachers and students) had to be submitted to the faculty itself and collected at a later stage.

5.5 Trustworthiness of Interview Study with Deans

In qualitative research, the issues of reliability and validity are typically referred to as the trustworthiness of the study (e.g. Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Golafshani , 2003). Golafshani (2003) states, "the concepts of reliability and validity are viewed differently by qualitative researchers who strongly consider these concepts defined in quantitative terms as inadequate" (p. 599). Thus, to promote trustworthiness in qualitative research, Guba (as cited in Shenton, 2004, p 64) suggests four criteria that correspond to those employed in quantitative research:

a) 'credibility' (in preference to internal validity)

b) 'transferability' (in preference to external validity)

c) 'dependability' (in preference to reliability)

d) 'confirmability' (in preference to objectivity).

To establish the trustworthiness of my qualitative data I followed the above criteria. For *Credibility*, my approach of selecting the participating faculties was based on including a variety of disciplines such as social science, medical science computing and so forth, and not to focus only on one or two disciplines. I also made sure that the participants were genuinely willing to take part in the interview process.

For example, during my initial visit to the selected faculty, I explained to the faculty dean the objectives of my study and asked him to take part in the interview and made it clear that he had the right to withdraw from the interview process at any point. In addition, during the interview process, I used promoting questions to elicit detailed information in relevance to the discussed issues. Additional measurements were carried out to promote the credibility of my quality data. As the literature commonly points out, a traditional criticism is that the interview is filled with the potential for bias. Holstein and Gubrium (2004, p. 141) argue that, to control for bias, throughout the interview process the emphasis should be on 'maximising the flow of valid, reliable, information' and 'minimising distortions' of the respondents' information. Two steps were followed to control for bias. First, to ensure that all the responses given by the faculty deans were not based on their official positions but rather on their frank, personal views on the outlined issues, all interviewed participants were informed of the confidentiality of the interview process, highlighting that neither their names nor their universities' names would be revealed in the study. Rather, only their faculty would be indicated. Second, all of the responses given by faculty deans were triangulated with the findings of teachers' and students' responses. This triangulation of data emerged from three various sources of information discussed in detail in Chapter 7. I believe these steps contributed towards promoting the credibility of the interview responses. Hence, I assured the reader that this research was conducted according to the principle of credibility associated with social research procedures.

For *Transferability,* I have provided the reader with information on the following issues: the number of faculties taking part in the study; I revealed for the

reader the obstacles I encountered while gathering the data (e.g. as the majority of interviewees requested the interviews not to be recorded); I have revealed the actual number of participants involved in the interview process and the time period over which the data were collected from each university. I also provided the reader with a rich amount of information obtained from the semi-structured interviews in order to maximise the transferability of the research findings.

For *Dependability,* I have included in this chapter a section with detailed description of the research design (semi-structured interviews) and its implementation (advantages and disadvantages). And finally for *Confirmability,* I informed the reader that the study findings gathered from the interview process reflect solely the participants' perceptions and ideas of issues raised during the interviews. I also argue that the method of semi-structured interviews was adopted because it was the most appropriate research method to provide answers to the research questions; answers that were based on the perspectives of the deans of the faculties and the managers of quality assurance units regarding NCAAA recommended policy and student learning.

5.6 Validity of Survey Results

Creswell and Clark (2007) propose that "in quantitative research, validity means that the research can draw meaningful inferences from the results to a population" (p. 133). Thus, to maximise the validity of research findings, I followed these procedures:

a) For the application of minimizing threats of internal validity criteria, the following steps suggested by Gray, et al (2007) were taken: (i) ensuring

clarity in terms of questionnaire structure and wording of questions; (ii) making an appropriate sequencing of questions and ensuring all questions were relevant to the study objectives.

b) The application of external validity criteria, which demands the research findings to be generalised beyond the particular research context (Bryman, 2004). To achieve this objective, I followed Skinner's (1991) advice that external validity requires two important considerations to be met. First, the representativeness of the sample: This requirement was met by selecting a sample of 100 teachers and 500 undergraduate students from 11 different disciplines across the two participating public universities. Second, the extent to which it is possible to generalize from the context of data collection: I believe that this aspect has been met because such a sample represents a variety of teachers and students from different universities and disciplines who are studying or tutoring different subjects; thus, such a sample is likely to be representative of the larger Saudi HE context.

c) The application of the statistical analysis approach to the collected data: Denscombe (2005) argues that this approach provides scientific evidence that is based on objective data. He particularly maintains that if statistically significant results are reached, they will provide the researcher with credibility in data interpretation and enhance the researcher's confidence that the findings did not come about on the basis of chance.

5.7 Reliability of Survey Results

The concept of reliability is described by Bryman (2004) in this way: "it refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept" (p.71). Similarly, Creswell and Clark (2007) propose that "in quantitative research, reliability means that scores received from participants are consistent and stable over time" (p.133). To ensure that the used instruments were consistent and reliable, the following steps were followed in the administration of the questionnaires as suggested by Ary et al. (2006).

I first made sure that certain conditions in relation to 'instrument reliability' were met; for example, the questions were all well worded and the instructions for answering them were clear. In the distribution process of student questionnaire, there was no presence of the teacher in the classroom because that would have caused distraction, and hence affected the reliability of students' responses. The same two instruments of both (teacher and student) were used for all participants from the 11 faculties. All participants were Arabic native speakers which means that they well understood the language used in the questionnaire. Instrument questions of both groups covered a wide range of issues in relation to the study objectives. Uncompleted questionnaires were scored out: *'data processing reliability'*. With respect to the timing of the distribution of the questionnaires, I took into consideration the element of potential 'tiredness' among respondents, which could affect their responses. As students used to attend many lectures a day I chose the early hours of the study day to distribute the questionnaires and collect them. Academics' teaching responsibilities were also taken into consideration. I made sure that they were not required to complete the questionnaires within a very limited time,

but rather within the entire period that I spent gathering the data at their institution. This gave them much more flexibility contributing to *'situational reliability'*. Furthermore, as one aspect of reliability in the quantitative research concerns the issue of consistency, the method of factor analysis has been carried out (see Chapter 6, section 2) to assess the internal consistency of teachers' and students' outcomes, as suggested by Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002).

5.8 Objectivity Issue

Denscombe (2002) explains the importance of objectivity as follows: "it lies at the heart of what it means to engage in research and it is a crucial criterion for arriving at judgements about the credibility of findings" (p. 157). Denscombe mentions that some investigators argue that achieving pure objectivity might never be reached when selecting a research topic, gathering data and interpreting those data. Yet, Denscombe points out that the social researcher should aspire to achieving research objectivity and he claims this can be achieved through a reasonable level of detachment and a reasonable level of open-mindedness in relation to the research topic, data collecting procedure and interpretation of findings. Therefore, I made an attempt to distance myself from any personal benefits in conducting this research. Regarding the second aspect that required the researcher to be open-minded, I believe that, I did not conduct this research with a preconceived notion of what results I wanted to obtain.

5.9 Ethical Issues

Ethical principles were followed during the qualitative research process to ensure that all interviewees (faculties' deans and quality assurance managers) had clear information and a clear understanding of the research objectives and the purposes of conducting the interview. Their participation was voluntary and they were informed that their anonymity (their names and University's name) would be protected (Silverman, 2005). These ethical principles were also applied while conducting the surveys with teachers and students. For academic teachers I made sure that their participation was voluntary and their anonymity would be protected. And during the distribution and collection of the students' questionnaires, I informed students that participation was not compulsory and they had the right to withdraw at any time. I also informed them that they had the right to ask any question about the survey (Creswell, 2003). In order to safeguard the researcher's integrity, the principles of independency, objectivity and trustworthiness were followed throughout the research process. These principles are in reporting the research findings (Denscombe, 2002). I therefore provide the reader with an accurate account of facts of why and how the data were being gathered and how they were being interpreted (Creswell, 2003).

CHAPTER 6

THE FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from both the interview and survey studies. The objective of this chapter is to report from the three groups of stakeholders – deans, teachers and students – their perceptions and experiences, and whether the teaching and learning practices in two Saudi public universities are congruent with the recommendations made by NCAAA, which are aimed at improving learning in Saudi higher education. The chapter is divided into three related sections: § 6.1 reports on interviews with deans; § 6.2 presents the survey findings of teachers and students; § 6.3 highlights the key issues that emerged from the qualitative and quantitative findings, considering comparisons between the two universities. Accordingly, this chapter will determine if there are any drawbacks associated with the teaching-learning processes at these two universities which might prevent the fulfilment of the NCAAA's recommended policy in relation to student learning.

6.1 Findings from the Interview (Qualitative Data)

This section shows the results for each of the five themes addressed in the interviews carried out with senior administrators from each of the two participating public universities. The sample included seven deans (faculty heads) across the two institutions (four at University X and three at University Z) plus the manager of the quality assurance unit from each of the two institutions (9 senior administrators in total). The section has been organised in the following way. I have addressed first the

responses of senior administrators from University X on each theme together with its sub-theme. Their responses on certain themes are then compared with their peers from University Z. The main purpose of this comparison of key[18] findings is to highlight similarities and differences in the senior administrators' perceptions of the extent to which selected recommendations made by the NCAAA had been implemented at their own university. The five themes are:

1. Quality of teaching.

2. Student assessment.

3. Programme evaluation and review process.

4. Educational assistance for students.

5. The faculty and quality assurance unit.

6.1.1 Quality of teaching

This theme consists of three sub-themes:

Sub-theme 1: Congruity between teaching strategies and intended learning outcomes.

Sub-theme 2: Evaluation of teaching effectiveness.

Sub-theme 3: Availability of training programmes aimed at improving the quality of teaching.

The data in *Table 1* shows that the majority of senior administrators at University X agreed that the NCAAA's recommended policy on how to improve the quality of teaching is not being applied in relation to these three sub-themes.

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[18] The sub-themes that do not reveal a real difference between senior administrators' responses are not addressed.

Table 1: Five University X senior administrators' responses in respect of quality of teaching

Sub-theme	YES, recommendations applied		Recommendations NOT being applied	
	Deans' responses	QA[19] unit	Deans' responses	QA unit
1	-	-	4	1
2	-	Not asked[20]	4	Not asked
3	1	1	3	-

To illustrate, on the issue of whether there is a mechanism for faculties to ensure that teaching strategies applied by teachers are linked to intended learning outcomes (Sub-theme 1), the Deputy Dean of the Management and Financial Sciences Faculty put it thus: *"As there is no such mechanism, each tutor has to follow his approach to teaching"*. In terms of evaluating the effectiveness of teaching at the level of the faculty as recommended by NCAAA policy (Sub-theme 2), all four deans agreed that there was no faculty-directed mechanism for the evaluation of teaching effectiveness. For instance, the Deputy Dean of the Sciences Faculty reported that "*there is no such mechanism; therefore it's the responsibility of the departments' managers to follow up their students' results"*. On the subject of the availability of training programmes that focus on improving the quality of teaching (Sub-theme 3), the interviews revealed that all four deans were agreed in their responses that training programmes were available for the teaching staff. However, three expressed their belief that the number of training programmes designed for teaching staff was limited. For instance, the Dean of the Computer Science Faculty stated, *"As the number of training programmes is limited, it does not concentrate enough on improving teaching strategies."*

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[19] The manager of quality assurance unit response.
[20] The manager of quality assurance unit was not asked about this issue.

It is apparent from *Table 2* that the single observation to emerge from the data comparison is that, similar to their peers from University X, two of the three participants from University Z reported a lack of a mechanism for the faculty to follow to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching (Sub-theme 2).

Table 2: Four University Z senior administrators' responses in respect of quality of teaching

Sub-theme	**YES,** recommendations applied		Recommendations **NOT** being applied	
	Deans' responses	QA unit	Deans' responses	QA unit
1	1	1	2	-
2	1	Not asked	2	Not asked
3	1	1	2	-

6.1.2 Student assessment

This theme consists of seven sub-themes:

Sub-theme 1: Informing students of assessment procedures.

Sub-theme 2: Fulfilment of course objectives.

Sub-theme 3: Applying the type of assessment methods consistent with course specifications.

Sub-theme 4: The efficiency of assessment methods.

Sub-theme 5: Feedback on students' performance.

Sub-theme 6: Academic training programme to improve assessment methods.

Sub-theme 7: Criteria and process for academic appeals.

One can see from the data in *Table 3* that most senior administrators (four deans and the quality assurance manager) at University X are agreed in their responses that the NCAAA's recommended policies to improve student assessment are not being applied in relation to five out of the seven sub-themes.

Table 3: Five University X senior administrators' responses in respect of student assessment

Sub-theme	YES, recommendations applied		Recommendations NOT being applied	
	Deans' responses	QA unit	Deans' responses	QA unit
1	4	-	-	1
2	1	1	3	-
3	1	-	3	1
4	2	Not asked	2	Not asked
5	-	-	4	1
6	1	1	3	-
7.1	1	Not asked	3	Not asked
7.2	Not asked[21]	-	Not asked	1

As an illustration, three deans reported that there is no mechanism that their faculties routinely follow to ensure that course objectives are achieved (Sub-theme 2). Interestingly, their responses were contrary to those of the quality assurance manager who reported that his unit distributes a course evaluation questionnaire asking students to evaluate the extent to which course objectives have been achieved. With regards to whether a formal procedure was followed by the faculty or quality assurance unit to ensure that the mode of assessment was appropriate for different forms of learning as stated in course specifications (Sub-theme 3),three administrators and the manager of the quality assurance unit agreed that no formal procedure existed to address this issue. For instance, the Deputy Dean of Science put it thus: *"It's the responsibility of department managers to follow up on this issue"* and the Deputy Dean of Human Sciences stated: *"There is no determined procedure concerning this matter, and in the end it's the responsibility of the subject's tutor to deliver this objective".*

The five participants were asked whether the faculty or quality assurance unit provided the student with feedback each term, not just in terms of exam results but

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[21] The dean of faculty was not asked about this issue.

accompanied by a mechanism for assistance if needed, as recommended by NCAAA policy, and, if so, whether such feedback applied to all courses taken during the term (Sub-theme 5). The interviews revealed that all five participants were congruent in their responses that neither their faculties nor the quality assurance unit provided the students with constructive feedback that included recommendations on how to improve their learning along with course results. Accordingly, the following statement shows the perception of the Deputy Dean of Human Sciences on this issue. He stated feedback might be given *"through a discussion conducted by the subject tutor with his students concerning their perceptions of exam questions, but the faculty does not provide such feedback"*. On the subject of the availability of training courses for academic teachers to learn about efficient methods to assess student learning (Sub-theme 6), the data show that the quality assurance manager reported that his unit provides these types of training courses for all teaching staff. However, three of the four participating administrators commented that the number of such programmes being offered to their teaching staff was limited.

Concerning the criteria and processes for academic appeals (Sub-theme 7), the interviews revealed that three of the deans reported that their faculties do not inform their students of the criteria and processes for academic appeals. When the quality assurance manager was then asked whether his unit ensures that the processes and criteria for academic appeals are followed properly by each faculty, he reported that no such processes were in place.

Table 4 below presents a summary of the views obtained from the four senior administrators at University Z. It is apparent from this table that most participants agreed that the NCAAA's recommended policy to improve student assessment is not

applied in relation to six out of the seven sub-themes. Interestingly, the data in this table indicate that there is similarity in responses among the nine participants from both universities on most issues related to student assessment.

Table 4: Four University Z senior administrators' responses in respect of student assessment

Sub-theme	**YES,** recommendations applied		Recommendations **NOT** being applied	
	Deans' responses	QA unit	Deans' responses	QA unit
1	1	-	2	1
2	1	1	2	-
3	1	-	2	1
4	1	Not asked	2	Not asked
5	-	-	3	1
6	-	1	3	-
7.1	1	Not asked	2	Not asked
7.2	Not asked	-	Not asked	1

On the issue of informing students of the assessment procedure (Sub-theme 1), three out of the four participating administrators reported in their interviews that the assessment procedure was not clearly communicated to students at the beginning of the course. With regards to whether a formal procedure is followed by the faculty or quality assurance unit to ensure that the mode of assessment is appropriate for different forms of learning, as stated in course specifications (Sub-theme 3), two deans and the manager of the quality assurance unit agreed that no formal procedure related to this issue. Indeed, the remaining Dean of the Engineering Faculty also agreed that there was no formal procedure, but indicated that his faculty follows an internal procedure through which they ensure that assessment methods are in line with subject learning objectives as stated in course specifications. He reported: "*We asked each tutor to design exam questions that contribute towards delivering subject learning objectives as stated in course specifications.*"

As we have seen, the outcomes of Sub-theme 3 show that three of the four participants agreed that there was no formal procedure being implemented to ensure the assessment methods used were appropriate for learning formats as stated in course specifications. Therefore, the researcher went further by asking the three deans to indicate whether the current assessment methods that each faculty followed were appropriate for the different forms of learning sought (Sub-theme 4). The interviews revealed that two deans confirmed that the methods used were not appropriate for the different forms of learning sought. On the subject of whether the faculty or quality assurance unit provided the students with feedback each term, not just restricted to exam results but accompanied by a mechanism for assistance if needed, and whether this applied to all courses taken during the term (Sub-theme 5), the interviews revealed that the responses of all four participants were consistent with that of their peers from University X, indicating that neither their faculties nor the quality assurance unit provided the students with constructive feedback. For instance, the Dean of Science stated: *"This matter depends on the subject tutor doing so, as there is no mechanism the faculty has to provide its students with constructive feedback."*

Concerning the availability of training courses through which the academic teachers can be trained to apply efficient assessment methods to assess student learning (Sub-theme 6), the data show that the quality assurance manager (as did his peer from University X) reported that his unit provided these types of training courses for all faculties' teaching staff. However, this response was inconsistent with the responses of all three participating deans at this University. Two of the deans raised the issue of the limited number of such programmes being offered to their

teaching staff, whereas the Dean of the Engineering Faculty reported that recently there had been no such training course. With regards to the criteria and processes for academic appeals (Sub-theme 7), the three participating faculty deans were asked whether their faculties informed the students of this process; the interviews showed that two participants did not inform their students of the criteria and processes for academic appeals. Only the Dean of the Science Faculty reported that his faculty had a committee that looked after students' academic appeals. To clarify the responses of the two deans who agreed on the lack of such a process, the quality assurance manager was asked whether his unit ensured that the processes and criteria for academic appeals were followed properly by each faculty; as did his peer from University X, he reported that his unit did not have a mechanism to ensure that this process was followed properly by each faculty.

6.1.3 Programme evaluation and review process

This theme consists of the following five sub-themes:

Sub-theme 1: Course evaluation.

Sub-theme 2.1: Students' participation in course evaluation.

Sub-theme 2.2: Obtaining all students' opinions of course evaluation.

Sub-theme 3: Programme reviews and informing students.

Sub-theme 4: Course evaluation and teachers' perceptions.

Sub-theme 5: Benefiting from course evaluation.

As *Table 5* shows, most senior administrators at University X agree that the NCAAA's recommended policy is not being applied in relation to four of the five sub-themes of the programme evaluation and review process outlined above. On the

subject of course evaluation (Sub-theme 1), only the manager of the quality assurance unit was asked whether the unit applies an evaluation mechanism to evaluate course quality; he reported that his unit distributed course evaluation questionnaires so that students would be able to evaluate aspects of studying the course (i.e. teaching strategies and assessment methods). Regarding students' participation in course evaluation (Sub-theme 2.1), of the four deans interviewed, three deans indicated that the student evaluates just some aspects of the subjects studied and not all of them. The last administrator, who was the Dean of Computer Sciences, reported that there was no formal mechanism that his faculty could follow to deliver this objective. Furthermore, the four deans and the manager of the quality assurance unit were asked whether the course evaluation process obtained all students' opinions of course quality or, alternatively, whether just a sample of students participated in the process (Sub-theme 2.2). The findings reveal a consensus among four participants, including the manager of the quality assurance unit, that this process just covered a sample of students and only for selected subjects. The Dean of Computer Sciences reported that his faculty did not obtain students' perceptions of course quality and argued that there was no formal mechanism requiring the faculty to deliver this objective. These findings suggest that at University X there is no formal procedure being followed, at least by the four faculties included in the study, requiring students' data to be obtained on their perceptions of the quality of all courses studied, so as to identify the impact of these courses on students' learning.

Table 5: Five University X senior administrators' responses in respect of the programme and review process

Sub-theme	**YES,** recommendations applied		Recommendations **NOT** being applied	
	Deans' Responses	QA unit	Deans' Responses	QA unit
1	Not asked	1	Not asked	-
2.1	-	Not asked	4	Not asked
2.2	1	-	3	1
3	-	-	4	1
4	1	-	3	1
5	-	1	4	-

In terms of programme reviews and informing students (Sub-theme 3), the four deans and the manager of the quality assurance unit were asked whether the faculty/unit informed the students of already-achieved actions or other actions that would be applied in the future to enhance the quality of the educational process (e.g. improving the quality of teaching). The five participants agreed that neither their faculties nor the quality assurance unit informed students of already-achieved actions or other actions that would be applied in the future in order to enhance learning. By way of illustration, the Dean of the Science Faculty said, "*This concept will be applied in future.*" With regard to course evaluation and teachers' perceptions (Sub-theme 4), the five administrators were asked whether teachers' perceptions were included in the process of course evaluation as recommended by NCAAA policy. The interviews revealed that four, including the manager of the quality assurance unit, agreed that teaching staff perceptions were not included in the course evaluation process. Considering the benefits of course evaluation (Sub-theme 5), the five administrators were asked in which ways the faculty/unit benefited from course evaluation. The findings reveal that the manager of the quality assurance unit agreed on the availability of such a mechanism; he reported that his unit analysed all course evaluation questionnaires and then sent the outcomes to all faculties so that they

could benefit from students' perceptions of course quality. On the other hand, the responses of the four deans did not agree with that of the quality assurance manager: they reported that there was no mechanism that their faculties could follow to benefit from course evaluation.

One can see from the data in *Table 6* that there is a lack of congruence between the responses of most of the participants of University Z. For example, if we compare the results reported in *Table 6* to those reported in *Table 5*, we can further observe that there is little agreement in how representatives of the two universities responded to three of the five sub-themes of the programme evaluation and review process theme, suggesting a real difference between the two institutions on these particular sub-themes.

Table 6: Four University Z senior administrators' responses in respect of the programme and review process

Sub-theme	YES, recommendations applied		Recommendations NOT being applied	
	Deans' Responses	QA unit	Deans' Responses	QA unit
1	Not asked	1	Not asked	-
2.1	3	Not asked	-	Not asked
2.2	2	-	1	1
3	-	-	3	1
4	3	1	-	-
5	2	1	1	-

In contrast to their peers from University X, on the issue of students' participation in course evaluation (Sub-theme 2.1) all three participating deans agreed that the students evaluated all the subjects they studied. Furthermore, the three deans and the manager of the quality assurance unit were asked whether the course evaluation process obtained all students' opinions of course quality or whether only a sample of students participated in the process (Sub-theme 2.2). Two

of the participants reported that the process obtained all students' opinions of course quality, whereas the other two indicated that the process covered a sample of students and only for selected subjects. With regard to course evaluation and whether teaching staff perceptions were included in order to improve the course (Sub-theme 4), the interviews revealed that the three participating deans, including the manager of the quality assurance unit, were consistent in their responses that teachers' perceptions were included in the course evaluation process. On the subject of benefiting from course evaluation (Sub-theme 5), two deans agreed that there was a formal procedure for each faculty to follow to benefit from course evaluation. For instance, the Dean of Applied Medical Sciences indicated that, after course evaluation, each tutor might receive a report recommending an enhanced teaching-learning process to improve student learning. The manager of the quality assurance unit also explained that at the end of each term his unit reviewed the files of all students studying courses in all faculties. This action, he argued, helped the faculty to obtain academic accreditation for its programmes.

Only the findings of Sub-themes 1 and 3 indicate a consensus among responses from University Z, as was the case for most of the participants from University X. On the issue of course evaluation (Sub-theme 1), similar to his peer from the other institution, the manager of the quality assurance unit explained that at the end of each term his unit reviewed the files of all the courses studied in all faculties to ensure their effectiveness (i.e. teaching strategies and assessment methods). With regard to programme reviews and informing students (Sub-theme 3), the three deans and the manager of the quality assurance unit were agreed in their responses, as were their peers from University X, that neither their faculties nor the

quality assurance unit informed students of already-achieved actions or other actions that would be applied in the future to improve the quality of the educational process to enhance students' learning. By way of illustration, the Dean of the Science Faculty argued that students were not being informed about actions related to the improvement of the educational process because, as he stated, "*The students do not understand anything in relation to this matter.*" The Dean of the quality assurance unit clarified the lack of such action by explaining that "*[t]here is no direct communication with the students.*" This finding sounds more likely to be a matter of misunderstanding on the part of these senior administrators of the value of students' role in the educational process.

6.1.4 Educational assistance for students

This theme consists of the following two sub-themes:

Sub-theme 1: Assisting individual students.

Sub-theme 2: Student learning and the role of the academic advice unit.

Overall, the single observation to emerge from the findings of the educational assistance for students theme is that the NCAAA's recommended policies are not being applied in relation to Sub-themes 1 and 2 at either of the two participating universities. Regarding University X, as shown in Table 7, the four deans and the manager of the quality assurance unit were asked whether the faculty/unit had a system that offered assistance to individual students or provided students with counseling to improve their learning (Sub-theme 1). The interviews revealed that all five participants were congruent in their responses that no formal mechanism was applied in their faculties or in the quality assurance units to provide individual

students with needed assistance. However, in the light of lacking such a mechanism, the Dean of Computer Sciences reported that his faculty offered low-cost courses for its students that concentrated on enhancing students' learning skills.

Table 7: Five University X senior administrators' responses in respect of the educational assistance for students

Sub-theme	**YES,** recommendations applied		Recommendations **NOT** being applied	
	Deans' Responses	QA unit	Deans' Responses	QA unit
1	-	-	4	1
2	2	-	2	1

Accordingly, the outcomes from Sub-theme 1 led the researcher to ask the five participants about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the establishment academic advice unit in improving student learning. Each participant was asked (Sub-theme 2): *Do you think that the academic advice unit is effective enough in assisting student learning and whether it participates in enhancing student learning?* The findings reveal that three of the five participants agreed on the academic advice unit's lack of efficiency in assisting students in their learning process. To illustrate, the manager of the quality assurance unit reported that *'[t]he academic advice system is not effective enough for assisting student learning due in part to the lack of co-operation process between the unit and the faculty.'*

Table 8 presents a summary of the views obtained from the four senior administrators at University Z. It is apparent from this table that most participants agreed that the NCAAA's recommended policy of educational assistance for students was not being applied in relation to the above two sub-themes. It is interesting to note that the data in this table are quite revealing because they indicate

a similarity in responses among the nine participants from both universities on these two issues related to the theme of educational assistance for students.

Table 8: Four University Z senior administrators' responses in respect of educational assistance for students

Sub-theme	**YES,** recommendations applied		Recommendations **NOT** being applied	
	Deans' Responses	QA unit	Deans' Responses	QA unit
1	-	-	3	1
2	1	-	2	1

On the subject of whether the faculty/unit had a system that offered assistance to individual students or provided them with counseling to improve their learning (Sub-theme 1), the interviews revealed that the responses of all four participants were consistent with their peers from University X, indicating that neither their faculties nor the quality assurance unit employed a formal mechanism to provide individual students with needed assistance concerning their learning. On the issue of the effectiveness of the academic advice unit in improving student learning (Sub-theme 2), the data show that, like their peers from University X, three out of the four participants agreed on the lack of efficiency of the academic advice unit in assisting students' learning. To illustrate, the Dean of Applied Medical Sciences explained the reason behind this: "*At this stage the academic adviser's role is not effective enough because in the faculty there is a shortfall of academic teaching staff who can participate in it.*" Meanwhile, the manager of the quality assurance unit said that the reason was the lack of cooperation between the unit and the faculty in promoting the effectiveness of the academic advice system.

6.1.5 The faculty and the quality assurance unit

This theme consists only of the following sub-theme:

Sub-theme 1: Faculty deans' views of the role of the quality assurance unit in improving the teaching-learning process.

The seven participating faculty deans were asked the following three related questions regarding Sub-theme 1:

Q1: What is the nature of the co-operation between the faculty and quality assurance unit in relation to the existing process of educational improvement?

Q2: From your own perspective, how do you assess the current role of the quality assurance unit in supporting the faculty in improving the quality of the educational process?

Q3: How, in your mind, could the co-operation between the faculty and the quality assurance unit be improved so as to enhance the quality of the educational process and thereby improve student learning?

With regard to Q1 and Q2, *Table 9* presents a summary of the views obtained from the four deans at University X. In general, these findings suggest that most of the deans' responses expressed dissatisfaction with the role of the quality assurance unit in improving the educational process.

Table 9: Four University X senior administrators' responses in respect of the role of the quality assurance unit in improving the educational process

Sub-theme (1)	Deans' responses	
	Agreement	Disagreement
Question 1	1	3
Question 2	1	3

In response to Question 1, three of the four participating deans expressed dissatisfaction with the inefficiency of the co-operation process between the faculty

and the quality assurance unit in relation to the existing improvement process of the educational process. For example, the Dean of the Computer Science Faculty, when asked for his assessment of the current role of the quality assurance unit in supporting the faculty in improving the quality of the educational process (Question 2), stated that "*[t]he co-operation process just concentrates on providing a training programme for teaching staff but the unit does not evaluate the effectiveness of the educational process in relation to course objectives, teaching strategies and assessment methods.*" The proportion of responses to this question is similar to those related to the above issue. Again, the same three out of the four disagreed that the quality assurance unit supported the faculty in improving this process. To illustrate, the Dean of the Science Faculty reported, "*The unit does not offer the training programme needed by our teaching staff.*" Meanwhile, the Dean of the Computer Sciences Faculty argued, "*At this stage, the unit does not have an effective role to play in improving the quality of the teaching-learning process.*"

As previously, regarding Q1 and Q2, it is apparent from *Table 10* that the single observation to emerge from the data comparison is that, similarly to their peers from the other institution, two deans' responses indicate dissatisfaction with the role of the quality assurance unit in improving the educational process.

Table 10: Three University Z senior administrators' responses in respect of the role of the quality assurance unit in improving the educational process

Sub-theme (1)	Deans' responses	
	Agreement	Disagreement
Question 1	1	2
Question 2	1	2

With respect to the nature of the co-operation arraigment between the faculty and quality assurance unit in relation to the existing improvement of the educational process Question 1, the interviews revealed that two out of the three deans were dissatisfied with the inefficiency of this process. For example, the Dean of Applied Medical Sciences commented, "*At the current stage the nature of the co-operation process is weak and this is due to the recent establishment of the quality assurance unit with its poor facilities.*" However, the remaining Dean of the Engineering Faculty, who at the same time held a management post at the quality assurance unit, said that there was an ongoing co-operation process between the faculty and quality assurance unit in relation to this aspect. He described it by saying, "*Providing all faculties with the needed support; regular visits to each faculty to ensure the completion of each course file and report any failure to department managers.*" It can thus be suggested that, according to the quality assurance manager's response, a weak link of communication may exist at faculty level specifically regarding how much the deans were aware of how the work of the quality assurance unit was followed through in their faculties. As for the deans' perspectives on how to assess the current role of the quality assurance unit in supporting the faculty in improving the teaching-learning process (Question 2), responses revealed that two of the three surveyed believed that the quality assurance unit did not play an effective role in improving this process as outlined by the NCAAA.

Regarding their responses to Question 3, the following are the most interesting suggestions from the participant deans of Universities X and Z to enhance the co-operation process between the faculty and the quality assurance unit:

a) Increase the number of training programmes for teaching staff.

b) Enhance the notion of quality culture within the faculty system and how the faculty should function. This can occur through the establishment of an internal committee that works to achieve this objective.

c) Each faculty should establish a plan to enhance the quality of the educational process and how this aim will be accomplished.

d) Enhance the concept of evaluation within the faculty culture to include students' evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and faculty performance.

e) Review and assess the impact of the training programmes and its relationship to improving the quality of the educational process.

Consequently, it is apparent from the faculty deans' responses, as illustrated in their responses to Question 3, that there are concerns about the need to enhance the quality assurance unit's role in improving the educational process. One such concern involves promoting the concept of evaluation within the faculty culture, which includes students' evaluation of teaching effectiveness.

6.1.6 Summary of the key findings

The present section has compared the perceptions of nine senior administrators from the two participating public universities. This section examined their view of the extent to which selected recommendations made by NCAAA of the five outlined themes had been implemented at their own university. The five addressed themes were: quality of teaching; student assessment; programme evaluation and review process; educational assistance for students; and the faculty

and quality assurance unit. The main goal of this comparison process was to identify whether the data gathered from these nine senior administrators at the two universities point to a difference between the two institutions. The outcomes of the interviews, while preliminary, suggest that to some extent both universities were not fully committed to following up the NCAAA recommendations on the above five outline themes. There is, however, an important difference between University X and University Z on one of the themes, that is, the programme evaluation and review process. Senior administrators' views from University Z indicate a real difference on this theme between the two institutions on three out of five particular sub-themes. The findings of this theme seemed to indicate that these two institutions were partly unalike specifically in relation to the programme evaluation and review process theme. Having identified this difference led the researcher, in the following section, to consider the data collected from teachers and students at the two universities to be separated, as this data seemed to come from two different institutions, to some extent. The following section discusses respectively the survey's findings with teachers and then students from University X and Z separately.

6.2 Findings of the Surveys with Teachers and Students (Quantitative Data):

This section presents the results for each of the seven themes addressed in the survey carried out with teachers and students from these two participating public universities regarding their perceptions and experiences of the teaching and learning processes they were engaged in. The survey given to teachers consisted of 25 questions aimed at identifying the role of the teacher in enhancing the quality of

student learning through the teaching-learning process. The student survey consisted of 70 questions, and the number of those questions was determined by the number of topics and issues for which data was required. The sample included 78 teachers and 430 students from 11 faculties from the two institutions (39 teachers and 229 students from University X; 39 teachers and 201 students from University Z). The data analysis of teachers and students was performed separately for each theme (7 themes in total) using either factor scores or descriptive statistics test where appropriate. For the theme with five items or less a descriptive test was used except for the student learning theme. For the other themes, with more than five items, a factor scores was used.

To report the data gathered, the researcher solicited information from the respondents using a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree. As the low end of the scale signifies strong agreement (1 = strongly agree) and the high end signifies strong disagreement (5 = strongly disagree), this scale means that smaller mean values will indicate strong agreement while bigger mean values will indicate strong disagreement. This section has two parts: § 6.2.1 presents teacher findings for themes (1- 6) [22] listed below; and § 6.2.2 presents students' findings for themes (1- 5 and 7)[23]. To report the findings, the mean value is used to represent the views of the teachers and the students. Later in the chapter, I compare teachers' and students' responses from each University on each theme of the 7 themes, and for certain issues I highlight similarities and differences in their perceptions and experiences of the

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[22] Teacher survey does not address theme No 7 (student learning theme).
[23] Student survey does not address theme No 6 (support for improvements in the quality of teaching theme).

teaching-learning processes engaged in by their respective institutions. The seven themes are:

1. The programme development processes.

2. Quality of teaching.

3. Student assessment.

4. Programme evaluation and review process.

5. Educational assistance for students.

6. Support for improvements in the quality of teaching.

7. Student learning.

6.2.1 Survey findings from teachers' data

6.2.1.1 Programme development processes

Two questions designed to explore this theme were included in the survey, as shown in *Table 11*. The purpose of these questions was to explore issues related to programme planning, specifically the recommendation that all courses should contribute in planned ways to accomplishing the intended learning outcomes. This involved identifying whether the learning objectives were explained clearly at the outset, and whether the teacher clarified for his students at the start of the course what they were supposed to do and what was expected of them during the course, as set out in the course specifications.

Table 11 shows the descriptive statistics obtained for the two questions related to this theme. For Q13, whether learning objectives were explained clearly at the outset, the mean values for the whole sample and for the two universities (X and Z) separately were between 1.36 and 1.41, this mean was closer to 1 (strongly agree).

The responses from teachers from both universities suggested that the learning objectives were explained at the beginning of term. For Q15, whether students usually had a clear idea of what was expected of them in mastering the course material, the mean values for the whole sample and for the two universities (X and Z) separately were between 1.41 and 1.76. Teachers at both universities concurred in their responses, reporting that they informed their students of what was expected of them in mastering the course material.

Table 11: Descriptive statistics for programme development processes questions for teachers of university X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed variables statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q13	In my discipline the subject learning objectives are explained from the start.	X	39	1.36	0.668
		Z	39	1.41	0.595
Q15	I made it clear from the start what I expected from my student to achieve in my subject.	X	39	1.41	0.785
		Z	38	1.76	0.998

Comparison of the Perspectives of Teachers from the Two Universities on Programme Development Processes: A Mann-Whitney U test was used to find out whether teachers from University X had the same perspective on this theme as teachers from University Z (see Appendix 10, *Table 1*). These findings suggest that teachers from University X were more likely, compared with their peers from University Z, to follow the NCAAA recommended policy on programme development processes. [Mann-Whitney U=582.50, p=0.055 (<0.05)].

6.2.1.2 Quality of teaching

There were 14 questions designed to explore this theme included in the survey, as shown in *Table 12*. The purpose of these questions was to identify teachers' perceptions of issues related to how they teach, e.g. whether the teaching approach they used was more focused on transmitting information to the student rather than on promoting his level of understanding. Findings related to this theme indicated whether elements of good teaching had been used, as intended by the NCAAA's recommended policy.

In order to obtain conceptually similar and significant analyses of issues related to this theme, a principal[24] components analysis was conducted with the determinant of the correlation matrix, along with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The determinant of the matrix was 0.041, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.540, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at $p=0.001$ (<0.05). In examining the varimax-rotated component matrix of the 14 questions used, eigenvalues equal to or greater than 1.00 were extracted. Five dimensions emerged, with five variables substantially loading on Factor 1, two variables substantially loading on Factor 2, two variables substantially loading on Factor 3, two variables substantially loading on Factor 4, and three variables substantially loading on Factor 5. The observed variables, factor loadings, commonalities, derived variables, variance explained, and reliability coefficients for the retained components are presented in *Table 12*.

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[24] A principal component analysis was also used in assessing the students' data, as will be shown later in § 6.2.2, for certain themes that have more than five items and in order to avoid repeating descriptions of the same procedure. Any theme that used a principal component analysis will refer to the procedure described in § 6.2.1.2 (quality of teaching theme).

The explained[25] variance of the five factors derived from the 14 questions was as follows: Factor 1 accounted for 17% of the variance; Factor 2 accounted for 13.27% of the variance; Factor 3 accounted for 12.55% of the variance; Factor 4 accounted for 10.28% of the variance; and Factor 5 accounted for 9.54% of the variance. These five factors combined accounted for 62.64% of the total variance of the 14 observed questions. The questions that loaded highly on Factor 1 all seemed to relate to teachers' willingness to understand the difficulties encountered by their students and their interest in promoting meaningful learning—this factor was named *teaching for meaningful understanding.* The questions that loaded highly on Factor 2 all seemed to relate to the issue of teachers being primarily concerned with transmitting information to students, and it was named *teaching as transmitting information.* The questions that loaded highly on Factor 3 all seemed to relate to the issue of teachers being interested in stimulating students and promoting their learning—this factor was named *subject-specific teaching competency* The questions that loaded highly on Factor 4 all seemed to relate to the issue that in the teaching-learning process, the teacher facilitates student learning by encouraging participation and promoting meaningful learning, and so it was named *teaching strategies for active learners.* The questions that loaded highly on Factor 5 all seemed to relate to the question of whether the approach used by the teacher was more oriented towards transmitting information to the student than promoting a positive transfer in learning—this factor was named *teaching orientation.*

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[25] The explained variance is illustrated here only for the quality of teaching theme as an example, in order to avoid a repetition of explaining the variance for other themes that used a principal components analysis, for these themes the variance is presented only in the table.

Table 12: Factor analysis of quality of teaching variables across the two Universities X and Z.

Observed Variable questions	Observed variables statements	Factor loading	Communality	Derived variable	Variance (%)	Reliability coefficient
Factor 1						
Q4	In my discipline I am interested in understanding the difficulties that my students might encounter in studying the subject.	0.740	0.651	Teaching for meaningful understanding	17.00	0.682
Q6	In my teaching approach the focus is more about preparing students for a future career.	0.478	0.600			
Q11	In my teaching approach, I feel a lot of teaching time should be used to question students' ideas.	0.716	0.716			
Q12	We take time out in classes so that students can discuss among themselves the difficulties that they encounter studying this subject.	0.685	0.646			
Q23	In my discipline I believe that the teaching strategies that I applied are consistent with the description of subject contents.	0.671	0.533			
Factor 2						
Q7	In my discipline, I think that subject information can only be properly presented if audio-visual materials are used.	0.742	0.669	Teaching as transmitting information	13.27	0.621
Q9	In my teaching approach I feel it is important to present many facts in the classes so that students can know what they have to learn from the subject.	0.840	0.785			
Factor 3						

Q5	In my teaching approach I am concerned to stimulate my students towards studying the subject.	0.715	0.588	Subject-specific Teaching competency	12.55	0.554
Q20	I believed that the teaching strategies that I applied in this subject are consistent with subject learning objectives.	0.738	0.638			
Factor 4						
Q2	In my teaching approach I am concerned to encourage students' participation in order to promote their interaction during the lecture.	0.726	0.665	Teaching strategies for active learners	10.28	0.531
Q3	I try to guide students in learning rather than emphasize any knowledge on them.	0.811	0.685			
Factor 5						
Q8	My teaching approach is more focused on transmitting subject information to the student.	-0.693[26]	0.620	Teaching orientation	9.54	(0.248)
Q10	I design my teaching method in this subject with the assumption that most of the students have very little useful knowledge of the topics to be covered.	0.728	0.624			
Q1	In my discipline it is important that by completing a course the student should be able to analyse a situation and display logical and rational thinking.	0.360	0.349			

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[26] This is because generated scores are usually standardized and in this case the negative loading relates to the low end of the $1 - 5$ scale of the entered data.

In order to enhance the interpretation of the factors, descriptive statistics of the 14 questions related to the quality of teaching theme were calculated. The means, standard deviations (SDs) and sample sizes (N values) for the 14 questions for the total sample and for Universities X and Z separately are shown in (Appendix 10, *Table 2*). Below I discuss the meaning of these five factors in the light of the mean values obtained on individual items.

Factor 1, teaching for meaningful understanding: For the observed variables related to this factor, the mean values of individual items for all five statements from teachers in both universities were between 1.31 and 2.18. A comparison of these results revealed that both groups of teachers agreed that they were more focused on student learning. For instance, they were interested in understanding the difficulties that their students might encounter in mastering course material. Also, they felt that a lot of their teaching time should be used to question students' ideas.

Factor 2, teaching as transmitting information: This factor had two observed variables, Q7 and Q9. These two questions were designed to find out whether teachers' orientation to teaching was focused on transmitting information to the student. The mean value of these two individual items from teachers from both universities was between 2.51 and 3.21. Their responses did not clearly indicate how they felt about their own performance in this regard.

Factor 3, subject-specific teaching competency: The mean values for the two individual items related to this factor were between 1.45 and 2.34. Teachers from both universities agreed that they wanted their students to do their best academically (Q5). They agreed that the teaching strategies they used were consistent with learning objectives (Q20).

Factor 4, teaching strategies for active learners: The mean values for the two individual items related to this factor were between 1.36 and 1.92. Teachers from both universities agreed that they had a duty to encourage student participation in the learning process (Q2). Their responses also indicated that students were encouraged to be active rather than passive learners (Q3).

Factor 5, teaching orientation: The three observed variables related to this factor were intended to reveal whether teachers were more likely to focus on transmitting information to their students or on enhancing their students' understanding of course material. Interestingly, there was no consensus on this point among teachers from either university. Teachers agreed that they used teaching approaches which guided students to analyse a situation and demonstrate logical and rational thinking (Q1). On the contrary, they reported that they were primarily focused on transmitting information to students (Q8 and Q10). It is apparent from these findings that teachers at both universities may be unaware of which teaching orientation is effective and meaningful for improving learning.

Comparison of the Perspectives of Teachers from Universities X and Z on the Quality of Teaching theme: To find out if there were any differences among teachers' orientations to teaching and the teaching approaches they used, comparisons between the two groups of teachers were made using the five factor scores. Results of the parametric independent sample t-test are presented in (Appendix 10, *Table 3*). For teaching for meaningful understanding, the mean factor score for teachers from University X was 0.130, while the mean factor score for teachers from University Z

was -0.138[27]. Even though teachers from University Z seemed to agree more that the mode of teaching they applied was more focused on student learning, there was no statistically significant difference on this derived variable between the two universities [t=1.09, p=0.282 (>0.05)].

For teaching as transmitting information, the mean factor score for teachers from University X was -0.346, while the mean factor score for teachers from University Z was 0.367. Teachers from University X placed more emphasis on teaching as transmitting information than did teachers from University Z, and there was a statistically significant difference on this derived variable between the two universities [t=-3.08, p=0.003 (<0.05)].

For subject-specific teaching competency, the mean factor score for teachers from University X was 0.215, while the mean factor score for teachers from University Z was -0.228. Even though teachers from University Z seemed to agree more that they were concerned with motivating their students to do their best in the subject and agreed that the teaching strategies used were consistent with subject learning objectives, there was no statistically significant difference between the two universities on this derived variable [t=1.83, p=0.072 (>0.05)].

For teaching strategies for active learners, the mean factor score for teachers from University X was 0.012, while the mean factor score for teachers from University Z was -0.013. Again, even though teachers from University Z seemed to agree more that through the learning process their teaching strategies facilitated their students' learning, there was no statistically significant difference between the two universities for this derived variable [t=0.10, p=0.922 (>0.05)].

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[27] Negative numbers means the mean of individual items are toward the low end of the 1 to 5 scale used by the researcher.

For teaching orientation, the mean factor score for teachers from University X was -0.029, while the mean factor score for teachers from University Z was 0.030. This indicated that teachers from both universities agreed that they were orientated towards a mode of teaching which focused on transmitting information to students, but they also agreed that they were orientated towards a mode of teaching that focuses on enhancing students' understanding of course material. There was no statistically significant difference between the two universities on this derived variable [t=-0.24, p=0.813 (>0.05)].

6.2.1.3 Student assessment

The survey included five questions designed to explore this theme, as shown in *Table 13*. These questions were designed to identify teachers' perspectives on issues related to student assessment, e.g. whether the assessment method used focused on assessing students' understanding of course material rather than just how well they memorized facts, and whether the teachers believed that their participation in the academic programmes offered by the quality assurance unit in both universities (as recommended by NCAAA policy) helped them effectively assess student learning. *Table 13* compares the perspectives of teachers from University X to University Z on the theme of student assessment. The table shows the descriptive statistics analyses of the five questions related to this theme. In both universities, the overall responses to these five statements were very positive, except for those to Q16. Teachers' responses suggested that they were more likely to focus on assessing a student's level of understanding of course material than on his ability to reproduce course material (Q14 and Q17). Their responses also indicated that elements of

effective assessments are associated with their teaching approaches. They all reported that they explained assessment procedures to their students at the beginning of a course, as recommended by NCAAA policy (Q22). It is apparent from their responses to Q24 that they felt that their participation in academic programmes to improve the use of assessment methods helped them in effectively assessing student learning. The only exception was their responses to Q16: teachers from both universities to some extent failed to follow NCAAA recommended policy that students should be given helpful feedback each semester.

Table 13: Comparison of descriptive statistics for student assessment variables between teachers of University X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed variables statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q14	I am more interested in assessing student level of understanding of subject contents than assessing the level of memorization.	X	39	1.38	0.633
		Z	39	1.67	0.772
Q16	I provide each one of my students with a helpful feedback on his progress in this subject.	X	39	2.54	1.232
		Z	38	2.53	1.246
Q17	I am more interested in assessing student level of memorization subject contents than assessing the level of understanding.	X	39	4.08	0.929
		Z	39	3.49	1.097
Q22	In my discipline and from the start the assessment procedure is explained for the students.	X	39	1.44	0.641
		Z	38	1.82	1.036
Q24	I believe that the academic programmes that I participated in to improve the use of assessment methods are helping me in assessing effectively my students learning.	X	33	1.97	0.883
		Z	32	1.84	0.767

Comparison of the Perspectives of Teachers from University X and Z on the Student Assessments theme: A Mann-Whitney U test was used to find out whether teachers from University X had the same perspective on student assessments theme as teachers from University Z. There were no significant differences between the two universities on this theme [Mann-Whitney U=389.00, p=0.343 (>0.05)] (see Appendix 10, *Table 4*).

6.2.1.4 Programme evaluation and review processes

There were three questions designed to explore this theme included in the survey, as shown in *Table 14*. The purpose of these questions was to identify teachers' perspectives on certain issues related to this theme; for example, as recommended by NCAAA policy, teachers were asked whether students' opinions about the programme were obtained at the end of the course and about their own opinions concerning the effectiveness of their teaching. *Table 14* compares the perspectives of teachers from University X to University Z on the programme evaluation and review processes theme. The table shows the descriptive statistics analyses of the three questions related to this theme.

In both universities, the overall responses to these three statements were positive, except the responses of teachers from University X to Q19. Most teachers' responses indicated that they were interested in knowing students' opinions concerning the effectiveness of their teaching (Q18). They agreed that during the programme evaluation process, the quality assurance unit in each university took into account their perceptions of programme quality with a view to improving student learning (Q25). The responses of teachers from University Z suggested that all

students had the opportunity to officially evaluate elements of the educational process, e.g. the quality of teaching (Q19), but the moderate responses from teachers from University X on this issue seemed to indicate that students at University X to some extent may not have had the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the educational process.

Table 14: Comparison of descriptive statistics of programme evaluation and review processes variables between teachers of University X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed variables statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q18	In my discipline, I am interested to know my students' opinions concerning the effectiveness of my teaching approach and its potential influence on their learning approaches.	X	37	1.86	0.751
		Z	39	1.72	0.759
Q19	At course end, I make sure that all my students have the opportunity to evaluate officially the educational process in terms of the quality of course design, teaching strategies and assessment methods.	X	39	3.10	1.334
		Z	39	2.41	1.585
Q25	During the process of programme evaluation, the quality assurance unit take into account my perceptions of programme quality with a view to enhancing the quality of student learning.	X	31	2.39	1.383
		Z	34	2.09	1.138

Comparison of the Perspectives of Teachers from University X and Z on the Programme Evaluation and Review Processes theme: A Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine whether teachers from University X had the same perspective as teachers from University Z on this theme. (see Appendix 10, *Table 5*). Comparing

the two groups, it can be seen that teachers from University Z seemed to agree more than did their peers from University X that NCAAA recommended policy concerning certain issues related to the programme evaluation and review processes theme was being adhered to [Mann-Whitney U=522.50, p=0.017 (<0.05)].

6.2.1.5 Support for improvements in the quality of teaching

There was only one question designed to explore this theme included in the survey, as shown in *Table 15*. The purpose of this question was to identify teachers' perspectives on the impact of training programmes on improving their teaching; as recommended by NCAAA policy, such training programmes should support continuing improvement in the quality of teaching. *Table 15* compares the perspectives of teachers from University X to University Z on the support for improvements in the quality of teaching theme. The table shows the descriptive statistics analyses of the only question related to this theme. The overall responses to this statement from teachers from both universities were very positive. The mean values of 1.74 and 1.85 for this single item indicated clearly that teachers perceived their participation in such programmes to have a positive impact on their teaching. These findings suggest that teachers from both universities were satisfied that NCAAA policy was being adhered to by these two institutions in relation to this theme.

Table 15: Comparison of descriptive statistics of support for improvements in the quality of teaching variable between teachers of University X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed variables statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q21	I believe that the academic programmes that I participated in to enhance my teaching performance are having a good impact on my teaching approach.	X	33	1.85	0.755
		Z	34	1.74	0.790

Comparison of the Perspectives of Teachers from University X and Z on Improvements in the Quality of Teaching theme: A Mann-Whitney U test was used to find out if teachers from University X had the same perspectives as teachers from University Z in relation to this theme. (see Appendix 10, Table 6). Comparing the two groups, it can be seen that there was no significant difference between them [Mann-Whitney U=511.50, p=0.505 (>0.05)].

6.2.2 Survey findings from students' data

6.2.2.1 Programme development processes

There were three questions on the survey designed to explore this theme, as shown in *Table 16*. The purpose of these questions was to identify student experiences of issues related to programme planning as recommended by NCAAA policy, namely that all courses should contribute in planned ways to accomplish the intended learning outcomes for the programme. This process involved identifying whether the learning objectives of the subjects being studied were explained right from the start, whether the subject content developed the student's academic interests, and whether the student had a clear understanding of what he was supposed to do and what was expected during the course. *Table 16* compares the perspectives

of students from University X to University Z on the programme development processes theme. The table shows the descriptive statistics analyses for the three questions related to this theme.

For Q17, whether learning objectives were explained right from the start, the mean value for the whole sample and for the two universities (X and Z) separately was between 2.68 and 3.18. Thus, the overall moderate responses from students suggested that the learning objectives being explained at the beginning of a term seemed to some extent not to be a common practice being followed at these two universities. For Q18, whether the study subject content was developing areas of students' academic interest, a comparison of the results revealed that students from University Z with a mean value of 2.47 tended to agree more with this statement in a positive way than their peers from University X who presented a mean value of 2.60. For Q20, whether the student usually had a clear idea of what he was expected to achieve in the study subject, the mean value for the whole sample and for the two universities (X and Z) separately was between 2.64 and 2.71. It can, therefore, be assumed that the overall moderate responses from students indicated that to some extent those students from both universities were more likely not to have had enough clarity of what was expected of them to achieve in the studied subject.

Table 16: Comparison of descriptive statistics of programme development processes variables between students of University X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed variables statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q17	The learning objectives of this subject were explained right from the start.	X	228	3.18	1.329
		Z	201	2.68	1.179
Q18	Subject content is developing areas of my academic interest.	X	227	2.60	1.035
		Z	200	2.47	0.992
Q20	In this subject I have usually had a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me.	X	226	2.71	1.025
		Z	200	2.64	0.993

Comparison of Programme Development Processes theme for students from Universities X and Z: A Mann-Whitney U test was used to find out if students from University X had the same or different experiences as students from University Z in relation to this theme. (see Appendix 10, *Table 7*). Despite the overall moderate responses for the whole sample and the two universities concerning the three statements shown above, there was a significant difference between the two groups on this theme. Students' responses from University Z indicated that NCAAA recommendations related to this theme were more likely to be being applied at University Z, more than University X [Mann-Whitney U = 19662.0, $p = 0.009$ (<0.05)].

6.2.2.2 Quality of teaching

There were 14 questions included in the survey designed to explore this theme, as shown in *Table 17.* The purpose of these questions was to identify students' perceptions and experiences of issues related to teaching quality, e.g. whether the teaching approach used guided the student to be an active rather than a passive learner. In order to consolidate the data on the quality of teaching theme, and thus make it easier to make comparisons between the two universities, a principal component factor analysis was carried out for the 14 questions relating to this theme (as previously described in § 6.2.1.2, the relevant norms and standards for doing such analyses were observed). Three dimensions emerged, with 10 variables substantially loading on Factor 1, three variables substantially loading on Factor 2, and one variable substantially loading on Factor 3. The questions that loaded highly on Factor 1 all seemed to relate to students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the teaching methods in enhancing learning—this factor was named *teaching for meaningful learning.* The questions that loaded highly on Factor 2 all seemed to relate to the issue that the approach used by the teacher prompted a surface approach to learning, and was labeled *Learning approach.* The single question that loaded highly on Factor 3 related to the issue that the approach used by the teacher was more about transmitting information on a subject to the student, and was named *teaching as transmitting information.*

Table 17: Factor analysis of quality of teaching theme variables across the two universities X and Z

Observed Variable (questions)	Observed variables (statements)	Factor loading	Communality	Derived variable	Variance (%)	Reliability coefficient
Factor 1						
Q28	The lecturer made it clears right from the start what he expected from me to achieve in this subject.	0.603	0.393	Teaching for meaningful learning	36.30	0.886
Q29	The lecturer motivated me to do my best in this subject.	0.682	0.481			
Q30	The lecturer provides a clear and useful explanation of ideas.	0.753	0.580			
Q31	Teaching method makes studying this subject interesting.	0.740	0.550			
Q33	The lecturer is concerned to engage me in the learning process to be able to analyze a situation and display logical and rational thinking.	0.661	0.472			
Q36	Lecturer teaching approach is guiding me in this subject to be an active rather than passive learner.	0.769	0.599			
Q37	Lecturer teaching approach enables me to explore my academic interests in the subject.	0.673	0.482			
Q40	The lecturer in this subject is applying a teaching approach that focuses on enhancing student conceptions of subject content.	0.676	0.471			
Q41	The lecturer is interested to know the difficulties that might encounter me in studying this subject.	0.743	0.553			
Q42	Lecturer teaching approach applied in this subject is consistent with subject objectives.	0.701	0.507			

Factor 2						
Q22	To do well in this subject all you need is a good memory.	0.732	0.557	Learning approach	10.93	0.441 (if Q35 deleted)
Q32	The lecturer seems more interested in testing what I have memorized than what I have understood.	0.724	0.552			
Q35	The lecturer seems more interested in testing what I have understood than what I have memorized.	-0.631[28]	0.645			
Factor 3						
Q38	Lecturer teaching approach is to impart subject information	0.934	0.898	Teaching as transmitting information	8.07	-

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[28] See footnote 19

In order to enhance the interpretation of the derived factors, descriptive statistics of the 14 questions related to the quality of teaching theme were calculated. The mean, the standard deviation (SD) and sample size (N value) for the 14 questions for the total sample and for Universities X and Z separately are shown in (Appendix 10, *Table 8*). Below I discuss the meaning of these three factors in the light of the mean values obtained on individual items.

Factor 1, teaching for meaningful learning: For most of the observed variables related to this factor, which measured student perceptions and experiences of teaching quality, the mean value for the whole sample and for the two universities separately was between 2.53 and 3.28. These moderate responses emerged from the students' responses and particularly those from University X, which to some extent seemed not to support the NCAAA recommended policy, namely, that teaching must be of a high quality.

Factor 2, learning approach: In both universities, student responses suggested that to some extent their teachers seem not to be interested in testing what they understood (Q35). Their responses indicated the opposite view on this issue, as both study groups agreed that, in order for a student to do well in studying a subject, all that a person needed was a good memory (Q22). Further, students' responses, and in particular those from University Z, showed that they believed that their teachers were more interested in testing what students had memorized rather than what they understood (Q32). Students' overall responses at both universities on these three observed variables, including the following one, were likely to prompt them to continue to follow the surface approach to learning.

Factor (3), teaching as transmitting information: This factor had only one observed variable (Q38) and the mean value for University X students was 2.26 (closer to 2), while the mean value for University Z students was 2.27 (also closer to 2). Given that these means were very close, students from both universities tended to agree that the mode of teaching applied by their teachers was simply to transmit subject information.

Comparison of the Experiences of Students from Universities X and Z on the Quality of Teaching theme: To find out whether students from University X had the same experiences as students from University Z, the three factor scores were compared. Results of the parametric independent sample t-test are presented in (Appendix 10, *Table 9*). For *teaching for meaningful learning*, the mean factor score for students from University X was 0.171, while the mean factor score for students from University Z was -0.191. Students' responses suggested that the teaching approach applied by teachers from University Z seemed to be more effective than that by teachers from University X [t = 3.742, p = 0.001 (<0.05)].

For *learning approach,* the mean factor score for students from University X was 0.081, while the mean factor score for students from University Z was -0.090. These findings suggest that University Z was more likely to be characterised as encouraging the surface approach to learning than University X, but there was no statistically significant difference between the students' responses for this factor [t = 1.744, p = 0.082 (>0.05)].

For *teaching as transmitting information,* the mean factor score for students from University X was -0.057, while the mean factor score for students from University Z was 0.064. Student responses suggested that teachers at University X

were more likely to have the mode of teaching they applied focus on transmitting subject information to the student. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the students' responses from both universities for this factor [t = -1.226, p = 0.221 (>0.05)].

6.2.2.3 Student assessment

There were 11 questions designed to explore this theme included in the survey, as shown in *Table 18*. These questions aimed to identify students' experiences of various issues related to learning assessment, e.g. whether the assessment format focused on assessing students' understanding of content rather than just the memorization of facts. In order to consolidate the data on student assessment theme, and thus make it easier to make comparisons between the two universities, a principal component factor analysis was carried out for the 11 questions relating to this theme (as previously described in § 6.2.1.2, the relevant norms and standards for doing such analyses were observed). Two dimensions emerged, with nine variables substantially loading on Factor 1 and two variables substantially loading on Factor 2. The questions that loaded highly on Factor 1 all seemed to relate to students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the assessment methods used, along with the assessment procedures applied in their respective faculties. This factor was named *appropriate assessment and clarity of procedure.* The questions that load highly on Factor 2 all seemed to relate to students' perceptions that the assessment methods used in their faculties were not conducive to their learning. This factor was named *obstructive assessment.*

Table 18: Factor Analysis of Student Assessment theme Variables across the Two Universities X and Z

Observed Variable questions	Observed variables statements	Factor loading	Communality	Derived variable	Variance (%)	Reliability coefficient
Factor 1						
Q43	At term beginning, assessment procedure is determinate in this subject.	.596	.373	Appropriate assessment and clarity of procedure	32.67	0.785
Q44	The actual goals addressed by the assessment in this subject are consistent with subject objectives.	.744	.554			
Q45	The assessment in this subject is enhancing my learning.	.736	.594			
Q46	Assessment format for this subject emphasizes assessing my understanding of its content not just memorization of facts.	.587	.514			
Q48	Assessment format for this subject provides feedback beyond just marks.	.590	.349			
Q50	In this subject I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn before undertaking the exam.	.589	.350			
Q51	Assessment methods for this subject encourage me to apply high critical learning skills (e.g. critical thinking skills, problem solving skills).	.674	.484			
Q52	In this subject I am encouraged to be involved in the assessment process (e.g. the negotiation of the forms or content of assessment).	.651	.425			
Q66	In my faculty, as a student the academic appeal is clear for me.	.386	.152			

Factor 2							
Q47	The assessment in this subject is hindering my learning.	.724	.529	Obstructive assessment	13.47	0.449
Q49	Assessment format for this subject emphasizes assessing my ability to reproduce subject facts rather than assessing my understanding of theme.	.856	.749			

In order to enhance the interpretation of the derived variables, descriptive statistics analyses of the 11 questions of the student assessments theme were calculated. The mean, standard deviation (SD), median and sample size (N value) for the total sample and for Universities X and Z separately for the 11 questions are shown in (Appendix 10, *Table 10*). Below I discuss the meaning of these two factors in the light of the mean values obtained on individual items.

Factor 1, appropriate assessment and clarity of procedure: For the individual items related to this factor, particularly Q44, Q45, Q46, Q50 and Q51, which measured student perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment methods in enhancing their learning, the mean value of individual items for the whole sample and for the two universities separately was between 2.55 and 3.08. These overall moderate responses from students suggested that the way the students were assessed and which assessment methods were used at these two universities were to some extent ineffective in enhancing student learning. Further, other observed variables, specifically Q48, Q52 and Q66, were aimed at finding out whether assessment procedures used by the participating faculties provided students with the following: constructive feedback, a clear academic appeal process, and the opportunity for the student to be involved in the assessment process. The mean values of individual items, regardless for which university, was between 3.75 and 4.30. From examining these data, we can see that students at both universities felt that their assessments were not effective in assuring and delivering the three goals mentioned above.

Factor 2, obstructive assessment: This factor had two observed variables, and student responses in particular from University Z showed they agreed that the mode of assessment used emphasized their ability to reproduce subject facts rather than

assessing their understanding of themes (Q49). With regard to whether the used mode of assessment hindered student learning (Q47), the mean value of individual items for the whole sample and for the two universities separately was between 2.73 and 2.83. Although students seemed not to agree with this statement clearly, their moderate responses on this issue seemed to suggest that these used assessment methods might increase the likelihood that their learning might be hindered.

Comparison of the experiences of students from Universities X and Z on the student assessment theme: To find out if students from University X had the same or different experiences from students from University Z, the two factor scores were compared. Results of the parametric independent sample t-test are presented in (Appendix 10, *Table 11*). For *Appropriate assessment and clarity of procedure*, the mean factor score for students from University X was 0.192, while that for students from University Z was -0.227. When comparing the two results, although their overall responses on this factor seemed not to be very encouraging, it can be seen that, at University Z, student perceptions of the effectiveness of the assessment methods used, along with the assessment procedures applied by their respective faculties, seemed to be better than those for students from University X. The result shows a significant difference between the two groups on this factor [t = 3.507, p = 0.001 (<0.05)].

For *obstructive assessment*, the mean factor score for students from University X was 0.046, while the mean factor score for students from University Z was -0.054. Student responses here indicated that at University Z the assessment methods used by their faculties focused on assessing student ability to reiterate facts, but not on whether the material was understood; however, there was no statistically

significant difference between the students' responses from both universities on this factor [t = 0.819, p = 0.414 (>0.05)].

6.2.2.4 Programme evaluation and the review processes

There were eight questions included in the survey designed to explore this theme, as shown in *Table 19*. The purpose of these questions was to identify students' experiences of issues relate to this theme, e.g. whether at term end, the student had the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the educational process as recommended by NCAAA policy. In order to consolidate the data on programme evaluation and the review processes theme, and thus make it easier to make comparisons between the two universities, a principal component factor analysis was carried out for the 8 questions relating to this theme (as previously described in § 6.2.1.2), the relevant norms and standards for doing such analyses were observed). Two dimensions emerged, with six variables substantially loaded on Factor 1, and two variables substantially loaded on Factor 2. The questions that loaded highly on Factor 1 all seemed to relate to students' perceptions of issues related to the quality of the programme they were studying on, e.g. whether there was a clear match between subject content and the outlined objectives. This factor was named *Experiences of the studying programme*. The two questions that loaded highly on Factor 2 seemed to relate to whether at term end, the student was provided with constructive feedback, and whether he was able to evaluate the quality of the educational process. This factor was labeled *Term end feedback and course evaluation.*

Table 19: Factor analysis of programme evaluation and review process theme variables across the two Universities X and Z

Observed Variable questions	Observed variables statements	Factor loading	Communality	Derived variable	Variance (%)	Reliability coefficient
Factor 1						
Q23	There is clear match between subject content and the outlined objectives.	.649	.436	Experiences of the studying programme	33.87	0.767
Q27	The programme in this department is highly organized.	.686	.472			
Q39	The lecturer in this subject is interested to know my opinion concerning the effectiveness of his teaching approach.	.539	.361			
Q68	I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern for the quality of course objectives and the methods used of accomplishing theme.	.665	.545			
Q69	I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern for improving the quality of teaching methods and assessing its effectiveness.	.754	.601			
Q70	I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern for improving the quality of used assessment methods.	.691	.557			
Q65	At term end, I have the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the educational process.	.809	.656			

Factor 2						
Q62	At term end, my department provides me with a feedback report that involves all subjects' results as well as recommendations to improve my performance.	.729	.569	Term end feedback and course evaluation	18.58	0.479

As previously, in order to enhance the interpretation of the derived variables, descriptive statistics of the 8 questions related to the programme evaluation and review processes theme were calculated. The mean, the standard deviation (SD), and the median and sample size (N value) for the eight questions for the total sample and for Universities X and Z separately are shown in (Appendix 10, *Table 12*). Below I discuss the meaning of these two factors in the light of the mean values obtained on individual items.

Factor 1, experiences of the studying programme: For all the observed variables related to this factor that measured student perceptions of issues related to the quality of the course and of the studying programme, the mean value of individual items for the whole sample and for the two universities separately was between 2.70 and 3.50. Therefore, the overall moderate responses from students and particularly those from University X suggested that to some extent students did not agree that there was a clear match between subject content and the outlined objectives. Further, they seemed not to agree that the studying programme in their department was highly organized, and their responses suggested that their teachers to some extent seemed not to be interested in knowing students' opinions concerning the effectiveness of their teaching approaches. Furthermore, other observed variables, specifically Q68, Q69 and Q70, aimed to find out from students' experiences whether in the past three academic years the quality of course objectives and the quality of teaching and assessment methods improved. These findings suggest that to some extent not much improvement was achieved to advance these three elements of the learning process at both universities.

Factor 2, term end feedback and course evaluation: This factor has two observed variables. Q62 sought to find out if at term end students were being provided with constructive feedback to improve their learning performance. The mean value of the individual item for the whole sample and for the two universities separately was 3.21 and 3.45. Thus, it is apparent from these moderate responses and particularly those from University X, that it is less likely that at term end students were being provided with constructive feedback. On the issue of whether students had the opportunity at the end of term to evaluate the quality of their educational process (Q65), the mean value of this item was 3.39 and 2.63 respectively, indicating that students from University X tended to disagree with that statement more than did students from University Z. Despite students' moderate responses on this issue, this finding seems to suggest that students from University Z were to some extent more likely to have the opportunity to evaluate the aspects of quality of their educational process as recommended by NCAAA policy than were their peers from University X.

Comparison of the experiences of students from Universities X and Z on the programme evaluation and review processes theme: A Mann-Whitney U test was used to find out if students from University X had the same or a different experience as students from University Z, the two factor scores were compared. Test results are presented in Table 13 in Appendix 10. For *Experiences of the studying programme,* the findings suggest that at University Z students were more likely to have a positive perception of the issues highlighted related to this factor than were students at University X. The result shows a significant difference between the two groups on this factor [Mann-Whitney U=18296, p=0.021 (<0.05)].

For *Term end feedback and course evaluation,* the responses of students suggest that University Z was more likely to be characterized as providing its students at term end with constructive feedback as well as facilitating for them the opportunity to evaluate aspects of their educational process as recommended by NCAAA policy compared with the view of University X, where the findings suggest that such a process was less likely to occur at this university. The result shows a significant difference between the two groups on this factor [Mann-Whitney U=13159, p=0.001 (<0.05)].

6.2.2.5 Educational assistance for students

There were seven questions included in the survey designed to explore this theme as shown in *Table 20*. The purpose of these questions was to identify students' experiences of issues related to educational assistance being provided for them as recommended by NCAAA policy, e.g. whether in their respective faculties students being provided with sufficient learning resources in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes. In order to consolidate the data on the educational assistance for students theme, and thus make it easier to make comparisons between the two universities, a principal component factor analysis was carried out for the seven questions relating to this theme (as previously described in § 6.2.1.2, the relevant norms and standards for doing such analyses were observed). Two dimensions emerged, with five variables substantially loading on Factor 1 and two variables substantially loading on Factor 2. The questions that loaded highly on Factor 1 all seemed to relate to the issue of understanding the difficulties that might be encountered in students' learning and whether the needed supported was being provided—this factor was named *understanding and supporting of students'*

learning. The questions that loaded highly on Factor 2 all seemed to relate to the issue that the available learning resources being provided were sufficient for supporting students' learning, and was labeled *appropriateness of learning resources*.

Table 20: Factor analysis of educational assistance for students variables across the Two Universities X and Z

Observed Variable questions	Observed variables statements	Factor loading	Communality	Derived variable	Variance (%)	Reliability coefficient
Factor 1						
Q25	The lecturer makes a real effort to understand difficulties I may be having in this subject.	0.690	0.481	Understanding and supporting of student's learning	30.61	0.720
Q34	The lecturer provides me with a helpful feedback on my progress in this subject.	0.542	0.386			
Q57	The programme administration staff are effective in supporting my learning.	0.660	0.576			
Q58	Teaching staff in my discipline seem to go out of their way to be friendly towards students.	0.779	0.615			
Q64	In my discipline, there is a clear interest in understanding the difficulties that might encounter me during studying this degree.	0.551	0.542			
Factor 2						
Q59	In my discipline the learning resources are appropriate for my study needs (e.g. library).	0.757	0.596	Appropriateness of learning resources	25.62	0.622
Q60	Resources on the University's website (e.g. electronic references) supported my learning.	0.859	0.740			

As previously, in order to enhance the interpretation of the derived variables, descriptive statistics analyses of the seven questions related to the educational assistance for students theme were calculated. The mean, standard deviation (SD), median and sample size (N value) for the seven questions for the total sample and for Universities X and Z separately are shown in Appendix 10, *Table 14*. Below I discuss the meaning of these two factors in the light of the mean values obtained on individual items.

Factor 1, understanding and supporting of students' learning: In both universities, students agreed that in their respective faculties there was a lack of providing them with constructive feedback regarding their learning progress (Q34). For the remaining observed variables, Q25, Q57, Q58 and Q64, the mean value of individual items for the whole sample and for the two universities separately in most cases was between 2.78 and 3.48. Their moderate responses on these statements indicated that both their teachers and the programme administration staff, and to some extent the level of effort put towards understanding the difficulties that students might have, and the level of support being provided to them was not sufficient enough to support student learning. Further, the data showed that students of University X in particular agreed that in their individual study discipline there was a lack in terms of understanding the difficulties that might encounter them during studying for that degree (Q64).

Factor 2, appropriateness of learning resources: This factor had two observed variables, Q59 and Q60. These two questions sought to find out whether the learning resources available in their disciplines were sufficient to support their

learning as recommended by NCAAA policy. The mean value of individual items for students of University Z showed that they agreed that the learning resources available in their disciplines were insufficient to support their learning. For University X the mean value indicated a moderate response but did not reveal agreement on the sufficiency of learning resources available in their individual disciplines.

Comparison of the experiences of students from Universities X and Z on educational assistance for students theme: A Mann-Whitney U test was used to find out if students from University X had the same or different experience as students from University Z, the two factor scores were compared. Test results are presented in Appendix 10, *Table 15*. For *Understanding and supporting students' learning,* the overall responses from students at University Z suggest that they were likely to receive more support from their teachers and programme administration staff throughout their learning studying than were their peers from University X. The result shows a significant difference between the two groups on this factor [Mann-Whitney U=14045, p=0.001 (<0.05)]. For *Appropriateness* of *learning resources,* students' responses indicated that adequate learning resources as recommended by NCAAA policy to support student learning was more available at University X than at University Z. The result shows a significant difference between the two groups on this factor [Mann-Whitney U=16119, p=0.001 (<0.05)].

6.2.2.6 Student learning

There were 27 questions in the survey designed to explore this theme. The purpose of these questions was to identify student experiences of issues related to

their orientation and the motivation towards learning. Findings from this theme determined whether the quality improvement agenda proposed by the NCAAA to improve learning in Saudi HEIs is having a positive impact on students' orientation to learning and the way they approach their learning. The following tables (21, 22, 23, 24, and 25) show the descriptive statistics analyses of the 27 questions related to this theme. I discussed the key interesting observations that emerged from the students' responses on issues related to the student learning theme. These 27 questions were divided into the following five main categories:

Category 1: Meaning orientation.

Category 2: Reproducing orientation.

Category 3: Achieving orientation.

Category 4: Perceptions of courses and their effects on student learning.

Category 5: Non-academic orientation.

Table 21: Meaning orientation (Category 1)

Question	Observed Variables	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	I tried to combine the subject that was dealt with separately in a course into one whole.	X	229	2.36	1.019
		Z	199	2.42	1.106
Q2	I tried to be critical of the interpretation of experts.	X	229	2.90	1.298
		Z	201	2.87	1.254
Q3	I tried to relate the new obtained information to my previous knowledge of the subject.	X	228	1.96	1.036
		Z	201	2.10	1.118
Q4	In addition to the syllabus, I studied other literature related to the content of the course.	X	228	3.64	1.368
		Z	199	3.55	1.402
Q5	If I find it difficult to understand a particular topic, I consult other books of my own accord.	X	228	3.10	1.373
		Z	201	2.69	1.306

Q6	I am interested in learning for its own sake.	X	228	2.09	1.050
		Z	201	2.05	0.984
Q54	When preparing for this assessment I tried to integrate the theoretical and practical components of the course so that they had some meaning for me.	X	193	2.28	1.873
		Z	180	2.58	1.960
Q56	I became increasingly absorbed in my work the more I read and studied for this assessment.	X	201	2.13	1.807
		Z	184	2.30	1.880

Table 22: Reproducing orientation (Category 2)

Question	Observed Variables	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q15	I tended to be generalized in studying the subject with little attention to details.	X	228	2.27	1.030
		Z	200	2.32	1.015
Q8	I studied according to the instructions given in the study materials or provided by the teacher.	X	228	1.89	1.094
		Z	201	1.98	1.012
Q9	I restricted my learning to the defined syllabus and specified tasks.	X	228	1.92	1.109
		Z	201	1.88	1.093
Q10	My main concern in studying a subject is completing assessment demands.	X	228	1.89	1.012
		Z	200	1.93	1.079
Q7	I memorized lists of characteristics of a certain phenomenon for exam demands.	X	227	2.08	0.997
		Z	201	2.09	1.011
Q53	When preparing for this assessment I summarized a lot of material without understanding it.	X	226	2.54	1.185
		Z	200	2.58	1.136
Q55	When preparing for this assessment I chose topics that I thought I could pass rather than those I was really interested in.	X	190	2.41	1.916
		Z	171	2.43	1.922

| Q11 | To me, learning is making sure that I can reproduce the facts presented in a course. | X | 228 | 2.23 | 1.138 |
| | | Z | 201 | 2.27 | 1.118 |

In both of the universities X and Z, data from *Table 21* when compared to the data from *Table 22* showed a lack of congruence among students' responses in relation to whether they considered that their orientation toward learning was driven by the factor of meaningful learning rather than simply reproducing knowledge. Looking at the findings in *Table 21* that measured students' meaning orientation towards learning, the mean value for the whole sample and for the two universities in most cases, except for questions Q2, Q4 and Q5, was between 1.96 and 2.42. This finding showed that students, and particularly those from University X, tended to agree with those statements. Thus, students' responses for these related questions from both of the universities suggested that their orientation towards learning was driven by factors of meaningful learning. For instance, they agreed that they tried to combine subjects that were dealt with separately in a course into a whole, and they agreed that, when preparing for assessment tasks, they tried to integrate the theoretical and practical components of a course, such that they had better comprehension of that course.

On the contrary, the findings in *Table 22* that measured students' reproducing orientation of learning revealed the opposite picture to what we noted in *Table 21*. Student responses from both universities suggested that their orientation towards learning was more likely to be driven by factors of reproducing knowledge than of meaningful learning. To clarify, the mean value for the whole sample and for the two universities in all the questions except one question (Q53) was between 1.88 and

2.43 and indicated that students tended to agree with almost all the statements. For instance, they agreed that the topics tended to be generalised when studying the subject, with little attention paid to detail, and they agreed that they restricted their learning to the defined syllabus and the specified learning tasks. Accordingly, this lack of congruence that existed between student responses to these two categories likely suggests that students from both universities, X and Z, to some extent were not driven by the factor of meaningful learning which promotes the use of the meaning approach to learning.

Table 23: Achieving orientation (Category 3)

Question	Observed Variables	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q13	My main source of motivation for learning is competitive and self-confident as a lever for success.	X	228	2.18	0.982
		Z	201	2.03	1.046
Q26	I am studying this subject because it is relevant to my future career.	X	227	2.22	1.205
		Z	199	2.15	1.169
Q12	My main source of motivation for learning is to obtain a qualification.	X	228	2.14	1.234
		Z	201	2.20	1.347

As shown in *Table 23*, three questions included in the survey were designed to explore whether these participant students were driven by intrinsic or extrinsic motivation when learning. Student responses from both universities X and Z seemed to suggest that their motivation for learning was more likely to be driven by an extrinsic motivation. They agreed that vocational relevance was the main reason for studying a course (Q26), and they agreed that their main source of motivation for learning was to obtain a qualification (Q12).

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Table 24: Perceptions of courses and their effects on student learning (Category 4)

Question	Observed Variables	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q24	I am encouraged in this course to use alternative sources of information to enhance my understanding of the subject syllabus.	X	226	3.27	1.394
		Z	200	3.18	1.344
Q21	My capacity skills for research and inquiry in this course are developing.	X	226	2.83	1.067
		Z	199	2.77	1.140
Q19	The workload in this course is too heavy.	X	226	2.54	1.200
		Z	199	2.70	1.262
Q63	My degree course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.	X	225	3.00	1.368
		Z	201	2.83	1.313

As shown in *Table 24,* four questions in the survey (specifically Q24, Q21 and Q63) sought to find out whether the student was being encouraged to use alternative sources of information to enhance his understanding of the subject syllabus; whether the student thought that his capacity skills for research and inquiry were being developed and whether the degree course stimulated enthusiasm for further learning. The mean values for the whole sample, regardless of university, was between 2.77 and 3.27 in both universities, these moderate responses from students regarding these three questions suggested that students felt that the course they were studying under the taught programme was not effective in delivering the three results noted above.

Table 25: Non-academic orientation (Category 5)

Question	Observed Variables	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q16	My interest in academic studies and vocational aspiration is low.	X	228	3.11	1.274
		Z	201	3.29	1.224
Q14	My study methods are disorganized (e.g. organize time ineffectively; not prompt in submitting work).	X	227	2.20	1.118
		Z	201	2.25	1.145
Q61	I am putting enough effort into study in this degree.	X	225	2.12	0.891
		Z	201	2.28	0.967
Q67	I feel I made the right decision in choosing this degree.	X	225	2.27	1.236
		Z	200	2.24	1.228

The four questions shown in *Table 25* and included in the survey were designed to measure students' non-academic orientation towards learning. Students' responses from both universities (particularly for Q61 and Q67) seemed to indicate that these students have an academic orientation towards learning. They agreed that they were putting enough effort into their studying of a course and also that they agreed that they made the right decision in choosing their degree. Despite these views, student responses to Q16 to some extent seemed not to support their claim in that they do not declare clearly that their interest in academic studies and vocational aspiration was high. Also, their responses to Q14 showed their agreement that their study methods were disorganized, e.g., organized their time ineffectively. Accordingly, this finding revealed a lack of congruence among the students in their responses from both universities X and Z regarding whether students were driven by an academic or non-academic orientation to learning. Indeed, their responses revealed mixed messages regarding their academic orientation toward learning.

6.2.3 A reflection on the meaning of midpoint (2.5 = Neutral) in the context of teachers' and students' responses

Before addressing the key findings of teachers' and students' responses in the following section, through presentation of the results and from questions across each of the surveys, two issues emerge around the meaning of midpoint neutral. Clarifying these two issues will allow the reader to understand the data and what they mean when the respondent selects the 'neutral' response. The first issue is that selecting 'neutral' may reflect that the respondent has insufficient knowledge or experience regarding the issue the question is intended to measure; meanwhile, including 'neutral' as a response avoids forcing the respondent to choose only between agree and disagree options. To illustrate, a question such as Q5, '*If I find it difficult to understand a particular topic, I consult other books of my own accord*[29]', is intended to measure whether participants, through their learning orientation, are keen to search for meaning in the learning process. In this case, the majority of respondents selected the neutral response, which might suggest that they lack the experience to understand whether their orientation towards learning is driven by factors of meaningful learning or not.

The second issue is that the presentation of the data across each of the surveys for both universities shows a set of questions for which the means lie quite close to the midpoint (2.5 = Neutral). Thus, a better understanding of whether subpopulations of teachers and students hold strong views (agree or disagree) is somewhat masked within the neutral response. Figures 7 and 8 represent graphically

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[29] Taken from students' survey presented in Table 21.

two questions whose answers are close to the midpoint to illustrate the range of responses on the Likert scales used for these questions. Appendix 10 represents graphically additional questions whose answers are close to the midpoint.

Figure 7.Teachers' responses to statement 16 that are close to the midpoint: I provide each one of my students with helpful feedback on his progress in this subject [30].
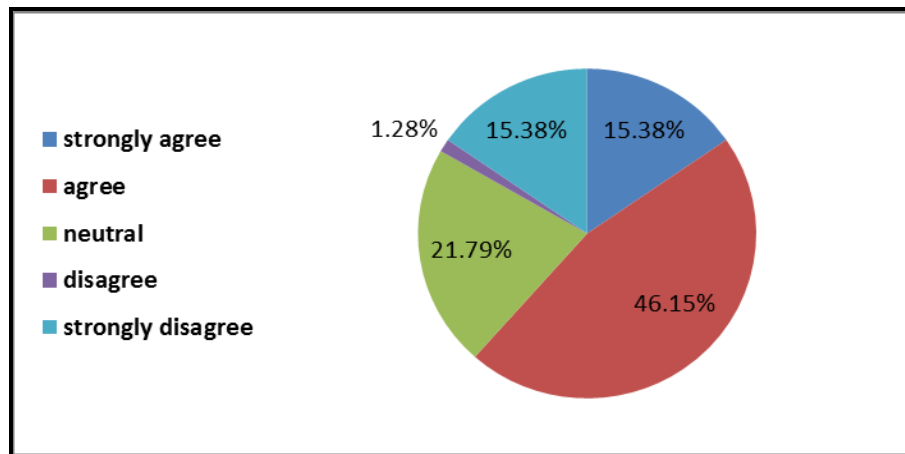
Figure 8. Students' responses to statement 53 that are close to the midpoint: When preparing for this assessment, I summarised a lot of material without understanding it [31].

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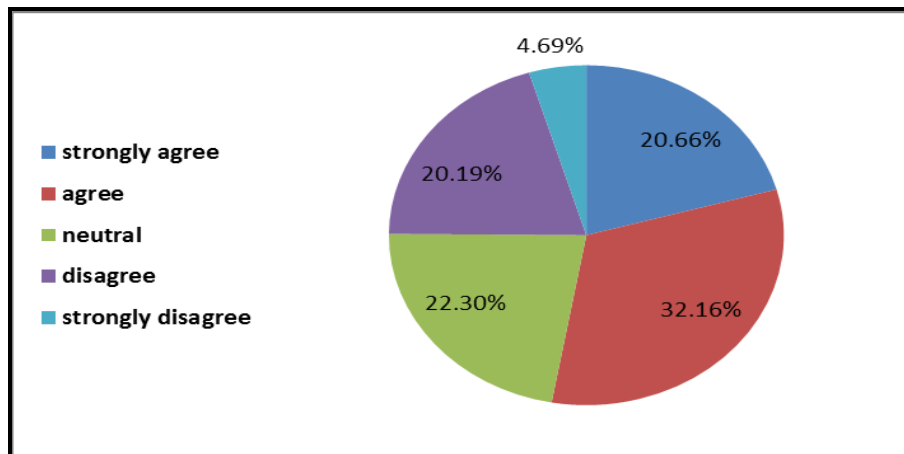
[30] Taken from teachers' survey presented in Table 13.

[31] Taken from students' survey presented in Table 22.

6.2.4 Summary of the key findings

To sum up, this section has presented the survey findings of teachers and students respectively from Universities X and Z. This section addressed teachers' perceptions and students' experiences of issues related to the teaching-learning process. The aim of this section has therefore been to identify the extent to which selected recommendations made by the NCAAA on the seven outlined themes addressed in this section had been implemented at each respondent's own university to improve the quality of the educational process and, thereby, student learning. The seven addressed themes were: the programme development processes; quality of teaching; student assessment; programme evaluation and review process; educational assistance for students; support for improvements in the quality of teaching; and student learning. As has been mentioned earlier in § 6.1, senior administrators' views indicated to some extent that neither university X nor Z was fully committed to adhering to the recommendations made by the NCAAA for improving the educational process. We only found that at the very least University Z was more likely to follow up NCAAA recommendations and that was just for certain issues related to the programme evaluation and review process theme. The crucial question may therefore be to ask here, do teachers' and students' responses from Universities X and Z on the outlined themes addressed in this section signal that the recommendations of improving the educational process were being adhered to by their perspective institutions, or whether their responses suggest, on the other hand, that one or neither of the two institutions was not committed to fulfilling NCAAA recommended policy to improve student learning. What is really remarkable about the key findings in this section is that, taking into perspective the responses of the

two participated groups (teachers and students) from both universities together, their responses fall into two different camps. The teachers' camp, in which their responses indicate in most cases that their teaching practice was in line with NCAAA recommended policy, and this suggested that their teaching is positively influencing their students' learning. The students' camp, on the contrary, revealed a different picture: their responses seemed to disprove the teachers' claims. The importance of this lies in the fact that most issues the students were asked about related to the quality of the educational process; their experiences of the teaching-learning process clearly seemed to suggest that NCAAA recommended policy was not fully achieved at either University X or Z. Having discussed the key finding from teachers and students I will discuss in § 6.3 the key issues that emerged from the three groups of stakeholders: deans, teachers and students; their perceptions and experiences, and whether teaching and learning practices in two Saudi public universities are congruent with the recommendations made by the NCAAA. The discussion is limited to the outlined themes addressed in §§ 6.1 and 6.2 of the interview and survey findings.

6.3 Summary and Conclusion

6.3.1 Summary of the findings of §§ 6.1 and 6.2

Having addressed in section one senior administrators' perceptions of the extent to which selected recommendations made by the NCAAA had been implemented at their own university and in section two teachers' and students' perceptions and experiences of the teaching and learning processes they were engaged in, in this section I highlight the key issues that emerged with a focus on

comparisons between senior administrators, teachers and students within and across the two universities. The objective is to explore the extent to which selected recommendations made by the NCAAA were directed towards the enhancement of the quality of educational process and student learning in relation to the following seven themes that were addressed in the interviews and survey with these three groups of participants.

First, the programme development processes: In both universities, teachers, particularly those from University X, agreed that subject learning objectives were defined at the start of the course. They were congruent in their responses, saying that they informed their students what is expected of them in order to achieve in the studied subject. Despite this agreement by teachers on these two issues, students' responses from both universities, particularly students from University X, to some extent did not share this high agreement with these issues. The observed differences between the teachers' and students' responses could be attributed to the findings from the senior administrators who were interviewed, their views were presented in § 6.1.3 - where we found that University Z was more likely, despite its students' moderate responses, to apply the NCAAA recommended policy than was University X.

Second, quality of teaching: With regard to teachers' responses, the data show that in both universities there was a lack of congruence concerning their orientation towards teaching. Teachers agreed that they used a teaching approach that guided the students to analyse a situation and display logical and rational thinking. This response indicated that they held a meaning orientation towards teaching their students. However, it was surprising to find that they then agreed that they followed

a mode of teaching that reflected a reproducing orientation in teaching, which focuses on the transmitting of subject information to the student. Accordingly, this inconsistency between the teachers' responses might explain in part the students' findings on issues related to teaching effectiveness. In both universities, the students' findings revealed that their perceptions of teaching effectiveness, in particular for students from University X, were to some extent not very encouraging. The students indicated that the teaching approach they experienced was more about the transmitting of subject information; this view was confirmed through student agreement that they were required to use a memorization approach in their studies. The students' responses to the issue of teaching effectiveness may be explained and compared with the findings from senior administrators. The interviews had revealed that neither of the two universities had a formal mechanism to evaluate teaching effectiveness, nor did they apply any mechanism to examine the congruence between the type of teaching strategies the teacher applied and the intended learning outcomes which the course was purposed to develop. The findings thus indicate a lack of appropriate policies to evaluate the quality of teaching within these two universities as recommended by the NCAAA; this lack of policy may encourage the use of a surface approach to learning, as certain teaching approaches are known to encourage students taking a surface approach to their learning. The point is that evaluating teaching more systematically in terms of whether it is conducive to encouraging among students a deep approach to learning could help eliminate teaching approaches that inadvertently encourage students to take a surface approach to learning.

Third, student assessment: At both universities, teachers' overall responses to certain issues related to student assessment were very positive. They agreed that the assessment procedure was explained to the students at the beginning of courses as recommended by NCAAA policy. Their responses suggested that the assessment methods used were more likely to be focused on assessing student levels of understanding of subject content rather than assessing the ability to reproduce the content. Also, teachers felt that their participation in the academic programmes to improve the use of assessment methods helped them when assessing student learning effectively. On the other hand, students from both universities seemed to be dissatisfied with the effectiveness of the assessment methods and procedures used by their respective faculties. From the data collected we can see that students from both universities agreed that assessment procedures providing students with constructive feedback, clear academic appeals processes, and opportunities for students to be involved in the assessment process were all insufficient. Thus, students' responses suggested that at both universities there is a lack of certain elements associated with this theme as recommended by NCAAA policy. A possible explanation for the students' responses could be attributed to the findings of § 6.1.2, in which the interviews revealed consensus among most of the nine participating administrators from both universities on issues related to student assessment: no formal procedure was implemented to ensure that the assessment methods used were appropriate for different forms of learning, as stated in course specifications; no constructive feedback was provided to students, including recommendations to improve learning along with course results; and there was a failure to inform students of the criteria and processes for academic appeals. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that at

both universities, particularly at University X, no mechanism was in place to ensure the fulfilment of course objectives; also, and more particularly for participants from University Z, the findings indicated that the assessment methods employed were not appropriate for accomplishing the different forms of learning sought, as recommended by NCAAA policy.

Fourth, programme evaluation and the review processes: Teachers from both universities agreed that they were interested in knowing students' opinions on the effectiveness of their teaching. The data also showed that all teachers but more strongly at University Z agreed that all students should have the opportunity to evaluate elements of the educational process officially, e.g., the quality of teaching. Contrary to this positive response, however, the overall responses from students in both universities, and particularly those from University X, revealed a moderate response to certain issues concerning this theme. Their responses suggested that their teachers to some extent did not seem to be interested in knowing students' opinions concerning the effectiveness of their teaching. It also seemed that, at the end of a term, not all participating students had the opportunity to evaluate the quality of their educational process. Students' findings also indicated that, in the past three academic years, not much progress had been made to improve each course's learning objectives, teaching, and assessment methods. Thus, students' moderate responses could be attributed to the findings from the interviews with senior administrators presented in § 6.1.3, and according to the NCAAA's policy, they recommended that to improve the quality of a programme as a whole, students' opinions about their programme should be obtained through a programme review process. Despite this point, the interviews revealed that, more particularly at University X, in terms of

students' participation in course evaluation, the students evaluated just some aspects of the studying subject and not all of it. Also, through the process of course evaluation, this process just covered a sample of students' opinions of course quality, rather than all students' opinions, and only for selected subjects. Such a response indicates a lack of awareness at these two participating universities of the importance of students' opinions as main stakeholders in the educational process, that their views of programme quality should be considered, as recommended by NCAAA policy.

Fifth, educational assistance for students: One of the issues related to this theme is to provide the student with helpful feedback during each semester as recommended by NCAAA policy. Despite this, the teachers' responses from both universities indicated that, to some extent, they did not follow the NCAAA recommendation regarding this issue. It is also apparent from the students' responses on other issues related to educational assistance being provided to them, that the findings for the two universities, and in particular for the students from University X, suggested that the level of effort from the teacher and from the programme administration staff side to understand the difficulties indicated that the student might not have the level of sufficient support to supporting their learning. Further, students, specifically those from University Z, disagreed that the learning resources available in their disciplines were sufficient to support their learning. These results may be explained and compared with the findings from the interviews presented in § 6.1.4. The findings reveal a consensus among most of the nine administrators at both universities that no formal procedure had been implemented through which they could provide individual students with needed assistance to improve their learning. They also agreed on the inefficiency of the academic advice unit in assisting students

in their learning process. Furthermore, the findings reveal that no constructive feedback was provided to students that included recommendations to improve learning along with course results.

Sixth, support for improvements in the quality of teaching: NCAAA policy recommended that teaching training programmes should be provided within the institution to support continuing improvement in the quality of teaching. In both universities, teachers' responses on this issue indicated clearly that their participation in such programmes was having a positive impact on improving their teaching. Nevertheless, the overall moderate responses from students concerning their perceptions of teaching effectiveness, particularly those from University X, did not seem to share the high agreement response that we found in the teachers' responses. Students' moderate responses on their teachers' effectiveness in teaching could be attributed to the findings from the interviews presented in § 6.1.1. The interviews revealed that neither university had a formal mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching strategies. The interviews also indicated that at both universities, and more particularly at University X, there was no mechanism being applied to ensure that the intended learning outcomes were met. On the issue of providing training programmes that focused on improving teaching strategies so that student learning could be enhanced, the interviews revealed that all the participating administrators agreed that training programmes were available for the teaching staff. However, most of them expressed their belief that the number of training programmes designed for teaching staff was limited.

Seventh, student learning: The results obtained from the five categories in § 6.2.2.6 of this theme show that, on the issue of student orientation to learning

categories 1 and 2, both universities' student responses indicated that their orientation to learning was not driven by a meaning orientation to learning which promotes the use of a meaning approach to learning (Table 21 and 22). Concerning the student motivation in learning category 3, students' responses revealed that their motivation for learning was more likely to be driven by extrinsic than intrinsic motivation at both universities (X and Z) (Table 23). The findings for category 4 seemed to indicate that, in both universities, students were more likely not to be encouraged to use alternative sources of information to enhance their understanding of a subject syllabus. Students' responses also did not indicate any clear agreement that their capacity and skills for research and inquiry were being developed, nor did they feel that their degree course stimulated their enthusiasm for further learning (Table 24). Regarding the non-academic orientation of learning category 5, the findings revealed a lack of congruence among the students' responses at both universities as to whether they were driven by academic or non-academic orientations to learning; their responses seemed to reveal mixed messages regarding their academic orientation towards learning (Table 25). Although, the NCAAA's recommended policy wanted to ensure good international standards for various aspects of the Saudi HEIs, student learning represented one element of them. From the overall responses to this theme, as well other themes, as we noted above, the findings seemed not to be very encouraging, and they raise some concerns about the effectiveness of the NCAAA recommended policy and the way this policy is being followed at these two participating public universities to improve student learning.

6.3.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, taken together, these results suggest that at both universities, X and Z, there was a clear lack of agreement among the three participating groups of stakeholders on several issues related to the improvement of the educational process as recommended by NCAAA policy. The crucial question may therefore be what sort of picture these findings allow us to construct. To put it simply, these findings could be divided into two different camps. The teachers' camp, as we mentioned in § 6.2.1, in which their responses indicated in most cases that their teaching practice was in line with NCAAA recommended policy, and this suggested that their teaching was positively influencing their students' learning. Nevertheless, more importantly, in the senior administrators' and students' camp, the responses from these two groups, as we noticed previously, in most cases indicated clearly the recommendations outlined by NCAAA policy were not fulfilled as they were supposed to in order to improve the students' learning. Indeed, it might be argued that the majority of senior administrators who were responsible of following up NCAAA recommendations acknowledged the fact that such recommendations were not fulfilled in their own faculties. In addition, looking at the experiences of the main stakeholders in the educational process – I mean here the students – and taking into consideration their concerns about the quality of this process as the data suggested, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that student learning at these two participating public universities seemed not to have yet been influenced positively by NCAAA recommended policy.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

This study set out to explore and describe the current engagement within Saudi higher education (HE) with the recommendations made by the National Committee for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) for enhancing the quality of student learning, and to identify whether the attributes of two public Saudi universities are consonant with these recommendations. The main aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings presented in Chapter 6. In response to the study's specific objectives, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section addresses the key findings from the perspectives of the three main groups of stakeholders (deans, teachers and students) and their perceptions and experiences, and focuses on how the seven dimensions of the teaching-learning theme (programme development processes, quality of teaching, student assessment, programme evaluation and review processes, educational assistance for students, support for improvements in the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes) were implemented in enhancing the quality of student learning as recommended by NCAAA policy; each dimension is discussed individually. The second section is a critique of the significance of the quality enhancement process across the two institutions, specifically the role of quality assurance unit in improving the educational process and thus student learning, as recommended by NCAAA policy.

7.1 The Quality of the Educational Process and Student Learning across the Two Institutions

(1) The Programme Development Processes: NCAAA policy recommends that course learning objectives, including knowledge and skills to be gained, be outlined in course specifications and addressed properly in each course. On these two issues, this study found that University Z, despite its students' moderate responses, was more likely to apply the NCAAA's recommended policy than was University X. This finding indicates that informing students of the intended learning outcomes for the course is a relatively unusual practice across the two universities. Therefore, there is no denying that, in order to ensure effective progression in student learning, students should be informed of the intended learning outcomes of a course. Also, for teachers, implementing the strategies that accomplish these objectives is a sign of effectiveness. Some authors have argued that, as mentioned in the literature review, the department plays an important role in accomplishing desired learning outcomes through appropriate course design (Bath et al., 2004). It is necessary for university teachers to be well aware of their responsibility to develop generic learning skills through student engagement with course content, and to assess student achievement to make sure that these objectives are fulfilled, a process called curriculum alignment[32] (Biggs and Tang, 2007; MacDonald and Horst, 2007; Bath et al., 2004).

(2) Quality of Teaching: NCAAA policy recommends that teaching strategies should be appropriate for the different types of learning outcomes the course is intended to develop, and that there should be a mechanism at the departmental level to evaluate teaching effectiveness. Despite this, as evident in the findings presented

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[32] See Chapter 3, § 3.1.3 Quality of curricula and constructive alignment.

in Chapter 6, neither university had a formal mechanism to evaluate teaching effectiveness on these two issues, nor did they apply any mechanism to examine the congruence between the type of teaching strategies a teacher applies and the intended learning outcomes which a course was purposed to develop. This explains, in part, students' perceptions of their teachers' effectiveness, particularly those of students from University X, which were somewhat discouraging. Of course, it could be argued that the lack of a good system to evaluate teaching effectiveness may have an impact on student learning. This point is evident in the findings, which indicated that the teaching approach primarily concerned with transmitting subject information; this view was confirmed by students' agreement that they were required to use a memorization approach in their studies, thus contributing to the use of a surface approach to learning. The key point to note is that teachers' reproducing orientation in teaching to some extent influences students' approaches to learning. As was mentioned in the literature review,[33] a number of authors (see Gow and Kember, 1993; Brown and Atkins, 1988) have argued that teachers need to change their conceptions of teaching in order to improve student learning. According to Kember (1997), teaching should be seen as a process of facilitating learning (student-centred orientation) where the emphasis is on developing students' understanding rather than simply transmitting information (teacher-centred orientation), which discourages meaningful learning. I also argued that a good university teacher employs a teaching method that not only motivates students' interest in the subject but also helps them to think critically and generate ideas; for example, to analyse, synthesise and evaluate

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[33] See Chapter 3, § 3.2 Conceptions of Teaching.

evidence and conclusions, as these skills greatly promote understanding (see Biggs, 1996; Bain, 2004; Strong et al., 2011).

Returning to the issue of the lack of a system to evaluate teaching effectiveness across the two universities, the key point to note, as I pointed out in Chapter 3,[34] is that it is a university's responsibility to enhance the quality of student learning through formal systematic processes of course evaluation, including evaluating the effectiveness of teaching (Barnett, 1992). The importance of this lies in the fact that such processes can contribute to informing the teacher of his/her teaching performance and to identifying potential weaknesses where improvements could be made (Saroyan and Amundsen, 2001). It should also be mentioned that the quality enhancement approach is being introduced in Saudi HEIs (including the two universities that participated in this study) to improve aspect of education[35]. It was argued that the success of quality enhancement approach at a teaching-learning level demands frequent evaluation. This involves regularly surveying students' perceptions of the effectiveness of teaching practice, which helps to ensure that learning objectives have been achieved (Gilbert et al., 1993), and requires that teachers improve their professional practice and commitment to their students (Chadwick, 1995).

(3) Student Assessment: Whilst NCAAA policy recommends that the assessment methods used should be appropriate for the intended learning outcomes, students should be provided constructive feedback and informed of the criteria for and processes of academic appeals. However, the key findings related to this theme show that deans' and students' responses across the two universities X and Z agreed

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[34] See Chapter 3, § 3.1.5 Evaluation of courses.
[35] See Chapter 1, § 1.3 Emergence of quality assurance within the Saudi higher education system.

that those recommendations had not been implemented. With respect to students'
dissatisfaction of the effectiveness of assessment methods and procedures used by
their respective faculties. As was discussed in Chapter 3,[36] assessment methods must
be matched to learning objectives (Brown and Knight, 1994). This means that an
appropriate mode of assessment is one that delivers the desired learning objectives—
in other words, one that has a positive, effective influence on student learning (Boud,
1995). Students' responses concerning the effectiveness of assessment methods take
us once again to the heart of the matter about the importance of evaluating the
effectiveness of teaching. As was mentioned in the discussion of the previous theme,
this issue is still not a common practice across the two universities. The fact of the
matter, as I argued regarding student assessment, is that the assessment methods used
should be appropriate in the sense that they do not lead the student to simply
reproduce the same content, simply regurgitating facts prevents the student from
applying the critical thinking skills that underpin meaningful learning and
understanding (Boud, 1990).

Regarding the failure to provide students with constructive feedback, the
crucial question may therefore be how student learning can be improved in such a
learning context, if students are not provided with meaningful feedback that
contributes effectively to improving their learning. As discussed in the literature
review, if assessments are to support students' learning, meaningful feedback must
be provided (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004). Meaningful feedback helps students identify
their own strengths and weaknesses in the learning process, and enables them to then
assess and improve the weaknesses (Sadler, 1989). It is also true that the ability to

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[36] See Chapter 3, § 3.1.4 Student assessment.

provide students with meaningful feedback on their learning performance is a sign of effective teaching (Harvey and Knight, 1996). What is really remarkable about this finding is that teachers at neither university seemed to be aware of how important these factors are to improving student learning.

In terms of the failure of both universities to inform students of the criteria and processes for academic appeals, it might be argued that student learning might be improved if they are made aware that their teachers and department staff are willing and able to listen to their concerns and take their views into consideration in the learning environment. The importance of this finding lies in the fact that, as I argued in Chapter 2[37], the Saudi HE system has always been hierarchical and students' voices are still neglected. The key point to note, as this finding suggests, is that although the NCAAA applied a quality enhancement approach similar to that used in the UK HE system, there is a significant failure to recognize the importance of student involvement in the institutional self-evaluation process compared to that found for example in the Scottish model, which emphasizes the value of student involvement. The question that remains for NCAAA policy makers is how can the institutional self-evaluation process effectively achieve the NCAAA's objectives if students are not informed of the criteria for and processes of academic appeals, as this finding indicated? This in turn means that students from Universities X and Z were not efficiently involved as main stakeholders in evaluating the educational process, as recommended by the NCAAA. Judging by this finding, it seems clear that at present there still is a significant failure to recognize the importance of students' voices in Saudi HE, at least in these two participating universities.

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[37] See Chapter 2 Quality in Higher Education.

(4) Programme Evaluation and the Review Processes: Even though NCAAA policy recommended that the quality of all courses and of a programme as a whole must be monitored regularly through appropriate evaluation mechanisms, including obtaining students' opinions through surveys and interviews, responses from deans and moderate responses from students, particularly those from University X, indicated that this recommendation to some extent has not been implemented. In any case it seems clear that, as was evident in the discussions of the previous two themes, students were not likely to have had the opportunity to evaluate either teaching effectiveness (Theme 2) or assessment methods (Theme 3). To put it simply, the key finding of this theme suggested that neither university has implemented an effective evaluation mechanism to regularly monitor the quality of courses, as recommended by NCAAA policy. What is really remarkable about the lack of an efficient evaluation mechanism is the responses from students who felt that little improvement had been achieved over the past three academic years regarding course learning objectives, teaching, and assessment methods. These findings are not very encouraging. As I explained in Chapter 3[38], that student's role and involvement in the course evaluation process is crucial (Kogan and Shea, 2007). This requires the evaluation process should fairly represent students' views (Lomax, 1985). Accordingly, it is clear that both universities lack the capacity to objectively represent their students' views on course quality.

(5) Educational Assistance for Students: Although NCAAA policy recommends that institutions should assist student learning through establishing an effective academic counselling system, students should also be provided with

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[38]See Chapter 3, § 3.1.5 Evaluation of Courses.

sufficient learning resources to ensure that courses' intended learning outcomes are achieved. The results of this theme indicate that these recommendations thus far have not been fulfilled at either university. In the light of this finding, for one thing it could be argued that how the intended learning can be achieved, if the learning environment at both universities as we have found were not supportive in assisting their students learning. This brings us to the importance of learning environment in supporting learning. As described in Chapter 4,[39] there are various conditions that must be satisfied in order to achieve quality student learning, one of which is the ability of the learning environment to offer sufficient support for the learner, such as a study skills programme (Nightingale and O'Neil, 1994). The same is true when the learning environment "provides students with optimally supported possibilities for high-level learning, improving students' adequate self-regulation and facilitating the advancement of their conceptions of knowledge, learning, and instruction" (Lowyck et al., 2004, p. 404). Judging by this finding, it seems clear that the learning environment at both universities lacks an effective system to successfully assist student learning.

(6) Support for Improvements in Teaching Quality: Although, teachers from both universities agreed that their participation in training programmes improved the quality of their teaching, two questions remain to be asked: a) how effective is the training programme to support continuing improvement in the quality of teaching as recommended by the NCAAA particularly considering that students from both universities reported dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the teaching?; and b) under what conditions can the quality of teaching be assured if the administrators

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[39] See Chapter 4, § 4.2   Quality of Learning.

agree that neither university has a formal mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching strategies and only a limited number of training programmes designed for teaching staff in their institutions? The value of these findings suggests that a weak culture of assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching exists in both universities. This seems to demonstrate that the self-evaluation approach at the institutional level advocated by the NCAAA has failed to achieve its goal of assuring high-quality teaching.[40] However, it is important to note that there is more still to be done at these two universities to establish a culture of self-evaluation that supports continuing improvement in teaching quality. Speaking of the importance of quality culture in the success of the self-evaluation approach, I argued in Chapter 2[41] on quality assurance and quality enhancement that an institution's culture is one of several crucial factors that must be considered at an institutional level during the self-evaluation process to improve the educational process; otherwise the improvement of teaching quality, as one aspect of this process, might not be attained.

(7) Student Learning: The key findings related to this theme call into question the extent to which the intended learning outcomes of programme were met. According to students' responses across the two universities, it seems clear that this desired goal has not been successfully achieved. This failure can be attributed to students' agreement on various issues related to their orientation and approach to learning and the influence of their learning environment. The factors contributing to this failure were evident from the students' responses: their orientation to learning was not driven by a meaning orientation to learning; their motivation for learning was more likely extrinsically driven rather than intrinsically driven; they were not

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[40] See Chapter 1, § 1.3 The Emergence of Quality Assurance within the Saudi HE System.
[41] See Chapter 2, § 2.2 Quality Assurance System in the UK.

being encouraged to use alternative sources of information to enhance their understanding of a subject; and lastly, their responses did not indicate any clear agreement as to whether their capacity and skills for research and inquiry were being developed.

In light of these responses, the question must be asked: what sort of picture do these findings allow us to construct? The reality is that the ideal of what learning should be in the HE context still needs to be established at these two universities. There are two key issues revealed in the above findings that need to be looked at, which take us to the heart of the matter of the quality of learning and the influence of the learning environment on students' orientations toward, conceptions of and approaches to learning[42] in the HE context.

The first key issue, if we look at what we learnt about the quality of student learning at these two universities based on students' responses, is that the educational process does yet not advance students' intellectual qualities and skills, which Nightingale and O'Neil (1994) argue is one of purposes of university education. The important point I would like to emphasize here, which the students appeared to be unaware of, judging from their response, is that the concept of learning in HE (as mentioned in Chapter 4)[43] requires the student to apply various advanced skills in a learning task, such as the ability to achieve a critical distance from the knowledge obtained (Barnett, 1990). This view—the importance of developing the disposition of a critic—builds on that of Bligh (1978), who argues that developing students' thoughts, attitudes and motivations in post-secondary education should be an educator's main objective, rather than focusing the learning process exclusively on

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[42] These three factors were discussed thoroughly in Chapter 4 The Student Experience.
[43] See Chapter 4, § 4.1, Learning in the Context of Higher Education, and § 4.2, Quality of Learning.

the accumulation of information that in the end encourages a surface approach to learning. This in turn means that the characteristics of high-quality learning that should be present in a constructive learning process that supports the student will include, for example, a deep approach to learning, a high level of self-regulation in learning and the demonstration of sophisticated critical thinking skills (see Vermetten et al., 1999; Nightingale and O'Neil, 1994; Ramsden, 2003). It is clear from the students' descriptions of their learning experiences that these qualities were lacking in the teaching-learning process. Accordingly, this observed finding indicates inadequacies in the quality of learning at both universities.

This takes us to the second key issue of what we learnt from students' experiences about the influence of their learning environment on their orientations toward, conceptions of and approaches to learning. It is clear that their learning environment did not have a good impact on their learning, as they agreed that their learning orientation was not driven by searching for meaning and understanding of learning materials, nor were they driven by an intrinsic motivation for learning. As I addressed in some detail in Chapter 4,[44] a student's orientation towards, conception of and approach to learning is affected by aspects of the learning environment, e.g., teaching approaches. In general, I argued that learning orientation is deeply influenced by the learning environment; for instance, inappropriate teaching and assessment methods were likely to encourage reproductive learning (Ramsden, 1997, 2003). Added to this, students' perceptions of their learning environment, whether reproductive or constructive, were found to be aligned to their conceptions of learning (Trigwell and Ashwin, 2006). As the finding indicates, students' perceptions

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[44] See Chapter 4, § 4.6, The Influence of the Learning Environment on Students' Orientations toward, Conceptions of and Approaches to Learning.

of learning were influenced by their experiences of their teaching. For example, the focus was on transmitting subject information to those students rather than promoting their level of understanding (Ramsden et al., 1989; Trigwell et al., 1999). If one considers the influence of the learning environment at these two universities on students' approaches to learning (Ramsden, 1997), it becomes clear in their responses that this was the case for those students who were likely to apply the surface approach to learning. This was illustrated in the outcomes of other themes[45] as well. To sum up, the importance of the key outcomes of the Student Learning theme lies in the fact that in order to enhance student learning at these two participating universities, we need to fully understand the critical role played by aspects of the learning environment in students' orientations toward, conceptions of and approaches to learning, which may have a negative influence on the student learning experience. Not doing so may lead to the NCAAA's ambition to establish high-quality undergraduate learning ending in failure.

7.2 Student Learning and the Quality Enhancement Process across the Two Institutions

In this section, I shall try to develop an understanding of the quality assurance system with reference to its present role in improving the quality of the educational process. This finding showed that experience was a great concern among students from both universities in their responses of aspects of the educational process and the effectiveness of the learning environment. This clearly suggests that NCAAA recommendations have still not been fully integrated as components in the

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[45] See previous themes above, particularly the Quality of Teaching and Student Assessment themes.

educational process in either of the two participating universities. This raises questions about the extent of the quality assurance unit's influence on improving the educational process. If we look at the key observed findings from the interviews with senior administrators, it was clear that, given the weak cooperation arrangements between the quality assurance unit and the participating faculties, there was little evidence that this unit currently plays a significant role in monitoring the quality of the educational process, including dealing with challenges they face in their effort to improve student learning. This may be owing to the dearth of a well-established culture of quality to support the fulfilment of NCAAA recommendations. It was evident in the administrators' responses that there was no periodic, systematic review process in place to regularly evaluate the quality of each course or to provide an overview of quality issues for the educational process. This illustrates the fact that the evaluation of the educational process has not yet been integrated into normal administrative processes. The lack of a clear framework of policy guidelines to ensure that NCAAA recommendations were implemented at both the institutional and teaching-learning levels should also be mentioned. The quality assurance units in both universities and their quality enhancement approaches presently lack the strength to play an effective role in terms of offering the university faculties the appropriate supervision and support to successfully implement NCAAA recommendations.

This essentially takes us back to what was discussed in Chapter 2, the difference between the quality assurance and quality enhancement approaches. Despite the fact that the quality approach used in the Saudi HE system is similar to that of the UK quality enhancement approach, in which the institution itself is

responsible for maintaining and updating its own continuing quality standards,[46] it is no exaggeration to say that at this stage this approach has proven insufficient in Universities X and Y. As mentioned above, the lack of a well-established culture of quality is one of the reasons for this failure. Speaking of the importance of this aspect, Harvey (2004) was quite right when he argued that if an institution is to improve its performance or the quality of a study programme, it must design quality enhancement mechanisms at the institutional level in a way that fosters an internal quality culture and accomplishes the institution's missions and objectives. Thus, the need to recognize the importance of an institution establishing and maintaining its own internal quality culture, a model described by Gvaramadze (2008) as the "Internal Quality Culture Mechanism"[47] is essential for both universities to support and improve their processes of quality enhancement. The failure to fully engage students as key stakeholders in the educational process must also be addressed. As Gvaramadze (2008) argued, the success of quality enhancement as a self-evaluation approach requires the full engagement of all relevant stakeholders, which includes students. Regarding the importance of students' voices, there is no denying that, as we noticed from the findings of other themes discussed above, neither university took steps to actively empower their students. As I discussed in Chapter 2,[48] the student voice in the Saudi HE context is still neglected. Once again, the key point to note is the need to give students a voice (albeit without relinquishing all control to them) if we are keen to improve their learning, as recommended by NCAAA policy.

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[46]See Chapter 2, § 2.2 Quality Assurance System in the UK.
[47] See Chapter 2, § 2.2, Figure 3.
[48] See Chapter 2, § 2.2, Quality Assurance System in the UK

Among other reasons that explain the insufficiency of the quality enhancement approach was the fact that issues of accountability and codes of conduct were still not well defined at either university (Harvey and Newton, 2004; Filippakou and Ted, 2008). To put it simply, what is most obvious about the quality assurance unit at both universities is that there is still time needed to establish a clear quality enhancement procedure to implement NCAAA recommendations and effectively support the improvement of the educational process, including a regular review evaluation. This will serve four purposes: a) it will identify the extent of the institutions' commitments to applying these recommendations at both the faculty and teaching-learning levels; b) it will make sure that the process contributes significantly to enhancing undergraduate learning; c) it will establish a healthy relationship with university faculties, offering assistance and support to bring the educational process up to international standards; and d) it will promote a culture of continuing quality enhancement at the institutional and teaching-learning levels. The concluding chapter will draw upon the entire thesis, tying up the various issues related to the study's objectives.

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

8.1 Significance and Strengths of the Study

The present study examined two public Saudi universities and was designed to explore and describe the degree to which NCAAA's recommendations for enhancing the quality of student learning have been implemented in Saudi higher education, and to determine whether the attributes of the Saudi higher education system are consonant with these recommendations. In order to address the study's objectives, a methodology of semi-structured interviews and a survey was adopted. These two research methods were chosen because the researcher believes they offer particular insight into how the two institutions examined adopted the NCAAA's recommendations in practice. The combination of these two methods provided both depth and breadth to the findings, which is one of the main strengths of the study.

Data were collected from three groups of stakeholders: senior administrators, teachers and students. This was done by means of individual interviews with 11 senior administrators and surveys administered to 78 teachers and 430 students, who were recruited from 11 faculties across the two institutions. The data gathered provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the two institutions engaged with the NCAAA's recommendations. Semi-structured interviews with senior administrators focused on their personal views and opinions of the educational process with respect to student learning, in order to identify the extent to which each faculty/unit engaged with the NCAAA recommendations. The questions in the

teacher and student surveys were derived from the literature and from the recommendations published by the NCAAA regarding the improvement of the educational process, and focused on teaching practices and learning experiences respectively. The qualitative analysis of the administrators' data suggested some differences in terms of how the two institutions engaged with the NCAAA's recommendations, and so I adopted a comparative approach in analysing the teachers' and students' responses. A factor analysis was carried out to further clarify the themes present in the surveys from the perspectives of both teachers and students, and descriptive analyses were then used to assess the extent to which the NCAAA's recommendations had been implemented. Inferential statistics were applied to investigate any differences between the two institutions in terms of the outlined themes.

This study found that administrators from both institutions tended to agree that there was room for improvement in adopting the NCAAA's recommendations; this opinion was also prevalent among the students, while the responses of teachers from both institutions suggested that the recommendations were in fact being appropriately implemented. The findings of the study indicate that there is yet some way to go in realising the NCAAA's aspirations in these two universities in order to improve the quality of the educational process and student learning. Given the difference between the prevalent opinion among the administrators and students and that of the teachers, it is possible that attempts have been made to commit to and espouse the NCAAA's recommendations, but the measures taken must be intensified and expanded before they have a direct and significant impact on the student learning experience.

In the course of my research, it became apparent that there is currently a lack of research on efforts within Saudi higher education to comply with NCAAA recommendations and the effect such efforts have had on improving the quality of the educational process throughout Saudi higher educational institutions. Therefore, I believe the results of this study throw much-needed light on a number of emerging issues, particularly the following three: a) the extent of our knowledge and understanding of the current quality of the educational process and student learning experiences in Saudi higher education; b) the issue of quality assurance and student learning, which in the Saudi context has been all but ignored in recent literature and c) the challenges encountered in the implementation of the NCAAA's recommendations.

8.2 Future Implications

The results of this study suggest that the successful implementation of the NCAAA recommendations requires that a specific set of conditions be met. These are: establishing a healthy quality of culture which strives to improve the quality of learning and provides an effective environment for learning at both the institutional and teaching-learning levels; fostering good teaching practices, which are a key factor in the successful fulfilment of NCAAA recommendations, particularly when it comes to enhancing the quality of student learning; integrating self-assessment practices into academic programmes and enabling both teachers and students to participate effectively in this process; promoting students' engagement in the learning process, encouraging them to view their role in the process of quality enhancement as a critical factor in improving their own learning experiences; and

regularly investigating the experiences and perceptions of relevant stakeholders of the quality of educational process— particularly students, as their input could have a good impact on practice. I believe that the recognition of these factors, among others, and efforts to pursue and implement them in educational practice, are necessary to improve the quality of the educational process and student learning as recommended by NCAAA policy.

8.3 Limitations

Although the three groups of stakeholders (administrators, teachers and students) were included in the study as primary internal stakeholders, the study does not address the views of external stakeholders such as senior NCAAA administrators or the Ministry of Higher Education, who also play a key regulatory role in the NCAAA initiative and whose views I believe provide more insight into the research. Due to limitations of time and access, the study focused only on two Saudi public universities; however, from a geographic location perspective, these two participating universities were selected from two distant provinces of Saudi Arabia[49].

As this study was limited to students in their final two years of studies, the research did not collect certain information with respect to the year of study and subject area of the participating students across the 11 faculties. Such information could have been valuable, but when conducting the research, such information did not seem germane to the work at the time. A further limitation of the study is that the sample used was limited to male participants, as previously explained, due to the

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[49] See Chapter 5, § 5.3 Gaining Access and Sample Selection.

gender-segregated culture of Saudi Arabia. It was easier for me to gain access to these participants as a researcher given that I am also male.

8.4 Scope for Further Research

The results of this study indicate a need for further research on the questions addressed here. First, as was previously explained, the sample used in this study was restricted to male participants[50], and so further research is necessary to take into consideration the perspectives of female students, as their experiences of the impact that the NCAAA recommendations have had on their learning may differ from those of male students.

Second, I think that the new emergence of the NCAAA has raised certain challenges for Saudi higher education's existing culture, and so further research is needed to explore the higher education system's readiness to adopt and effectively integrate the outlined recommendations into daily administrative processes. For example, future research should focus on educational management and department administrations to verify the effectiveness of their internal enhancement review approaches, which provides necessary support in improving their administrative systems and assists them in implementing the NCAAA's recommendations.

Third, a further study with a greater focus on leadership and management in universities and the perceived need to train those in or destined for management roles, specifically those who are responsible for guiding and monitoring the quality enhancement of institutions (as presently manifest in the NCAAA's recommendations) is needed.

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[50] See Chapter 5, § 5.3 Gaining access and sample selection.

Fourth, research into the nature and consistency of student learning experiences and the interventions, needed to fulfil the goal of enhancing the student experience, would enrich the debate over how to assure the quality of the learning experience in Saudi higher education.

Fifth, as the study focused on public Saudi universities, private institutions are equally bound by the NCAAA recommendations as are public institutions. Questions exploring private institutions' readiness to adopt NCAAA recommendations should be addressed in a further study. Sixth, it would be of interest also to explore employers' perceptions as to whether they believe that NCAAA's recommendations are resulting in better-trained graduates who possess the learning and skills employers consider important. Further studies could also explore the professionalism of university teaching and the maintenance of academic standards in Saudi higher education.

Finally, although the current study explored only the degree to which NCAAA's recommendations for enhancing the quality of student learning have been implemented at the institutional level. Data were not gathered with the idea of specific cross-domain comparisons being made, but rather with a view to the sample being broadly representative of teachers and students of each of the eleven participating faculties across two public universities as explained in Chapter 5 - the methodology. As participant, teachers and students represented various faculties, and some of the participating faculties shared no similarities in their disciplines' titles[51]. Since the study was limited to comparing university X and Z and their adoption of

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[51] See Chapter 5, § 5.3.2 Surveys generating quantitative data: the participants.

NCAAA's recommendations, it was beyond the scope and objectives[52] of the present study to conduct direct cross-institutional comparisons between faculties sharing the exact same title or academic focus.

However, the gathered data allowed the researcher to carry out a small-scale cross-comparison to establish whether any manifest differences existed between teachers' and students' perceptions on common issues addressed in the survey for both populations. To determine whether their views on outlined issues differ from the results discussed in chapters 6 and 7, the researcher divided the participants' teachers and students across the 11 different faculties into two main groups. This division was based on the broad focus of the faculty—namely, whether the participating faculty had a "sciences" or "humanities" focus - see Appendix 12. As the original research design was conceived to address different questions to the teacher and to the student groups, six themes were identified[53] at which the questions asked of the teachers could be directly mapped onto the questions asked of the students, and in that way a comparison could be made. Identified themes are: a) teaching for meaningful understanding; b) teaching orientation; c) understanding and supporting of student's learning; d) clarity of assessment procedure; e) constructive feedback; and f) evaluation of teaching. The underlying goal was to explore the extent of agreement between teachers and students on these six themes related to NCAAA's recommendations directed towards the improvement of student learning. As shown in Appendix 12, teachers from both universities, whether they belong to a "sciences" or "humanities" faculty, reported a high degree of agreement; their responses clearly

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[52] See Chapter 1, § 1.6 Objectives of the Study.

[53] See Appendix 12.

indicate that, in most cases, their approach to teaching was in the line with NCAAA's recommendations. In contrast, students' responses from both universities, regardless of whether they belong to a "sciences" or "humanities" faculty, show that only a small proportion of students' responses were congruent with those of their teachers suggesting that it was likely that NCAAA's recommendations were being follow in the teaching processes as recommended by NCAAA policy. Given that, this small-scale cross-comparison show that there really is no manifest differences between "sciences" or "humanities" faculty.

Overall, these results supported the findings discussed in detail in chapters 6 and 7. In both institutions, while the teachers seemed to express the belief that they were conducting themselves in such a way that the recommendations of the NCAAA were being supported, the responses of the majority students were less obviously satisfied indicate that there was room for improvement in adopting the NCAAA's recommendations for improving the quality of teaching-learning process. Therefore, there would seem a need to use a different approach than the one applied in this study and select only like-type faculties from across different public Saudi universities. This approach would help explore and compare the degree of similarities and differences among these systematically selected faculties in terms of their approach in adopting NCAAA's recommendations directed towards the improvement of student learning.

8.5 Personal Reflection on the Thesis Journey

My interest in the quality of the educational process and undergraduate learning led me to develop my PhD proposal exploring the outlined research

objectives. This interest was driven by reading about the establishment of the NCAAA to improve the quality of Saudi HEIs. I believe this study contributes to understanding the nature of current engagement with NCAAA recommendations at the two participating public universities. My research journey was a challenging one considering that I lack experience working in the higher education sector: I have delved into various issues, including adult learning and the quality of learning in higher education, teaching practices and the quality of the educational process, what is required to improve student learning and quality assurance and how it can enhance learning. I found the greatest challenge in the course of conducting my research to be the limited literature concerning the emergence of the NCAAA and its role in enhancing the quality of learning at the institutional and student learning levels. I must also acknowledge that, as a researcher working outside the higher education sector, conducting this study allowed me to enrich my understanding of how in particular the participating students perceived their learning experiences to match their experiences with mine as I used to be a student at one of these two participating universities. Regarding the development of my personal skills, I am pleased that my research has given me the opportunity to further develop my critical thinking skills through structuring, writing, discussing and reporting the outcomes of this study.

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APPENDIX 1

Government Universities of Saudi Arabia [54]

Academic Institution	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Lecturer	Instructor	Teacher	**Total of Teachers**	**Total of Students**
Umm Al-Qura university	328	489	1255	492	1219	84	**3,867**	**61381**
Islamic University	51	109	200	95	113	217	**785**	**17120**
Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University	209	336	775	466	781	47	**2,614**	**54302**
King Saud University	659	839	1536	690	1102	126	**4,952**	**51168**
King Abdulaziz University	505	931	2174	966	2094	558	**7,228**	**52450**
King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals	118	168	340	309	51	59	**1,045**	**8911**
King Faisal University	91	183	526	218	325	44	**1,387**	**21856**
King Khalid University	84	277	881	344	743	0	**2,329**	**41620**
Qassim University	114	190	714	292	727	16	**2,053**	**31549**
Taibah University	65	157	574	225	612	0	**1,633**	**45787**
Taif University	91	189	617	214	544	60	**1,715**	**37558**
King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences	14	13	189	36	90	9	**351**	**900**
Jazan University	108	138	490	572	338	67	**1,713**	**44225**
University of Ha'il	17	75	532	417	402	15	**1,458**	**27696**
Al Jouf University	10	39	205	267	269	20	**810**	**19855**
University of Tabuk	27	50	285	166	330	23	**881**	**17565**

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[54] Ministry of Higher Education of Saudi Arabia Universities Statistics (http://www.mohe.gov.sa/universitiesstatistics/ accessed 20/03/2014)

Al Baha University	29	59	324	189	230	5	**836**	**14,290**
Najran University	19	21	175	153	314	8	**690**	**9662**
Princess Nora bint Abdulrahman University	35	76	498	329	136	0	**1,074**	**22317**
Northern Borders University	16	29	89	113	94	15	**356**	**9244**
Shagra University	15	35	200	281	198	32	**761**	**10767**
Al Kharj University	26	64	201	189	320	7	**807**	**22547**
University of Dammam	120	276	933	393	624	37	**2,383**	**30234**
University of Dammam	120	276	933	393	624	37	**2,383**	**30234**
Almajmaah University	9	18	225	104	123	8	**487**	**12333**
Government Universities Total	**2734**	**4709**	**13858**	**7504**	**11682**	**1440**	**41,927**	**666475**

APPENDIX 2

The Major Policies of the Saudi HE System

Al-Hamed (2007, p. 121) identified the following policies:

a) Providing for the continuation of study into higher education following the completion of high school or another equal stage.

b) Ensuring that both state and private institutions of HE are responsive to the higher education council.

c) Meeting the needs and capacities of the state in new foundation universities and colleges.

d) Ensuring that each university has its own high council.

e) Holding higher education councils responsible, in coordination with various colleges, for meeting and balancing the state's needs for different subjects and skills.

f) Opening new departments for post-graduate studies in various subjects, where both factors and capability meet.

g) Universities award graduate students with different levels of degrees.

h) Cooperation between Saudi Arabia's universities and other universities form the Islamic aims to accomplish Islamic nations' objectives in order to underpin Islamic culture.

i) Cooperation between Saudi Arabia's universities and other universities from both the Arabic and international world regarding research, innovations, and interchanging experiences.

j) Providing instructional materials and other instruments that promote research activities in the universities.

k) Establishing translation departments which function in translating various studies from different fields into the Arabic language.

l) Teaching the history of Islamic civilization according to how it suits the institution's specialization.

APPENDIX 3

The Hierarchy of Authority in the Saudi Higher Education System

Authority	Responsibilities
Higher Education Supreme Council	• Formalizing the general policy of HE. • Developing HE institutions. • Coordinating among HE institutions. • Establishing new universities and colleges. • Authorizing new programmes. • Approving new roles for HE institutions.
The Ministry of Higher Education	• Implementing the state's HE policy. • The minister of HE is the head of each university's council.
University Council	• Implementing the general policy of the university. • Authorizing scientific programmes, academic programmes, and university activities. • Conferring degrees. • Authorizing internal regulations. • Conducting teaching affairs. • Approving training and scholarship planning. • Approving the university's financial reports.
University President	• The authority of university president is subordinate to the University Council. • Conducting the university's affairs (academic, departmental, and financial). • The university president is responsible to the HE minister in implementing and supervising the general policy of the university. • Representing the university.
University Vice President	• Assisting the university president in conducting the university's affairs (academic, departmental, and financial)

APPENDIX 4

The Principles and Recommendations of NCAAA for Improving Teaching-Learning Process[55]

To evaluate performance in relation to learning and teaching standard and to be granted accreditation, a college or department offering the programme should investigate and provide appropriate evidence whether these following good practices for each subsection relates to this standard are carried out and how this is done.

a) **To satisfy these recommendations for improving Student Learning Outcomes, this require:**

  I. Appropriate programme evaluation mechanisms including graduating student surveys, employment outcome data, employer feedback and subsequent performance of graduates should be used to provide evidence about the appropriateness of intended learning outcomes and the extent to which they are achieved.

b) **To satisfy these recommendations for Program Development Processes, this require:**

  I. Plans for delivery and evaluation of the programme should be included in detailed programme specifications that include knowledge and skills to be acquired, and strategies for teaching and assessment for the progressive development of learning in all the domains of learning.

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[55] cited from standards for quality assurance and accreditation of higher education institutions, http://www.ncaaa.org.sa/

II.   Plans for courses should be set out in course specifications that include knowledge and skills to be acquired and strategies for teaching and assessment for the domains of learning to be addressed in each course.

III.   The content and strategies set out in course specifications should be coordinated and followed in practice to ensure effective progressive development of learning for the total program in all the domains of learning.

IV.   Planning should include any action necessary to ensure that teaching staff are familiar with and are able to use the strategies included in the programme and course specifications.

V.   The academic and/or professional fields for which students are being prepared should be monitored on a continuing basis with necessary adjustments made in programme and in course content and reference materials to ensure continuing relevance and quality.

c) To satisfy these recommendations for Program Evaluation and Review Processes, this require:

I.   Courses and programme should be evaluated and reported on annually and reports should include information about the effectiveness of planned strategies and the extent to which intended learning outcomes are being achieved.

II.   Quality indicators that include learning outcome measures should be established for all courses and the programmes.

III. Reports on the programme should be reviewed annually by senior administrators and quality committees.

IV. Systems should be established for central recording and analysis of course completion and programme progression and completion rates and student course and programme evaluations, with summaries and comparative data distributed automatically to departments, colleges, senior administrators and relevant committees at least once each year.

V. In addition to annual evaluations a comprehensive reassessment of the program should be conducted at least once every five years. Procedures for conducting these reassessments should be consistent with policies and procedures established for the institution.

VI. In programme reviews opinions about the programme should be obtained from students and graduates through surveys and interviews, discussions with teaching staff, and other stakeholders such as employers.

d) **To satisfy these recommendations for Student Assessment, this require:**

I. Student assessment mechanisms should be appropriate for the different forms of learning sought.

II. Assessment practices should be clearly communicated to students at the beginning of courses.

III. Arrangements should be made within the institution for training of teaching staff in the theory and practice of student assessment.

IV. Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments during each semester should be given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.

V. Assessments of student work should be conducted fairly and objectively.

VI. Criteria and processes for academic appeals should be made known to students and administered equitably.

e) To satisfy these recommendations for Educational Assistance for Students, this require:

I. Teaching staff should be available at sufficient scheduled times for both full time and part time students as appropriate consultation and advice to students. (availability of staff should be confirmed, not just assumed because times have been scheduled).

II. Teaching resources (including staffing, learning resources and equipment, and clinical or other field placements) should be sufficient to ensure achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

III. Adequate tutorial assistance should be provided to ensure understanding and ability to apply learning.

IV. Progress of individual students should be monitored and assistance and/or counselling provided to those facing difficulties.

V. Feedback on performance by students and results of assessments should be given promptly to students and accompanied by mechanisms for providing assistance if needed.

VI.   Adequate facilities should be provided for private study with access to computer terminals and other necessary equipment.

VII. The adequacy of arrangements for assistance to students should be periodically assessed through processes that include, but are not restricted to, feedback from students.

f) To satisfy these recommendations for Quality of Teaching, this require:

I.   Teaching strategies should be appropriate for the different types of learning outcomes the programme is intended to develop.

II.   Strategies of teaching and assessment set out in programme and course specifications should be followed by teaching staff with flexibility to respond to the needs of different groups of students.

III. Students should be fully informed about course requirements in advance through course descriptions that include knowledge and skills to be developed, work requirements and assessment processes.

IV.   The conduct of courses should be consistent with the outlines provided to students and with the course specifications.

V.   Effective systems should be used for evaluation of courses and of teaching.

VI.   The effectiveness of different planned teaching strategies in achieving learning outcomes in different domains of learning should be regularly reviewed and adjustments should be made in response to evidence about their effectiveness.

g) To satisfy these recommendations for Support for Improvements in Quality of Teaching, this require:

I. Training programmes in teaching skills should be provided within the institution for both new and continuing teaching staff including those with part time teaching responsibilities.

II. The extent to which teaching staff are involved in professional development to improve quality of teaching should be monitored.

III. Teaching staff should be encouraged to develop strategies for improvement of their own teaching and maintain a portfolio of evidence of evaluations and strategies for improvement.

IV. Formal recognition should be given to outstanding teaching, and encouragement given for innovation and creativity.

V. Strategies for improving quality of teaching should include improving the quality of learning materials and the teaching strategies incorporated in them.

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THE FACULTY ADMINISTRATORS

Q1**:** Is there an appropriate evaluation mechanism the faculty follows to evaluate the learning objectives of each course of study in order to measure the level of fulfilment of these objectives?

Q2: Does the faculty apply a certain mechanism to examine the congruence between the type of teaching strategies the lecturer applies and the intended learning outcomes which the course is meant to develop?

Q3: Does the faculty follow a mechanism that evaluates the effectiveness of teaching strategies in order to enhance student learning?

Q4: Does the faculty provide training programmes that focus on improving teaching strategies so that student learning can be enhanced?

Q5: What procedure does the faculty follow to ensure that the assessment methods being applied are appropriate for different forms of learning as shown in the course specifications?

Q6: Do you think that the assessment methods the faculty applies are appropriate for the different forms of learning being sought?

Q7: Is the assessment procedure clearly communicated to students at the beginning of the course?

Q8: Is there a training course through which the academic teachers can be trained to apply efficient assessment methods to assess student learning?

Q9: Is there an appropriate evaluation mechanism which the faculty follows to evaluate course quality? Does this mechanism include course objectives, teaching strategies, and assessment methods?

Q10: Does the course evaluation process obtain all students' opinions of course quality? Alternatively, does it select just a sample of students to participate in this process?

Q11: In cases where the student participates in course evaluation, does such participation include the student's evaluation of all subjects studied or only some of them?

Q12: Does the faculty provide the student with feedback each term, not restricted to only his exam results, but also accompanied by a mechanism for assistance if needed? In addition, does this apply to all courses of the study term?

Q13: Does the faculty have a system (programme) that offers assistance to individual students or provides them with counseling to improve their learning?

Q14: Do you think that the academic advice unit is effective enough for assisting student learning? In addition, do you think it contributes to enhancing student learning?

Q15: Does the faculty have a mechanism (strategy) for monitoring and coordinating student workload across courses?

Q16: Does the faculty inform the students of the criteria and processes for academic appeals?

Q17: Are academic teachers' perceptions included in the process of course evaluation in order to improve it?

Q18: In which way does the faculty benefit from course evaluation?

Q19: Does the faculty inform the students of the already-achieved actions or other actions that will be applied in the future to enhance the quality of the educational process (e.g., improving teaching strategies)?

Q20: What is the nature of the co-operation process between the faculty and quality assurance unit in relation to the existing improvement process of the educational process?

Q21: What steps have been taking regarding this issue?

Q22: From your own perspective, how do you assess the current role of the quality assurance unit in supporting the faculty in improving the quality of the education process?

Q23: What are your suggestions to enhance the co-operation process between the faculty and the quality assurance unit to improve the educational process in order to enhance student learning?

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THE MANAGER OF QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT

Q1: What is the nature of the relationship between the quality assurance unit and the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA)?

Q2: What is the nature of the relationship between the quality assurance unit and the Aafaq[56] project?

Q3: Who is responsible for monitoring the planning performance of the quality assurance unit?

Q4: Is there an appropriate evaluation mechanism the unit follows to evaluate the learning objectives of each course of study in order to measure the level of fulfilment of these objectives?

Q5: Does the unit apply a certain mechanism to examine the congruence between the type of teaching strategies the lecturer applies and the intended learning outcomes which the course is meant to develop?

Q6: Does the unit provide training programmes that focus on improving teaching strategies so that student learning can be enhanced?

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[56] A Future Plan for University Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Q7: What procedure does the unit follow to ensure that the assessment methods being applied are appropriate for different forms of learning as shown in the course specifications?

Q8: Do you think that the assessment methods the faculty applies are appropriate for the different forms of learning being sought?

Q9: Is the assessment procedure clearly communicated to students at the beginning of the course?

Q10: Is there a training course through which the academic teachers can be trained to apply efficient assessment methods to assess student learning?

Q11: Is there an appropriate evaluation mechanism which the unit follows to evaluate course quality? Does this include course objectives, teaching strategies, and assessment methods?

Q12: Does the course evaluation process obtain all students' opinions of course quality? Alternatively, does it select just a sample of students to participate in this process?

Q13: In cases where the student participates in course evaluation, does such participation include the student's evaluation of all subjects studied or only some of them?

Q14: Does the unit provide the student with feedback each term, not restricted to only his exam results, but also accompanied by a mechanism for assistance if needed? In addition, does this apply to all courses of the study term?

Q15: Does the unit have a system (programme) that offers assistance to individual students or provides them with counseling to improve their learning?

Q16: Do you think that the academic advice unit is effective enough for assisting student learning? In addition, do you think it contributes to enhancing student learning?

Q17: Does the unit have a mechanism (strategy) for monitoring and coordinating student workload across courses?

Q18: Does the unit inform the students of the criteria and processes for academic appeals?

Q19: Are academic teachers' perceptions included in the process of course evaluation in order to improve it?

Q20: In which way does the unit benefit from course evaluation?

Q21: Does the unit inform the students of the already-achieved actions or other actions that will be applied in the future to enhance the quality of the educational process (e.g., improving teaching strategies)?

APPENDIX 7

(ARABIC VERSION)

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

استبيان المحاضر

عزيزي المحاضر:

في البداية أشكرك على مشاركتك في هذا الإستبيان. يهدف هذا الإستبيان في التعرف على رأيك الشخصي فيما يتعلق بدورك كعنصر أساسي في العملية التعليمية وهذا يشمل التعرف على طريقة التدريس المستخدمة، آلية عرض وتدريس المقرر، آلية التقييم المستخدمة وأثر ذلك على مفهوم الجودة في تعلم الطالب.

لك خالص تحياتي وتقديري

محمد الشهري

طالب دكتوراه (جامعة أدنبره-بريطانيا)

الرجاء عدم كتابة الاسم أو إسم الجامعة في هذا الاستبيان يرجى فقط كتابة التالي:
اسم الكلية:

ملاحظة:

- يرجى إختيار أي مقرر دراسي من مقرارات الفصل الدراسي الماضي قد تم تدريسهُ وتم فيه إختبارالطلبة لغرض إستخدامهُ في الإجابة على بعضٍ من الأسئلة التالية دون كتابة اسم المقرر المختار.
- يرجى إختيار إجابة واحدة فقط من كل سؤال وذلك بوضع علامة دائرة حول الإختيار المناسب.

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1. في نهاية إكمال المقرر الدراسي من المفترض أن يكون الطالب قادر على تطبيق مهارات معرفية ذات مستوى عالي على سبيل المثال (مهارة إيجاد حل لمشكلة).

   (1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

2. في تدريسي لهذا المقرر أنا حريص على تعزيز وتطوير مشاركة الطلاب بهدف تفعيل دورهم أثناء المحاضرة.

   (1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

3. طريقة التدريس التي أستخدمها تساهم في إرشاد وتوجيه طلابي في البحث عن المعلومة دون فرض معرفتي بمحتوى المقرر على الطلاب كمصدر وحيد للمعلومة يتم الإعتماد عليه.

   (1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

4. في تدريسي لهذا المقرر أنا حريص على فهم الصعوبات التي قد تواجه طلابي أثناء دراستهم للمقرر.

   (1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

5. طريقة التدريس التي أستخدمها تساهم في تحفيز وتشجيع الطالب على دراسة هذا المقرر.

   (1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

6. طريقة التدريس التي أستخدمها في هذا المقرر تعتمد بشكل أكثر على تهيئة الطالب للوظيفة المستقبلية.

   (1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

7. أنا أعتقد بأن الطريقة المناسبة في عرض محتويات هذا المقرر هو فقط استخدام وسائل تعليمية مرئية.

   (1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

8. طريقة التدريس التي أستخدمها في هذا المقرر تعتمد بشكل أكبر على نقل محتويات المقرر إلى الطالب.

   (1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

9. في طريقة تدريسي لهذا المقرر أنا أعتقد بأنه من الأهمية أن يكون عرض محتوى المقرر مكثف وهذا سوف يساعد الطالب في فهم محتوى المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

10. خطة التدريس المستخدمة في تدريس هذا المقرر تأخذ في الإعتبار بأن غالبية الطلاب دارسي هذا المقرر يوجد لديهم معرفة محدودة في مفردات المقرر الدراسي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

11. في طريقة تدريسي لهذا المقرر أنا أعتقد بأنه من الأهمية أن يتم تخصيص جزء كافي من وقت المحاضرة في مناقشة إستفسارات الطلاب.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

12. من فترة إلى أخرى أنا أستقطعُ وقتاً من المحاضرةِ وفيه يتمُ إعطاءُ طلابي الفرصة في مناقشة فيما بينهم الصعوبات التي قد يواجهونها في دراسة هذا المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

13. في تدريسي لأي مقرر من مقررات التخصص يتم شرح الأهداف التعليمية للمقرر في بداية الفصل الدراسي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

14. في إختبار هذا المقرر أسئلة الإمتحان والتي تم تصميمها تعتمدُ على قياس فهم الطالب لمحتوى المقرر أكثر من قياس قدراتهُ في حفظ محتواه.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

15. في بداية الفصل الدراسي أنا أوضح لطلابي ما هو المتوقع منهم إنجازهُ من خلال دراستهم لهذا المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

16. أنا أعطي كل طالب من طلابي تقرير (تغذية راجعة) يتم التوضيح فيه مستوى أداءهُ في دراسة هذا المقرر يشمل ذلك كل من نقاط القوة والضعف.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

17. في إختبارهذا المقرر فإن اسئلة الإمتحان والتي تم تصميمها تعتمد على قياس قدرات الطالب في حفظ محتوى المقرر أكثرمن قياس مستوى فهم الطالب لهذا المحتوى.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

18. في تدريسي لهذا التخصص أنا حريص في التعرف على رأي طلابي في فعالية طريقة التدريس المستخدمة والأثر المحتمل من إستخدام هذه الطريقة على أسلوب التعلم الذي يستخدمه الطالب.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

19. عند نهاية تدريس المقرر أحرصُ على توزيع إستبيان شامل لجميع دارسي هذا المقرر وفيه يتم إعطاءُ الفرصة للطالب في تقييم عملية التعلم والمقصودُ بها هنا:

- الجودة في أهداف المقرر ومستوى تحقيقها
- فعالية طرق التدريس المستخدمة في المقرر
- الجودة في آليات التقييم (الاختبار)

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

20. أعتقدُ أن استراتيجيات التدريس والمستخدمة في هذا التخصص تتلائم مع الأهداف التعليمية لأي مقرر يتم تدريسه.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

21. أعتقدُ أن مشاركتي في الدورات التدريبية والتي تهدف إلى تطوير الجودة في التدريس ساهمت بشكل فعال في تحسين طريقة تدريسي المستخدمة.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

22. يتم توضيح آليات التقييم للطلبة عند بداية تدريسي لأي مقرر من مقررات التخصص.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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23. أعتقدُ بأن استراتيجيات التدريس التي أستخدمها في تدريس هذا التخصص تتلائم مع توصيفات المقررالمحددة.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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24. أعتقدُ بأن الدورات التدريبية التي شاركتُ فيها والمتخصصة في تدريب عضو هيئة التدريس في تطوير استخدام طرق التقييم قد ساهمت بشكل جيد في مساعدتي في تقييم أداء طلابي بشكل فعال ومناسب.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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25. عند مراجعة (تقييم) جودة المقرر الدراسي من قبل مركز الجودة والتطوير يشمل ذلك إيضاً التعرف على رأي كعضو هيئة تدريس وملاحظاتي بشأن الجودة في المقرر الدراسي وذلك بهدف ضمان الجودة في تعلم الطالب.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

___

26 . الرجاء كتابة الإقتراحات التي تراها قد تساهم في تعزيز جودة التعلم لدى الطالب من خلال تطوير وضمان الجودة لثلاثة عناصر من العملية التعليمية والمقصود بها هنا:

(أهداف المقرر الدراسي – طرق التدريس – طرق التقييم)

1..

2..

3..

4..

5..

انتهت الأسئلة

عزيزي المحاضر شكراً لك مرة أخرى لمشاركتك في هذا الإستبيان

ENGLISH VERSION

Teacher Questionnaire

Dear Teacher

In the beginning I would like to thank you for taking part in this survey. The purpose of this survey is to identify your own perception of aspects of educational process that include (i.g. used teaching strategies, assessment methods) in order to identify its potential influence on the quality of student learning.

Best Regards.

Note: Please do not write your name or university's name. Only write the following:
Faculty Name:

Notes:

- Please select only one subject from the last term that you taught and examined your students in that subject, in order to use it as an example to answer some of the following questions.
- Please select only one answer for each question.

1. In my discipline it is important that by completing a course the student should be able to analyse a situation and display logical and rational thinking.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

2. In my teaching approach I am concerned to encourage students' participation in   order to promote their interaction during the lecture.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

3. I try to guide students in learning rather than emphasize any knowledge on them.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

4. In my discipline I am interested in understanding the difficulties that my students might encounter in studying the subject.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

5. In my teaching approach I am concerned to stimulate my students towards studying the subject.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

6. In my teaching approach the focus is more about preparing students for a future career.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

7. In my discipline, I think that subject information can only be properly presented if audio-visual materials are used

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

8. My teaching approach is more focused on transmission subject information to the student

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

9. In my teaching approach I feel it is important to present many facts in the classes so that students can know what they have to learn from the subject.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

10. I design my teaching method in this subject with the assumption that most of the students have very little useful knowledge of the topics to be covered.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

11. In my teaching approach, I feel a lot of teaching time should be used to question students' ideas.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

12. We take time out in classes so that students can discuss among themselves the difficulties that they encounter studying this subject.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

13. In my discipline the subject learning objectives are explained from the start.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

14. I am more interested in assessing student level of understanding of subject contents than assessing the level of memorization.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

15. I made it clear from the start what I expected from my student to achieve in my subject.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

16. I provide each one of my students with a helpful feedback on his progress in this subject.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

17. I am more interested in assessing student level of memorization subject contents than assessing the level of understanding.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

18. In my discipline, I am interested to know my students' opinions concerning the effectiveness of my teaching approach and its potential influence on their learning approaches.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

19. At subject end, I make sure that all my students have the opportunity to evaluate officially the educational process in terms of the quality of course design, teaching strategies and assessment methods.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

20. I believed that the teaching strategies that I applied in this subject are consistent with subject learning objectives.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

21. I believed that the academic programmes that I participated in to enhance my teaching performance are having a good impact on my teaching approach.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

22. In my discipline and from the start the assessment procedure is explained for the students.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

23. In my discipline I believed that the teaching strategies that I applied are consistent with the description of subject contents.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

24. I believed that the academic programmes that I participated in to improve the use of assessment methods are helping me in assessing effectively my students learning.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

25.   During the process of programme evaluation, the quality assurance unit take in account my perceptions of programme quality with view to enhancing the quality of student learning.

 (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

26. Could please write down any suggestions you do think is needed to improve the quality of educational process that including course objectives, teaching and assessment methods.

- …………………………………………………………………………
- …………………………………………………………………………
- …………………………………………………………………………
- …………………………………………………………………………
- …………………………………………………………………………

Thank you so much for your participating

APPENDIX 8

ARABIC VERSION

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

استبيان الطالب

عزيزي الطالب:

في البداية أشكرك لمشاركتك في الإجابة على اسئلة الاستبيان، يهدف هذا الاستبيان في التعرف على رأيك الشخصي فيما يتعلق بالعملية التعليمية من خلال دراستك في هذه الكلية، يتألف هذا الإستبيان من جزءان الجزء الأول: يناقش العلاقة مابين طريقة التعلم المستخدمة والعملية التعليمية (المقرر الدراسي – طرق التدريس -التقييم) الجزء الثاني: يناقش العلاقة مابين الطالب وبيئة التعلم، لذا ارجو أن تتم الإجابة على اسئلة هذا الإستبيان بكل مصداقية وحيادية.

مع تمنياتي لك بالتوفيق والنجاح في مجال دراستك.

طالب برنامج دكتوراه (جامعة ادنبره – بريطانيا)

لايتطلب منك كتابة إسمك او رقمك الإكاديمي او إسم الجامعة في هذا الإستبيان يرجى فقط كتابة التالي:	
القسم:	الكلية:

الجزء الأول : الطالب وجودة العملية التعليمة

ملاحظة:

- يرجى إختيار أي مقرر دراسي كمثال من الفصل الماضي قد تم الإختبار فيه لغرض إستخدامه في الإجابة على اسئلة الجزء الأول.
- يرجى إختيار إجابة واحدة فقط من كل سؤال وذلك بوضع علامة دائرة حول الإختيار المناسب لك بناءً على خبرتك الدراسية.

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1. من خلال دراستي لهذا المقرر أنا حريص على عمل ربط مباشر مابين أي موضوع يتم تدريسه وبين المقرر الدراسي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

2. أنا أتبع مفهوم البحث والإستفسار في التعلم من خلال دراستي لهذا المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

3. أنا أركز في دراستي على عمل ربط مابين المعلومات الجديدة المكتسبة في هذا المقرر مع معلوماتي السابقة.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

4. بالإضافة إلى دراسة محتوى هذا المقرر أنا إختيارياً أدرسُ مقررات إضافية لكي أعزز مستوى فهمي للمقرر الرئيسي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

5. في حالة وجود صعوبة في فهم إي جزئية في المقرر الدراسي، أنا أبحث في مصادر تعليمية أخري لفهم هذه الجزئية.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

6. الهدف الأساسي في إختياري دراسة هذا التخصص هو رغبتي في التعلم كهدف رئيسي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

7. أنا أركز في دراستي لهذا المقرر على حفظ أجزاء محددة تساهم في نجاحي في إختبار المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

8. أنا أعتمد في دراستي لهذا المقرر على كل من إرشادات المحاضر كذلك إرشادات المقرر التعليمية.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

9. **دراستي لهذا المقرر لا تخرج عن إطار محتوى المقرر الرئيسي.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

10. **يتركز إهتمامي في دراسة هذا المقرر هو النجاح في إختبار المقرر الدراسي.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

11. **بالنسبة لي مفهوم التعلم هو أن كون قادراً على حفظ معلومات المقرر الدراسي وإعادة إستخدام هذه المعلومات في إختبار المقرر.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

12. **بالنسبة لي فإن الهدف الرئيسي من التعلم هو الحصول على الشهادة الجامعية.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

13. **بالنسبة لي فإن الهدف الرئيسي من التعلم هو أن أكون طالباً منافساً ومتميزاً في تخصصي الدراسي.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

14. **أنا أعتقد بأنني غير منظم في طريقة دراستي لهذا المقرر على سبيل المثال (الوقت المخصص للدراسة غير منظم)**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

15. **أنا أركز في دراستي لهذا المقرر على المعلومات العامة الرئيسية أكثر من تركيزي على المعلومات التفصيلية التي يحتويها المقرر.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

16. **أنا أعتقدُ بأن طموحي في الدراسة الجامعية منخفض.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

17. أهداف المقرر واضحة ومحددة قبل بداية دراسة المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

18. محتوى هذا المقرر ساهم في تطوير إهتمامي الأكاديمي في دراسة هذا التخصص.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

19. الواجبات الدراسية في هذا المقرر مكثفة (كثيرة).

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

20. في هذا المقرر يوجد لدي رؤية واضحة بالمخرجات التعليمية (المهارات التعليمية) والتي من المتوقع أن يتم إكتسابها من خلال دراستي للمقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

21. دراسة هذا المقرر ساهمت في تطوير مهاراتي في البحث العلمي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

22. دراسة هذا المقرر تعتمد على مهارة الحفظ وهذا يساهم في الحصول على دراجات عالية.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

23. في هذا المقرر يوجد ربط واضح مابين محتوى المقرر وأهداف المقرر المحددة.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

24. في هذا المقرر يوجد تشجيع في الإعتماد على مراجع بديلة بهدف تنوع مصادر المعلومة وتعزيز مستوى الفهم لمفردات هذا المقرر وعدم الإعتماد فقط على المقرر الرئيسي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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25. المحاضر يبذل جهد كافي في التعرف على الصعوبات التي أواجُها في دراستي لهذا المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

26. أنا أدرسُ هذا المقرر لأنهُ ذو علاقة بالوظيفة المستقبلية والتي سوف أعملُ بها مستقبلاً.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

27. هذا المقرر الدراسي مُنظم بشكل جيد وواضح.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

28. في بداية دراسة هذا المقرر يوضح لي المحاضر الأهداف التعليمية التي يجبُ أن أُحققها (أنجُزها) في نهاية دراستي للمقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

29. المحاضر يشجعني على أن أقوم بأداء مميز في دراستي لهذاالمقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

30. المحاضر يشرح محتوى هذا المقرر بطريقة واضحة ومفيدة.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

31. طريقة التدريس التي يستخدمها المحاضر في هذا المقرر ممتعة ومفيدة.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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32. نوعية أسئلة الإمتحان التي يعدها المحاضر لهذا المقرر تعتمد على إختبار قدراتي في حفظ محتوى المقرر أكثر من قياس مستوى فُهمي لمحتواه.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

33. في هذا المقرر المحاضر حريص على تشجيعي في المشاركة خلال المحاضره بهدف تطوير المهارات التعليمية على سبيل المثال مهارة إيجاد حل لمشكلة.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

34. في هذا المقرر المحاضر يزودني بتقرير دوري يتم التوضيح فيه نقاط القوة ونقاط الضعف فيما يتعلق بمستواي الدراسي في المقرر وذلك بهدف تحسين الأداء الدراسي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

35. نوعية أسئلة الإمتحان التي يعدها المحاضر لهذا المقرر تعتمد على قياس مستوى فهمي للمقرر أكثر من إختبار قدراتي في حفظ محتواه.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

36. طريقة التدريس التي يستخدمها المحاضر في هذا المقرر تشجعني على المشاركة في المحاضره والتجاوب مع المحاضر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

37. طريقة التدريس التي يستخدمها المحاضر ساهمت في إكتشاف ميولي الأكاديمية في دراسة هذا المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

38. طريقة التدريس التي يستخدمها المحاضر في هذا المقرر تعتمد على نقل معلومات المقرر (محتوى المقرر) إلى الطلاب.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

39. في هذا المقرر المحاضر مُهتم في التعرف على رأي الشخصي في طريقة التدريس التي يستخدمها ومدى فعاليتها.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

40. في هذا المقرر المحاضر يخصص وقت كافي من المحاضره في مناقشة إستفسارات الطلاب بهدف تعزيز مدى الفهم لمحتوى المحاضره.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

41. في هذا المقرر المحاضر حريصٌ على التعرف على الصعوبات الدراسية والتي قد تواجهني في دراسة المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

42. طريقة التدريس التي يستخدمها المحاضر في هذا المقرر تتلائم مع تحقيق أهداف المقرر التعليمية.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

43. في هذا المقرر إجراءات التقييم (الاختبار) والتي سوف يتم تطبيقها واضحة قبل البدء في دراسة المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

44. في هذا المقررأنا أعتقد بأن الأهداف التي يتم تحقيقها في إختبار المقرر تتوافق مع الأهداف العامة للمقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

45. طريقة الإختبار المطبقة في هذا المقرر ساهمت في تطوير كفاءتي في التعلم.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

46. طريقة الإختبار المطبقة في هذا المقررتعتمد على تقييم مستوى فهمي لمحتوي المقرر أكثر من تقييم مقدرتي في حفظ محتواه.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

47. طريقة الإختبار المطبقة في هذا المقرر تعييق تطوير كفاءتي في التعلم.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

48. **في هذا المقرر فإنهُ بالإضافة إلى درجة الإختبار الحاصل عليها يتم تزويدي بتقرير تغذية راجعة عن مستواي العام الدراسي في المقرر يشمل نقاط القوة ونقاط الضعف.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

49. **طريقة الإختبار المطبقة في هذا المقرر تعتمد على تقييم مقدرتي في حفظ محتوى المقرر أكثر من تقييم مستوى فهمي لمحتواه.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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50. **في هذا المقرر يوجد وقت كافي مُتاح لدراسة وفهم محتوى المقرر قبل أن يتم إجراءُ الاختبار.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

51. **طريقة الإختبار المطبقة في هذا المقرر ساهمت في تشجيعي على إستخدام مهارات تعلم مختلفة على سبيل المثال (مهارة إيجاد حل لمشكلة).**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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52. **في هذا المقرر يتم تشجيعي كطالب لعرض وجهة نظري في طريقة التقييم (الإختبار) والتي سوف يتم استخدامها ومدى فاعليتها في تحقيق أهداف المقرر.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

53. **في مرحلة الإعداد للإختبار في هذا المقرر أنا أركز على مهارة الحفظ لمحتوى المقرر أكثر من التركيز على فهم مفرداته.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

54. **في مرحلة الإعداد للإختبار في هذا المقرر أركز على الربط ما بين الجانب النظري والجانب التطبيقي للمقرر بهدف تعزيز فهمي لمفرداته.**

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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55. في مرحلة الإعداد للإختبار في هذا المقرر أنا أركز على دراسة مفردات المقرر التي تساهم في نجاحي في إختبار المقرر أكثر من التركيز على مفردات المقرر والتي أنا مُهتمٌ بها شخصياً لدراستها والإستفادةُ منها.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

56. في مرحلة الإعداد للإختبار في هذا المقرر أنا أستعد بشكل جيد للإختبار من خلال مراجعة وقراءة دقيقة لمفردات المقرر.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

الجزء الثاني : خبرات الطالب في بيئة التعليمية

ملاحظة:

- عزيزي الطالب الأسئلة التالية تتعرف على رأيك الشخصي فيما يتعلق بتخصصك الدراسي وبيئة التعلم الدراسية لذا يرجو الأخذ في الإعتبار بأن التركيز هنا سوف يكون على التخصص العام فقط وليس على المقرر الدراسي.

- يرجى إختيار إجابة واحدة فقط من كل سؤال وذلك بوضع علامة دائرة حول الإختيار المناسب لك بناءَ على خبرتك الدراسية.

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57. في هذه الكلية أنا أعتقد بأن مشرفي البرنامج يؤدون دوراً فاعلاً في دعم دراستي في هذا التخصص.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

58. في هذا التخصص يوجد عبء دراسي يؤثر سلباً على مستواي الدراسي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

59. أعتقدُ بأن أعضاء هيئة التدريس في هذا الكلية حريصون على وجود علاقة جيدة مع الطلاب.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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60. في هذه الكلية مصادر التعلم متوفرة ومناسبة لإحتياجاتي التعليمية (على سبيل المثال – المكتبة) .

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

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61. موقع الجامعة الإلكتروني يوفر مصادر تعلم إضافية لتعزيز مستواي الدراسي على سبيل المثال

(توفر المراجع الإلكترونية) .

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

62.   أنا أبذُل جُهداً مناسباً وكافياً في دراستي لهذا التخصص.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

63.   في نهاية كل فصل دراسي يتم إعطائي تقرير شامل يتم التوضيح فيه مستوى العام في مقررات الفصل الدراسي مصحوباً بتوصيات لتحسين المستوى الدراسي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

64.   أنا أعتقد بأن دراستي لهذا التخصص ساهمت بشكل جيد في تشجيعي لمزيد من التعلم والبحث في مجال تخصصي.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

65.   في هذه الكلية يوجدُ إهتمام في التعرف على الصعوبات الدراسية التي قد أواجُها في دراستي لهذا التخصص.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

66.   في نهاية كل فصل دراسي يتم توزيع إستبيان شامل من خلاله يتم إعطائي الفرصة كطالب في تقييم مستوى العملية التعليمية والذي يشمل العناصر التالية:

○   مستوى تحقيق أهداف المقرر
○   فعالية طرق التدريس المستخدمة
○   فعالية أساليب التقييم (الاختبارات)

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

67.   إجراءات التظلم الأكاديمي واضحة بالنسبة لي كطالب في هذه الكلية.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

68.   أنا أعتقد بأنني أتخذت القرار الصحيح في إختياري لدراسة هذا التخصص.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

69. أعتقدُ بأنهُ خلال الثلاث السنوات الدراسية الماضية ومن خلال دراستي لهذا التخصص يوجد إهتما م فيما يتعلق بجودة أهداف المقرر الدراسي والطرق المستخدمة في تحقيق هذه الأهداف.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

70. أعتقدُ بأنهُ خلال الثلاث السنوات الدراسية الماضية ومن خلال دراستي لهذا التخصص يوجد تطوير في جودة طرق التدريس وتقييم مدى فعاليتها.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

71. أعتقدُ بأنهُ خلال الثلاث السنوات الدراسية الماضية ومن خلال دراستي لهذا التخصص يوجد تطوير في جودة آليات التقييم المستخدمة في إختبارات المقرارت الدراسية.

(1) أوافق بشدة   (2) أوافق   (3) عادي   (4) لا أوافق   (5) لا أوافق بشدة

---

72. الرجاء كتابة الإقتراحات التي تراها قد تساهم في تطوير الجودة في العملية التعليمية والمقصود بها هنا: (الجودة في أهداف المقرر الدراسي – الجودة في طرق التدريس – الجودة في آليات التقييم)

1...

2...

3...
.

4...

نهاية الأسئلة

عزيزي الطالب: شكراً لك مرة أخرى لمشاركتك في الإجابة على هذه الأسئلة مع تمنياتي لك بالتوفيق والنجاح في مجال دراستك.

محمد الشهري

ENGLISH VERSION

Student Questionnaire

Dear Student

In the beginning I would like to thank you for taking part in this survey. The purpose of this survey is to identify your perceptions and experience of the quality of educational process in your faculty. The survey consists of two parts. First, discusses the relationship between your approach of learning and with that element of the educational process (i.e. teaching strategies and assessment methods). Second, identifies your perception and experience of the learning environment in your faculty.

I would like to emphasise that your responses are strictly confidential and will not be seen by teaching staff.

I wish you best luck in your study.

Note: Please do not write your name, academic number or university's name. Only write the following:	
Department:	**Faculty:**

Part One: The Quality of Educational Process and Student Learning

Notes:

- Please select randomly only one subject from the last course as an example that can be used in order to answer part one questions.

- Please put a cycle around only one answer for each question based on your studying experience of this subject.

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1. I tried to combine the subject that was dealt with separately in a course into one whole.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

---

2. I tried to be critical of the interpretation of experts.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

---

3. I tried to relate the new obtained information to my previous knowledge of the subject.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

---

4. In addition to the syllabus, I studied other literature related to the content of the course.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

5. If I find it difficult to understand a particular topic, I consult other books of my own accord.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

6. I am interested in learning for its own sake.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

7. I memorized lists of characteristics of a certain phenomenon for exam demands.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

8. I studied according to the instructions given in the study materials or provided by the teacher.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

9. I restricted my learning to the defined syllabus and specified tasks.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

10. My main concern in studying a subject is complement assessment demands.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

11. To me, learning is making sure that I can reproduce the facts presented in a course.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

12. My main source of motivation for learning is to obtain a qualification.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

13. My main source of motivation for learning is competitive and self-confident as a lever for success.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

14. My study methods are disorganized including (e.g. organize time ineffectively; not prompt in submitting work).

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

15. I attend to be generalized in studying the subject with little attention to details.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

16. My interest in academic studies and vocational aspiration is low.

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

17. The learning objectives of this subject were explained right from the start

    (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

18. Subject content is developing areas of my academic interest.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

19.   The workload in this course is too heavy.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

20. In this subject I have usually had a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

21. My capacity skills for research and inquiry in this course are developing.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

22. To do well in this subject all you need is a good memory.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

23. There is clear match between subject content and the outlined objectives.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

24.   I am encouraged in this subject to use alternative source of information to enhance my understanding of subject syllabus.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

25. The lecturer makes a real effort to understand difficulties I may be having in this subject.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

26. I am studying this subject because it is relevant to my future career.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

27. The programme in this department is highly organized.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

28. The lecturer made it clears right from the start what he expected from me to achieve in this subject.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

29.   The lecturer motivated me to do my best in this subject.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

30. The lecturer provides a clear and useful explanation of ideas.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

31. Teaching method makes studying this subject interesting.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

32. The lecturer seems more interested in testing what I have memorized than what I have understood.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

---

33. The lecturer is concerned to engage me in the learning process to be able to analyze a situation and display logical and rational thinking.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

---

34. The lecturer provides me with a helpful feedback on my progress in this subject.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

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35.   The lecturer seems more interested in testing what I have understood than what I have memorized.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

---

36. Lecturer teaching approach is guiding me in this subject to be an active than passive leaner.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

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37. Lecturer teaching approach enables me to explore my academic interests in the subject.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

38. Lecturer teaching approach is to impart subject information.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

39. The lecturer in this subject is interested to know my opinion concerning the effectiveness of his teaching approach.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

40. The lecturer in this subject is applying a teaching approach that focuses on enhancing students conceptions of subject content.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

41.   The lecturer is interested to know the difficulties that might an encounter me in studying this subject

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

42. Lecture teaching approach applied in this subject is consistent with subject objectives

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

43. At term beginning, assessment procedure is determinate in this subject.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

44. The actual goals addressed by the assessment in this subject are consistent with subject objectives.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

45. The assessment in this subject is enhancing my learning.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

46.   Assessment format for this subject emphasizes assessing my understanding of its content not just memorization of facts.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

47. The assessment in this subject is hindering my learning.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

48. Assessment format for this subject provides a feedback beyond just marks.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

49. Assessment format for this subject emphasize on assessing my ability to reproduce subject facts rather than assessing my understanding of theme

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

50. In this subject I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn before undertaken the exam.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

51. Assessment methods for this subject encourage me to apply high critical learning skills (e.g. critical thinking skills, problem solving skills).

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

52. In this subject I am encouraged to be involved in the assessment process (e.g. the negotiation of the forms or content of assessment)

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

53. When preparing for this assessment I summarized a lot of martial without understanding it.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

54. When preparing for this assessment I tried to integrate the theoretical and practical components of the course so that they had some meaning for me.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

55. When preparing for this assessment I chose topics that I thought I could pass rather than those I was really interested in.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

56. I became increasingly absorbed in my work the more I read and studied for this assessment.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

Part Two: Experience of the Learning Environment

Notes:

- **Dear student, the following questions seek to identify your perceptions of your learning environment within your faculty.**

- **Please put a cycle around only one answer for each question based on your studying experience in your faculty.**

57. The programme administration staff are effective in supporting my learning.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

58. Teaching staff in my discipline seem to go out of their way to be friendly towards students.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

59. In my discipline the learning resources are appropriate for my study needs (e.g. library).

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

60. Resources on the University's website (e.g. electronic references) supported my learning.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

61.   I am putting enough effort into study in this degree.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

62. At term end, my department provides me with a feedback report that involves all subjects' results as well as recommendations to improve my performance.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

63. My degree course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

64. In my discipline, there is a clear interest in understanding the difficulties that might encounter me during studying this degree.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

65. At term end, I have the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the educational process.

(1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

66. In my faculty, as a student the academic appeal is clear for me.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

67. I feel I made the right decision in choosing this degree.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

68. I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern for the quality of course objectives and the methods used of accomplishing theme.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

69. I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern for improving the quality of teaching methods and assessing its effectiveness.

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

70. I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern for improving the quality of used assessment methods

   (1) Strongly agree   (2) Agree   (3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly disagree

71. Could please write down any suggestions you do think is needed to improve the quality of educational process that include including; course objectives, teaching and assessment methods.

- …………………………………………………………………………………
- …………………………………………………………………………………………
- …………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you so much for your participation

APPENDIX 9

Questionnaire Original Sources

(Teacher Questionnaire[57])

Resource 1

Ramsden, P. (1991), Performance Indicator of Teaching Quality in Higher Education: the Course Experience Questionnaire, *Studies in Higher Education,* Vol. 16, No. 2.

Table 1

Item	Re-worded item
Teaching staff here normally give helpful feedback on how you are going	Yes
You usually have a clear idea of where you're going and what's expected of you in this course	=
Staff here seem more interested in testing what we have memorised than what we have understood	=

Resource 2

Trigwell, K. Prosser, M. and Waterhouse, F. (1999), Relations between Teachers' Approaches to Teaching and Students' Approaches to Learning, *Higher Education,* Vol. 37, pp.57–70.

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[57] For both of teacher's and student's questionnaire, the above tables give a detailed description of items that were discussed in the literature, adopted from existing questionnaires still, the remaining items in both questionnaires and not shown in these tables were created by the researcher to address a particular learning-teaching recommendation made by NCAAA.

Table 2

Item	Re-worded item
I feel it is important to present a lot of facts in the classes so that students know what they have to learn for this subject	Yes
I design my teaching in this subject with the assumption that most of the students have very little useful knowledge of the topics to be covered.	=
I feel a lot of teaching time in this subject should be used to question students' ideas	=
We take time out in classes so that students can discuss among themselves the difficulties that they encounter studying this subject.	No

Resource 3

Gow, L. and Kember, D. (1993), Conceptions of teaching and their relationship to student learning, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 63, pp. 20-33.

Table 3

Item	Re-worded item
After completing a course, students should be able to analyse a situation and display logical and rational thinking.	Yes
In my teaching I have tried to develop participation from the students to make it more lively.	=
1 guide students in learning rather than force things down their throats.	=
Information can only be properly presented if audio visual materials are used.	=
A lecture imparts information to the student.	=

(Student Questionnaire)

Resource 4

Wilson, K. Lizzio, A. and Ramsden, P. (1997), The Development, Validation and Application of the Course Experience Questionnaire, *Studies in Higher Education,* Vol. 22, No. 1.

Table 4

Item	Re-worded item
This course has helped me to develop my problem-solving skills	Yes
The teaching staff of this course motivate students to do their best work	=
This course has sharpened my analytic skills	=
You usually have a clear idea of where you're going and what's expected of you	=
To do well on this course all you really need is a good memory	No
The course has encouraged me to develop my own academic interests as far as possible	Yes
We are generally given enough time to understand the things we have to learn	=
The staff make a real effort to understand difficulties students may be having with their work	=
Our lecturers are extremely good at explaining things to us	=
Teaching staff here work hard to make subjects interesting	=
Feedback on student work is usually provided ONLY in the form of marks and grades	=
The staff here make it clear right from the start what they expect from students	=
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of this course	=

Resource 5

Entwistle, N and Ramsden, P. (1983) *Understanding student learning*, Croom Helm Ltd, Kent

Table 5

Item	Re-worded item
I often find myself questioning things that I hear in lectures or read in books	Yes
I try to relate ideas in one subject to those in other, whenever possible	=
I chose my present course mainly to give me a chance of a really good job afterwards	=
I suppose I am more interested in the qualifications I will get than in the course I am taking	=
I find it difficult to organise my study time effectively	=
The workload here is too heavy	=
Staff here make a real effort to understand difficulties students may be having with their work	=
Lecturers in this department seem to go out of their way to be friendly towards students	=

Resource 6

Entwistle, N. Hounsell, D. and Hanley, M. (1979), Identifying Distinctive Approaches to Studying, *Higher Education* , Vol. 8, pp. 365 − 380.

Table 6

Item	Re-worded item
I tend to read very little beyond what is required for completing assignments.	Yes

Resource 7

Biggs, J. Kember, D. and Leung, D. (2001), The Revised Two-Factor : Study Process Questionnaire, *British Journal of Educational Psychology* , Vol.71, pp. 133–149.

Table 7

Item	Re-worded item
My aim is to pass the course while doing as little work as possible	Yes
I can get by in most assessments by memorising key sections rather than trying to understand them.	=

Resource 8

Lizzio, A. Wilson, K. and Simons, R. (2002), University Students' Perceptions of the Learning Environment and Academic Outcomes: implications for theory and practice, *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 27, No. 1.

Table 8

Item	Re-worded item
In what ways, if any, did the assessment in this subject help your learning, hinder your learning, or was not relevant to your learning?	Yes
How consistent are the espoused goals of this subject and the actual goals addressed by the assessment?	=
What is your opinion of the level of involvement or participation you have as students in the assessment process? Would you prefer more/less or different involvement or level of choice in the negotiation of the forms or content of assessment?	=

APPENDIX 10: Chapter 6. Findings

6.2.1 Survey Findings from Teachers Data (Quantitative Data)

Table 1. Comparison of Programme Development Processes between Teachers of University X and Z

Derived Variable	Name of University	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. (p value)	Median
Program Development Processes	X	39	34.94	582.50	0.055	1.00
	Z	39	44.06			1.25

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Quality of Teaching Variables between Teachers of University X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed variables statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Factor 1. Teaching for meaningful understanding					
Q4	In my discipline, I am interested in understanding the difficulties that might encounter my students in studying the subject.	X	39	1.44	0.552
		Z	39	1.31	0.468
Q6	In my teaching approach the focus is more about preparing students for future career.	X	38	1.61	0.638

		Z	38	1.61	0.595
Q11	In my teaching approach, I feel a lot of teaching time should be used to question students' ideas.	X	39	1.54	0.600
		Z	39	1.36	0.628
Q12	We take time out in classes so that students can discuss among themselves the difficulties that they encounter studying this subject.	X	38	2.18	0.730
		Z	39	2.05	0.647
Q23	In my discipline I believed that the teaching strategies that I applied are consistent with the description of subject contents.	X	39	1.67	0.577
		Z	39	1.64	0.668
Factor (2): Teaching as transmitting information					
Q7	In my discipline, I think that subject information can only be properly presented if audio-visual materials are used.	X	39	2.72	1.146
		Z	39	3.21	1.260
Q9	In my teaching approach I feel it is important to present many facts in the classes so that students can know what they have to learn from the subject.	X	39	2.51	1.189
		Z	38	3.21	1.018

Factor 3. Subject-specific teaching competency				
Q5	In my teaching approach I am concerned to stimulate my students towards studying the subject.	X	38	1.45	0.602
		Z	38	1.55	0.555
Q20	I believed that the teaching strategies that I applied in this subject are consistent with subject learning objectives.	X	38	2.34	0.938
		Z	39	1.92	0.957
Factor 4. Teaching strategies for active learners				
Q2	In my teaching approach I am concerned to encourage students' participation in order to promote their interaction during the lecture.	X	39	1.36	0.486
		Z	39	1.36	0.486
Q3	I try to guide students in learning rather than emphasize any knowledge on them.	X	38	1.92	0.673
		Z	39	1.79	0.615
Factor 5. Teaching orientation				
Q8	My teaching approach is more focused on transmitting subject information to the student.	X	39	2.21	0.951
		Z	39	2.10	0.995
Q10	I design my teaching method in this subject with the assumption that most of the students have very little useful knowledge of the topics to be covered.	X	37	1.86	1.669
		Z	37	1.86	1.669

			N			
Q1	In my discipline it is important that by completing a course the student should be able to analyse a situation and display logical and rational thinking.	X	39	1.41	0.498	
		Z	37	1.46	0.605	

Table 3. Comparison of Factor Scores for Quality of Teaching theme between Teachers of University X and Z

Derived Variables	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	sig. (p value)
Teaching for meaningful understanding	X	34	0.130	1.075	1.09	0.282
	Z	32	-0.138	0.911		
Teaching as transmitting information	X	34	-0.346	0.847	-3.08	0.003
	Z	32	0.367	1.030		
Subject-specific teaching competency	X	34	0.215	1.089	1.83	0.072
	Z	32	-0.228	0.854		
Teaching strategies for active learners	X	34	0.012	0.957	0.10	0.922
	Z	32	-0.013	1.059		
Teaching orientation	X	34	-0.029	1.035	-0.24	0.813
	Z	32	0.030	0.977		

Table 4. Comparison of Student Assessment theme between Teachers of University X and Z

Derived variables	Name of University	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. (p value)	Median
Student Assessment	X	33	29.71	389.00	0.343	-0.339
	Z	31	35.47			-0.143

Table 5. Comparison of Programme Evaluation and Review Processes theme between Teachers of University X and Z

Derived Variable	Name of University	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. (p value)	Median
Program Evaluation and Review Processes	X	39	45.60	522.50	0.017	2.33
	Z	39	33.40			2.00

Table 6. Comparison of Support for Improvements in Quality of Teaching theme between Teachers of University X and Z

Observed Variable	Name of University	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. (p value)	Median
Support for Improvements in Quality of Teaching	X	33	35.50	511.50	0.505	2.00
	Z	34	32.54			2.00

6.2.2 Survey Findings from Students Data (Quantitative Data)

Table 7. Comparison of the Experiences of Students from Universities X and Z on the Programme Development Processes theme

Derived Variable	Name of University	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. (p value)	Median
Programme Development Processes	X	229	230.14	19662	0.009	2.67
	Z	201	198.82			2.33

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Quality of Teaching Questions for Students of University X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed variables statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Factor 1. Teaching for meaningful learning					
Q28	The lecturer made it clears right from the start what he expected from me to achieve in this subject.	X	227	2.91	1.315
		Z	200	2.53	1.203
Q29	The lecturer motivated me to do my best in this subject.	X	227	2.74	1.331
		Z	200	2.48	1.260
Q30	The lecturer provides a clear and useful explanation of ideas.	X	227	2.70	1.163
		Z	200	2.53	1.079

Q31	Teaching method makes studying this subject interesting.	X	227	3.14	1.185
		Z	200	2.85	1.203
Q33	The lecturer is concern to engage me in the learning process to be able to analyze a situation and display logical and rational thinking.	X	228	3.01	1.359
		Z	199	2.73	1.254
Q36	Lecturer teaching approach is guiding me in this subject to be an active than passive leaner.	X	228	3.07	1.119
		Z	199	2.81	1.089
Q37	Lecturer teaching approach enables me to explore my academic interests in the subject.	X	228	3.19	1.156
		Z	199	2.88	1.190
Q40	The lecturer in this subject is applying a teaching approach that focused on enhancing student conceptions of subject contents.	X	226	3.28	1.401
		Z	201	2.85	1.348
Q41	The lecturer is interested to know the difficulties that might an encounter me in studying this subject.	X	227	3.54	1.427
		Z	200	3.18	1.451
Q42	Lecture teaching approach applied in this subject is consistent with subject objectives.	X	227	2.89	1.066
		Z	200	2.72	.989
Factor 2. Learning approach					
Q22	To do well in this subject all you need is a good memory.	X	226	2.44	1.232
		Z	200	2.38	1.242
Q32	The lecturer seems more interested in testing what I have memorized than what I have understood.	X	227	2.52	1.235
		Z	199	2.34	1.142

Q35	The lecturer seems more interested in testing what I have understood than what I have memorized.	X	227	2.74	1.216
		Z	199	2.85	1.203
Factor 3. Teaching as transmitting information					
Q38	Lecturer teaching approach is to impart subject information	X	227	2.26	.977
		Z	201	2.27	.953

Table 9. Comparison of the Experiences of Students from Universities X and Z on the Quality of Teaching theme

Derived variables	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (p value)
Teaching for meaningful learning	X	219	.171	1.009	3.742	0.001
	Z	196	-.191	.957		
Learning approach	X	219	.081	1.016	1.744	0.082
	Z	196	-.090	.976		
Teaching as transmitting information	X	219	-.057	1.007	-1.226	0.221
	Z	196	.064	.991		

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics for Student Assessment Questions between Students of University X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed variables statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Factor 1. Appropriate assessment and clarity of procedure					
Q43	At term beginning, assessment procedure is determinate in this subject.	X	222	2.97	1.074
		Z	197	2.65	1.057
Q44	The actual goals addressed by the assessment in this subject are consistent with subject objectives.	X	224	2.79	0.970
		Z	200	2.55	0.917
Q45	The assessment in this subject is enhancing my learning.	X	225	2.98	1.033
		Z	199	2.77	0.971
Q46	Assessment format for this subject emphasizes on assessing my understanding of its content not just memorization of facts.	X	225	2.88	1.143
		Z	199	2.95	1.067
Q48	Assessment format for this subject provides a feedback beyond just marks.	X	178	4.30	1.558
		Z	157	4.10	1.698
Q50	In this subject I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn before undertaken the exam.	X	224	3.02	1.242
		Z	199	2.78	1.136
Q51	Assessment methods for this subject encourage me to apply high critical learning skills (e.g. critical thinking skills, problem solving skills).	X	226	3.08	1.091
		Z	200	2.83	0.995
Q52	In this subject I am encouraged to be involved in the assessment process (e.g. the negotiation of the forms or content of assessment).	X	190	4.22	1.588
		Z	160	3.78	1.850

Q66	In my faculty, as a student the academic appeal is clear for me.	X	224	3.84	1.483
		Z	200	3.75	1.428
Factor 2. Obstructive assessment					
Q47	The assessment in this subject is hindering my learning.	X	225	2.73	1.107
		Z	198	2.83	1.095
Q49	Assessment format for this subject emphasize on assessing my ability of reproducing subject facts rather than assessing my understanding of theme.	X	225	2.70	1.129
		Z	197	2.34	0.985

Table 11. Comparison of the Experiences of Students from Universities X and Z on the Student Assessment theme

Derived Variables	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (p value)
Appropriate assessment and clarity of procedure	X	147	0.192	0.983	3.507	0.001
	Z	124	-0.227	0.975		
Obstructive assessment	X	147	0.046	1.060	0.819	0.414
	Z	124	-0.054	0.925		

Table 12. Descriptive Statistics for Programme Evaluation and Review Processes questions for University X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed Variables Statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Factor 1. Experiences of the studying programme					
Q23	There is clear match between subject content and the outlined objectives.	X	225	2.73	0.992
		Z	200	2.70	0.936
Q27	The programme in this department is highly organized.	X	227	3.04	1.120
		Z	200	2.71	0.985
Q39	The lecturer in this subject is interested to know my opinion concerning the effectiveness of his teaching approach.	X	227	3.50	1.440
		Z	201	3.19	1.374
Q68	I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern of the quality of course objectives and the methods used of accomplishing theme.	X	225	3.02	1.143
		Z	199	2.79	1.003
Q69	I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern of improving the quality of teaching methods and assessing its effectiveness.	X	225	3.21	1.221
		Z	199	2.88	1.050
Q70	I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern of improving the quality of used assessment methods.	X	224	3.29	1.075
		Z	199	2.94	1.033
Factor 2. Term end feedback and Course evaluation					
Q62	At term end, my department provides me with a feedback report that involves all subjects' results as well as recommendations to improve my performance.	X	224	3.45	0.912
		Z	201	3.21	1.019
Q65	At term end, I have the opportunity to evaluate the quality of educational process.	X	225	3.39	0.870
		Z	200	2.63	1.014

Table 13. Comparison of the Experiences of Students from Universities X and Z on the Programme Evaluation and Review Processes theme

Derived Variable	Name of University	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. (p value)	Median
Experiences of the studying programme	X	214	219.00	18296	0.021	0.057
	Z	197	191.87			-0.126
Term end feedback and Course evaluation	X	214	243.01	13159	0.001	0.574
	Z	197	165.80			-0.394

Table 14. Descriptive Statistics for Educational Assistance for Students questions for University X and Z

Observed variables questions	Observed Variables Statements	Name of University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Factor (1) Understanding and supporting of student's learning					
Q25	The lecturer makes a real effort to understand difficulties I may be having in this subject.	X	227	2.91	1.341
		Z	199	2.72	1.392
Q34	The lecturer provides me with a helpful feedback on my progress in this subject.	X	228	3.99	1.316
		Z	199	3.54	1.392
Q57	The programme administration staff is effective in supporting my learning.	X	227	3.48	1.217
		Z	199	3.18	1.290
Q58	Teaching staff in my discipline seem to go out of their way to be friendly	X	226	3.39	1.330

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			Z	198	2.78	1.263
Q64	In my discipline, there is a clear interested in understanding the difficulties that might encountering me during studying this degree.		X	225	3.66	1.166
			Z	201	3.27	1.175
Factor (2) Appropriateness of learning resources						
Q59	In my discipline the learning resources are appropriate for my study needs (e.g. library).		X	227	3.04	1.291
			Z	199	3.68	1.277
Q60	Resources on University's website (e.g. Electronic references) supported my learning.		X	227	3.33	1.234
			Z	199	3.74	1.267

Table 15. Comparison of the Experiences of Students from Universities X and Z on Educational Assistance for Students theme

Derived Variable	Name of University	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. (p value)	Median
Understanding and supporting students' learning	X	220	241.66	14045	0.001	0.331
	Z	195	170.03			-0.362
Appropriateness of learning resources	X	220	183.77	16119	0.001	-0.146
	Z	195	235.34			0.304

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Table 16. Comparison of Student Learning theme between Students of University X and Z

Category	Name of University	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. (p value)	Median
Meaning orientation	X	229	215.03	22906.00	0.933	2.50
	Z	201	216.04			2.62
Reproducing orientation	X	229	213.76	22616.50	0.757	2.00
	Z	201	217.48			2.12
Achieving orientation	X	228	222.41	21225.00	0.181	2.16
	Z	201	206.60			2.00
Perceptions of courses and their effects on student learning	X	229	220.66	21834.00	0.356	2.75
	Z	201	209.63			2.75
Non-academic orientation	X	229	206.81	21024.00	0.118	2.50
	Z	201	225.40			2.50

First: Teachers' Data

6.2.1.3 Student assessment

Q16 I provide each one of my students with a helpful feedback on his progress in this subject.
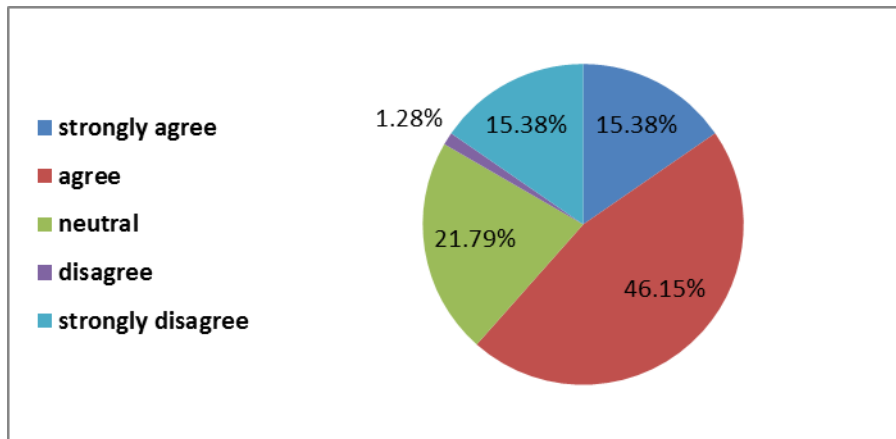
6.2.1.4 Programme evaluation and review process

Q19 At course end, I make sure that all my students have the opportunity to evaluate officially the educational process in terms of the quality of course design, teaching strategies and assessment methods.
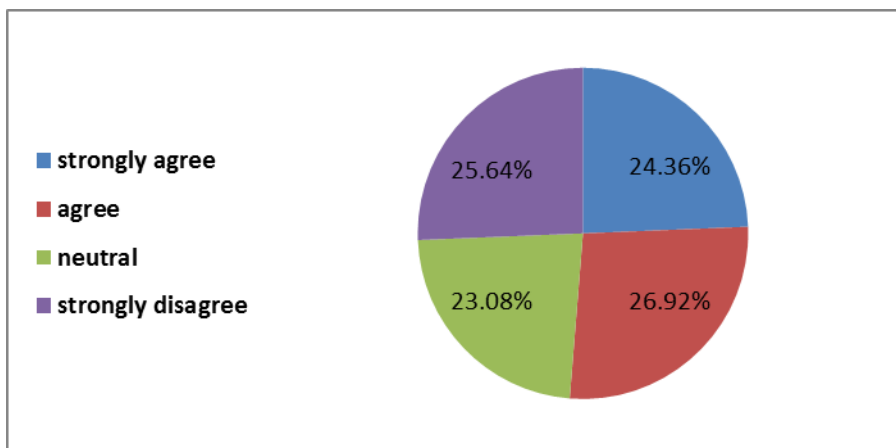
Q25 During the process of programme evaluation, the quality assurance unit take into account my perceptions of programme quality with a view to enhancing the quality of student learning.
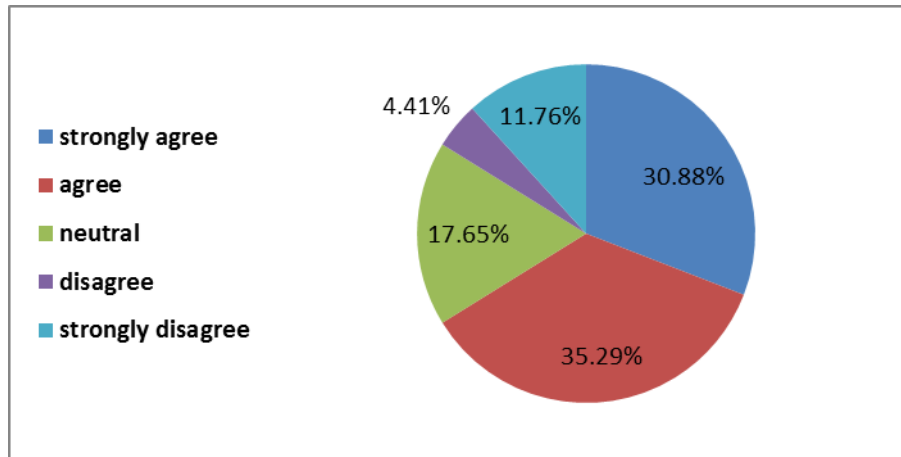
Second: Students' Data

6.2.2.1 Programme development processes

Q17 The learning objectives of this subject were explained right from the start.
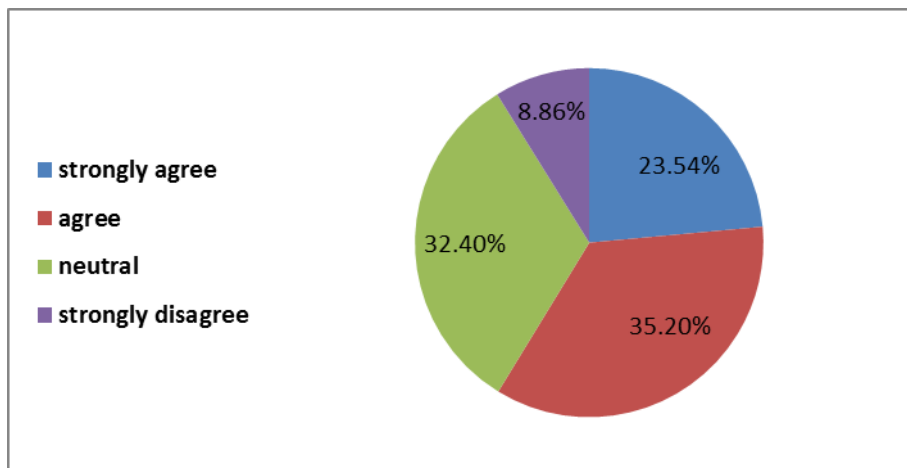
Q18 Subject content is developing areas of my academic interest.
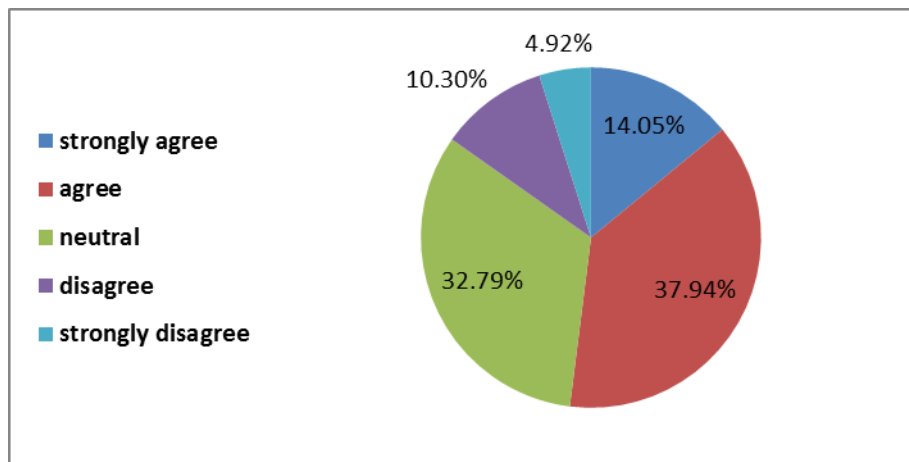
Q20 In this subject I have usually had a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me.
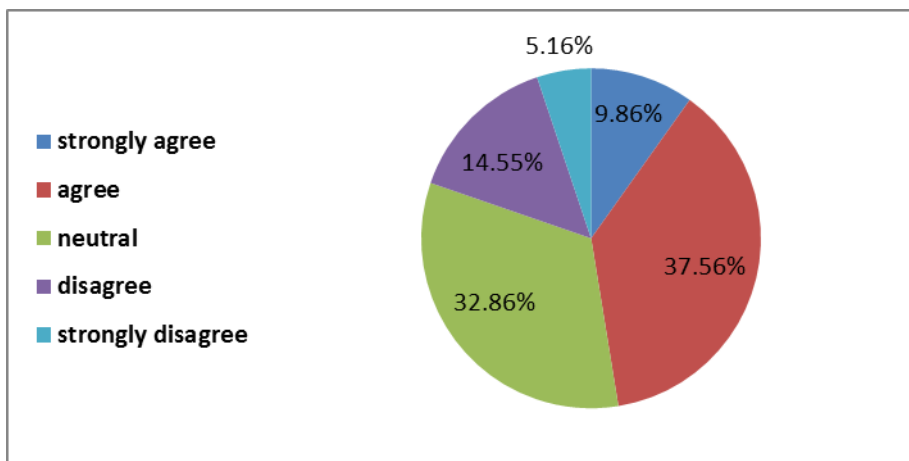
6.2.2.2 Quality of teaching

Q28 The lecturer made it clear right from the start what he expected from me to achieve in this subject.
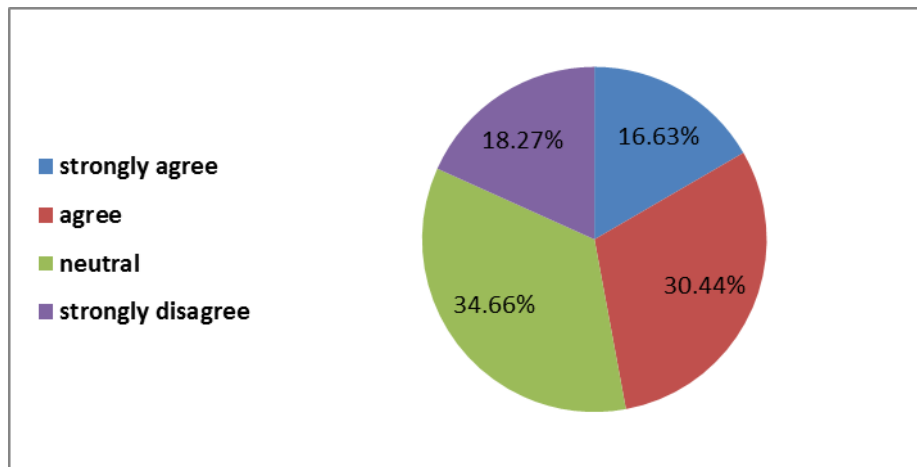
Q29 The lecturer motivated me to do my best in this subject.
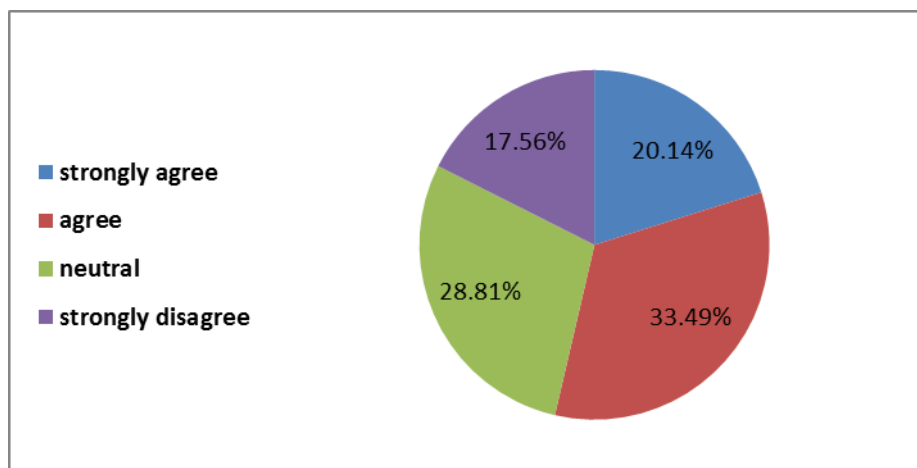
Q30 The lecturer provides a clear and useful explanation of ideas.
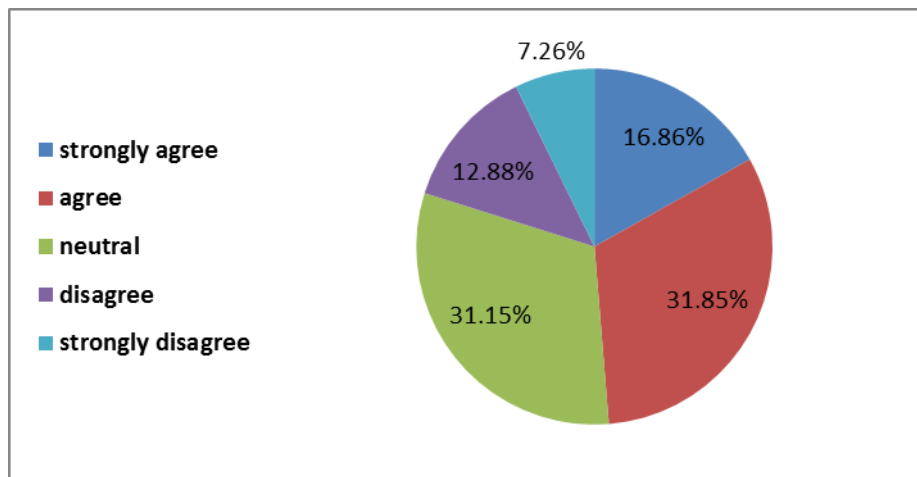
Q31 Teaching method makes studying this subject interesting.
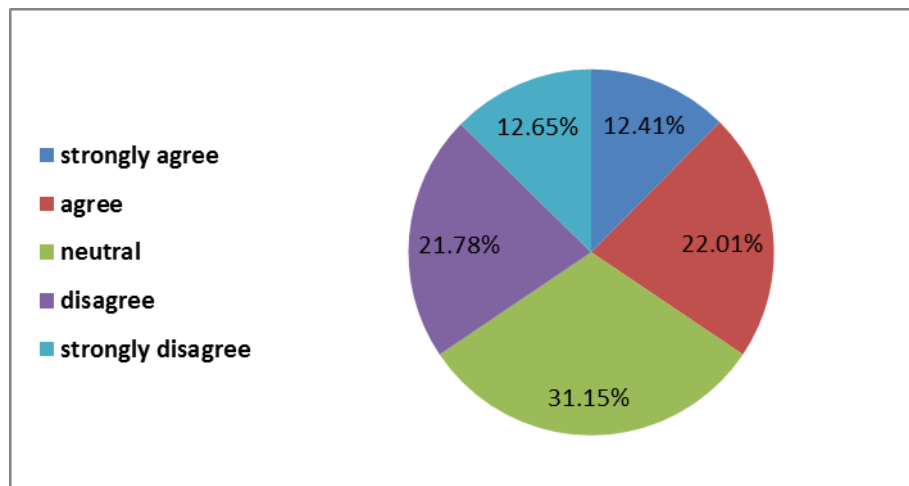
Q36 The lecturer's teaching approach is guiding me in this subject to be an active than passive leaner.
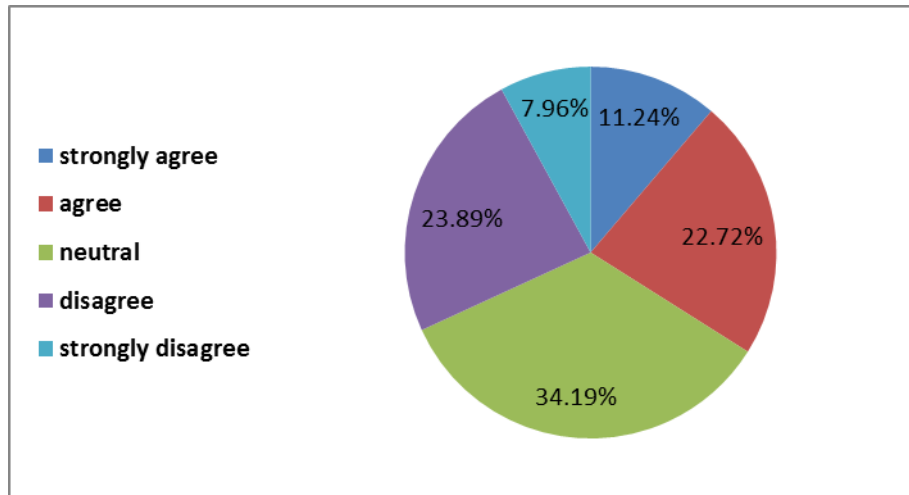
Q37 The lecturer's teaching approach enables me to explore my academic interests in the subject
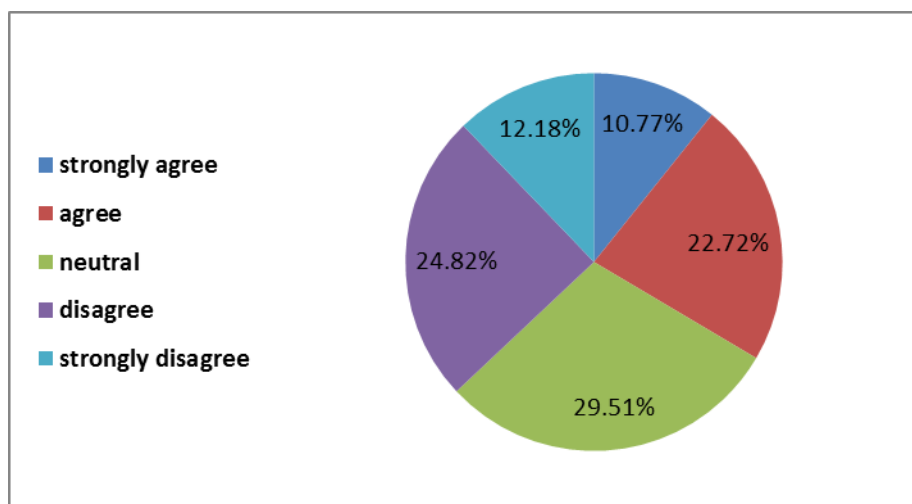
Q33 The lecturer is concerned to engage me in the learning process to be able to analyze a situation and display logical and rational thinking.
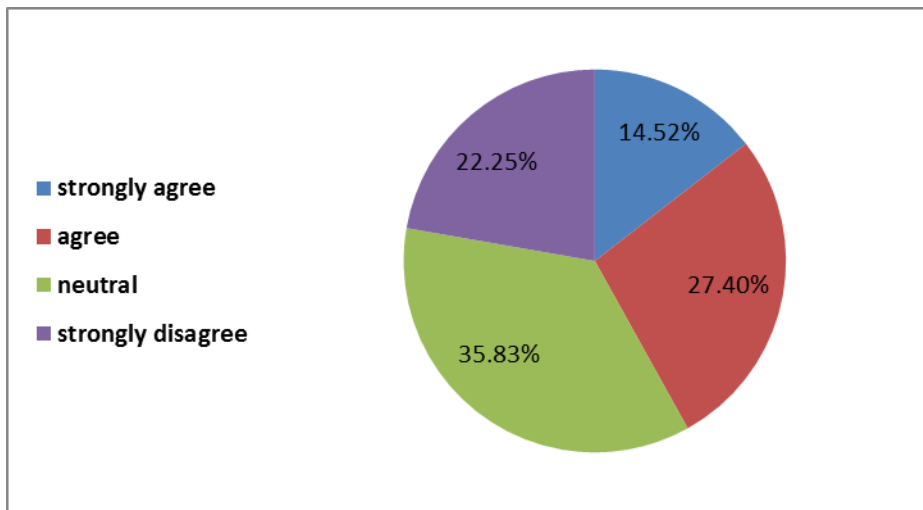
Q42 The lecturer's teaching approach applied in this subject is consistent with subject objectives.
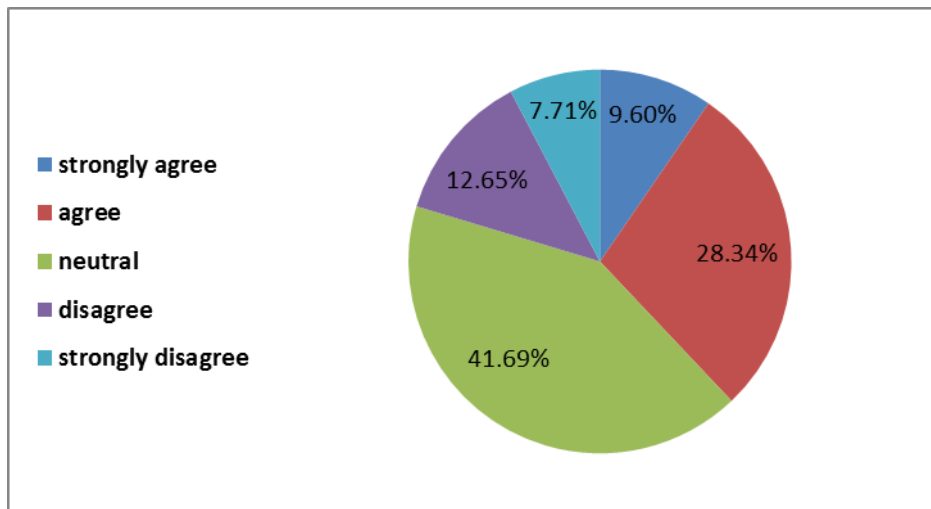
Q35 The lecturer seems more interested in testing what I have understood than what I have memorized.
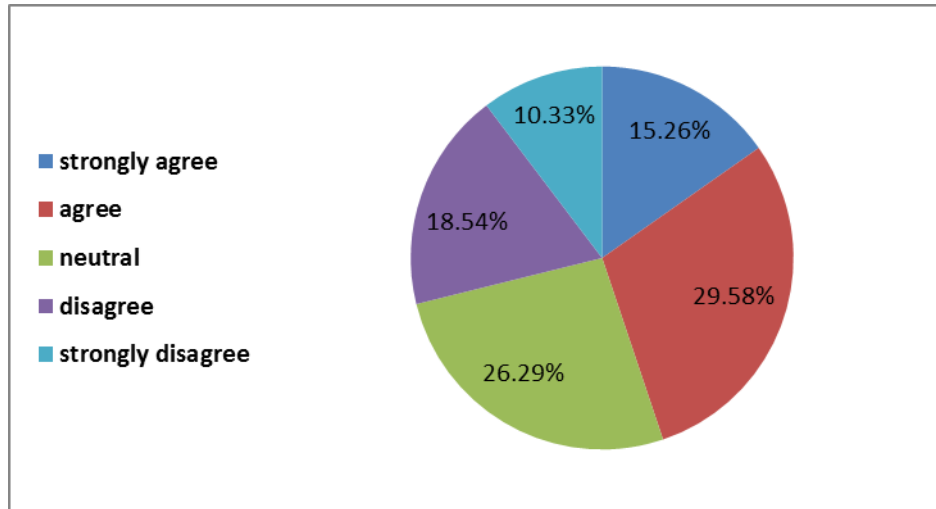
6.2.2.3 Student assessment

Q43 At term beginning, assessment procedure is determinate in this subject.
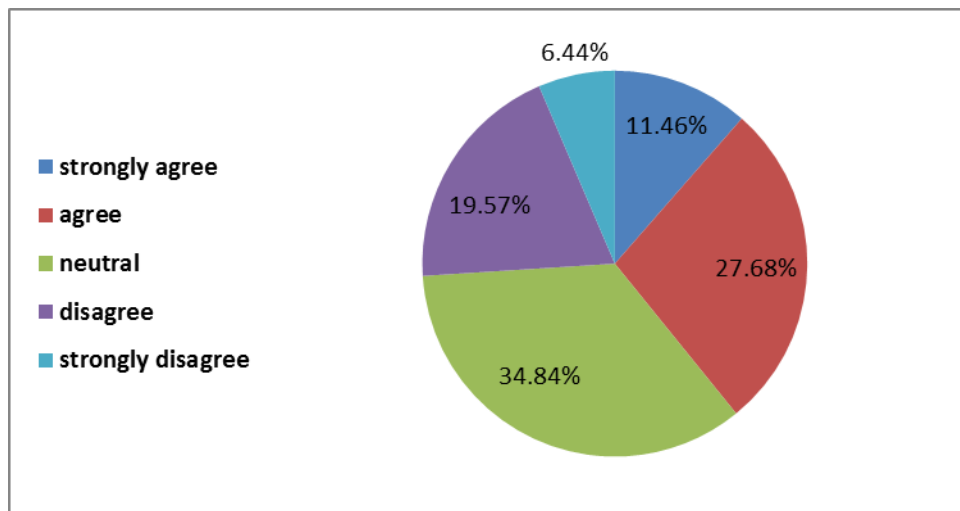
Q44 The actual goals addressed by the assessment in this subject are consistent with subject objectives.
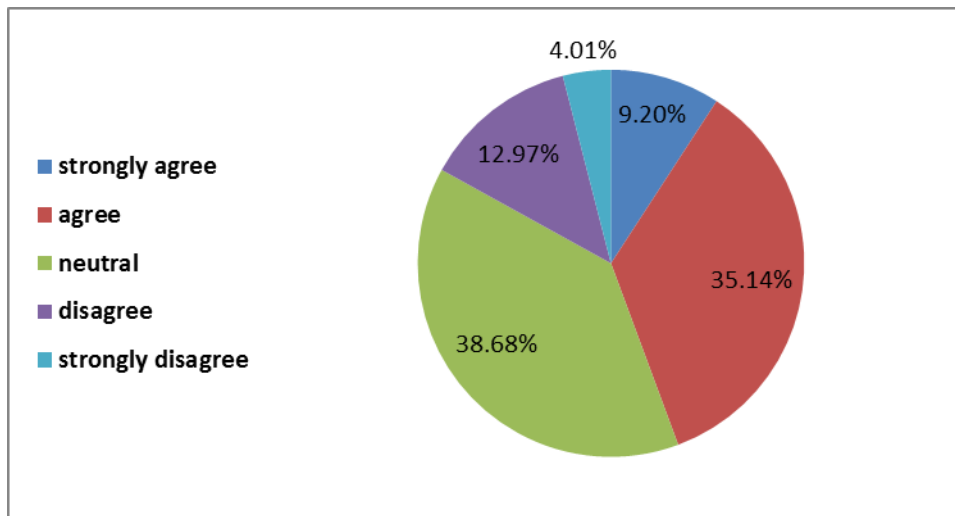
Q45 The assessment in this subject is enhancing my learning.
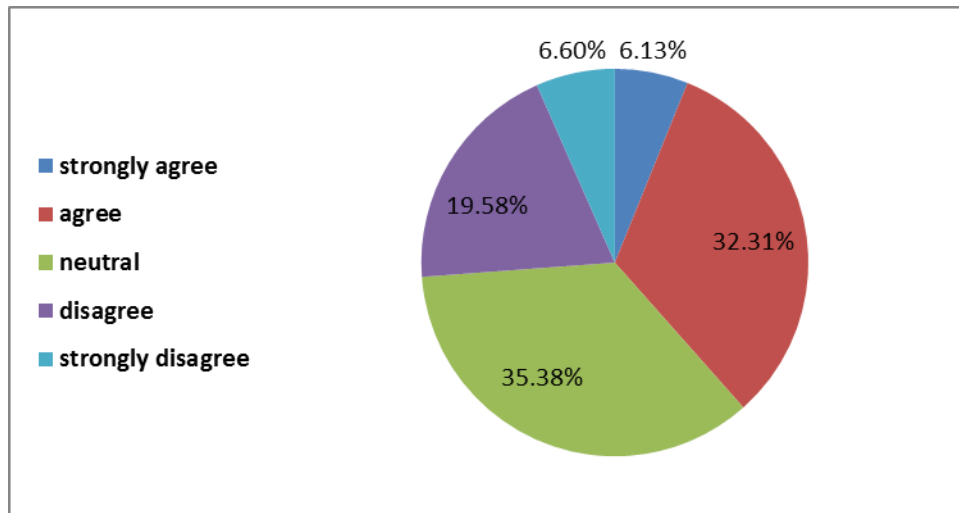
*Q50* In this subject I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn before undertaken the exam.
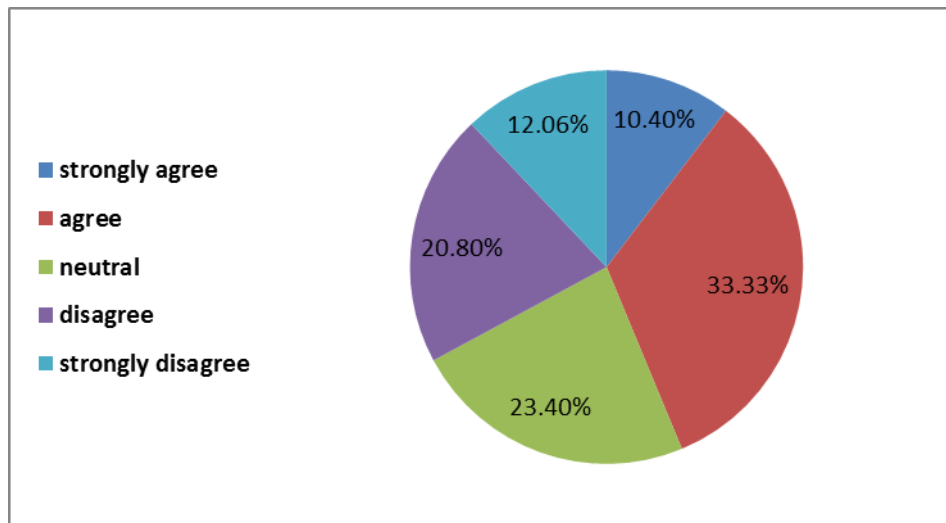
Q51 Assessment methods for this subject encourage me to apply high critical learning skills (e.g. critical thinking skills, problem solving skills).
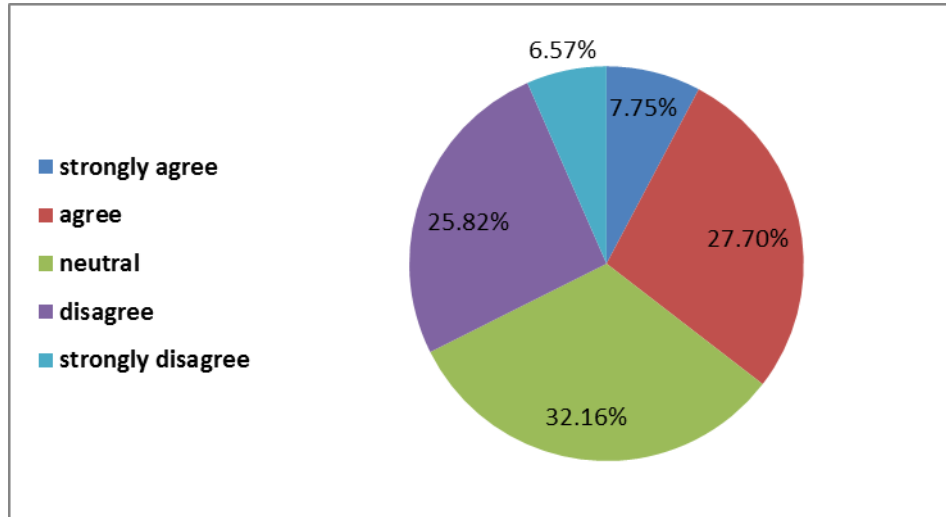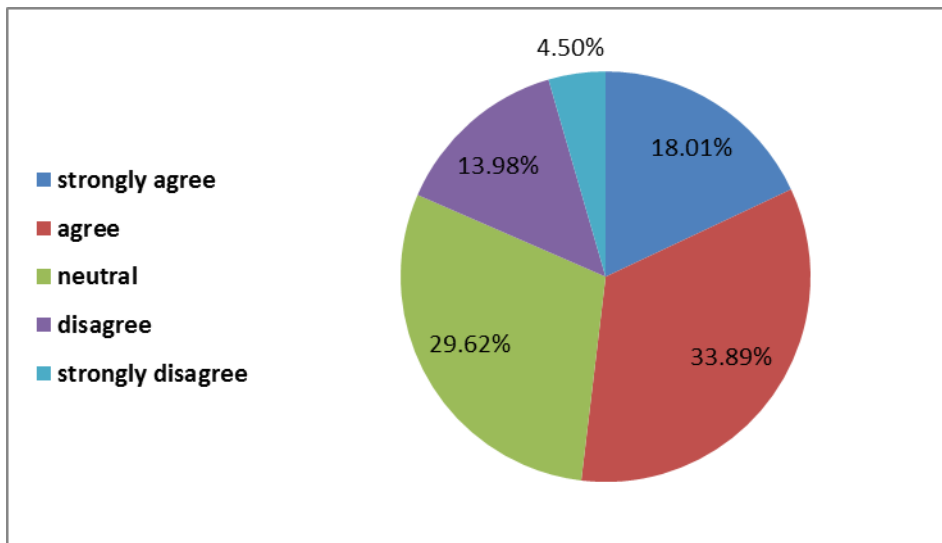
Q46 Assessment format for this subject emphasizes on assessing my understanding of its content not just memorization of facts.
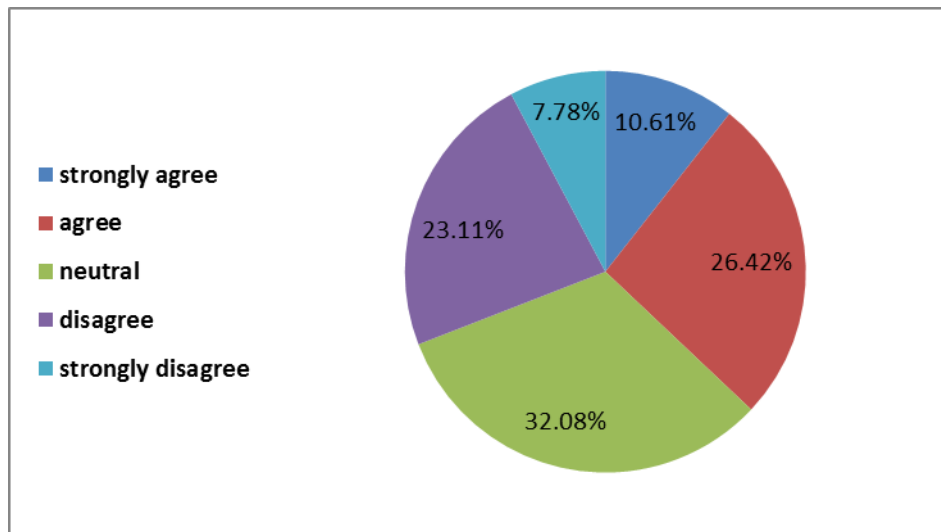
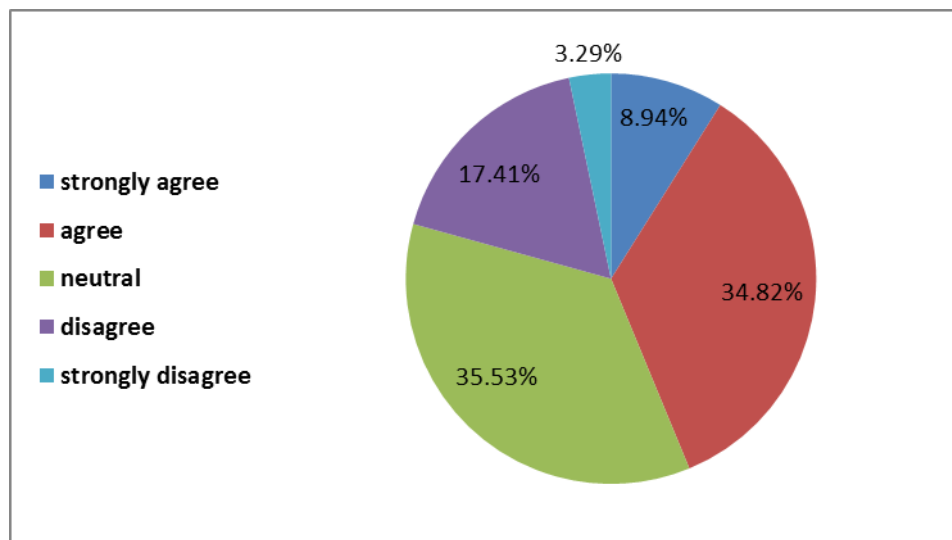*Q47* The assessment in this subject is hindering my learning.
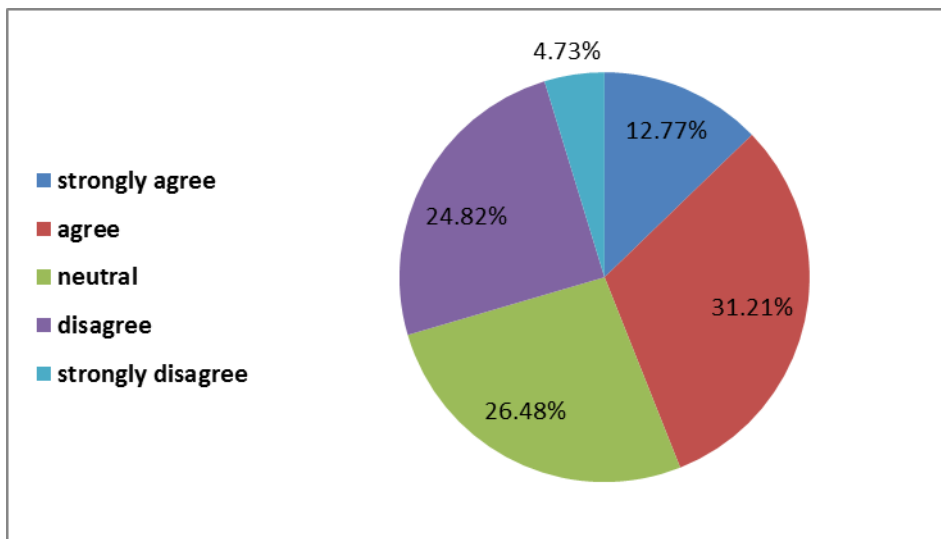
Q49 Assessment format for this subject emphasize on assessing my ability of reproducing subject facts rather than assessing my understanding of theme.
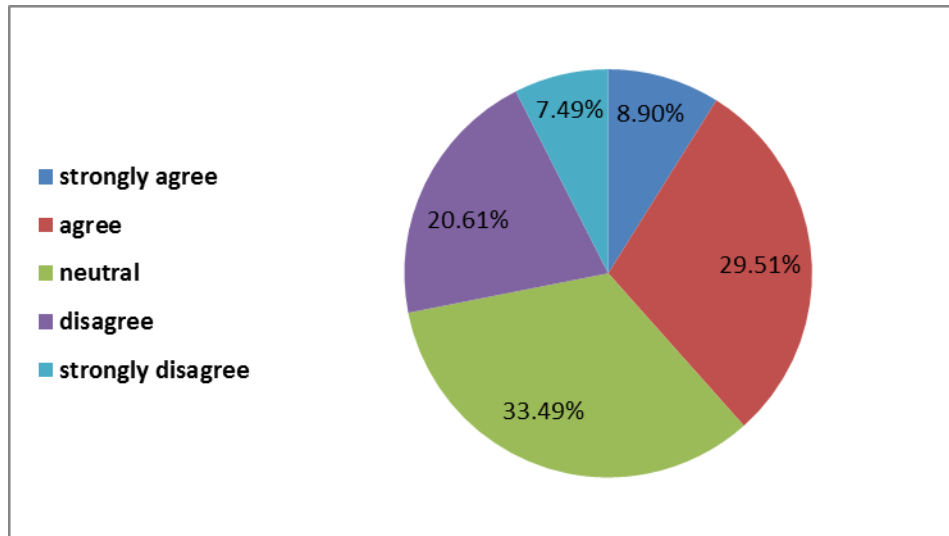

## 6.2.2.4 Programme evaluation and the review processes

Q23 There is clear match between subject content and the outlined objectives.

*Q27* The programme in this department is highly organized.

Q68 I believe that, in the past three academic years and during my studying in this faculty there is a clear concern of the quality of course objectives and the methods used of accomplishing theme.
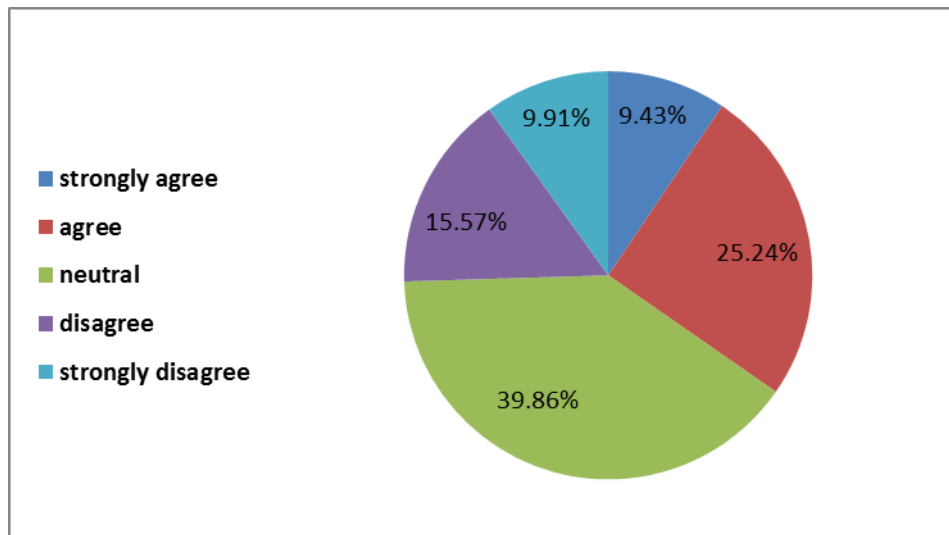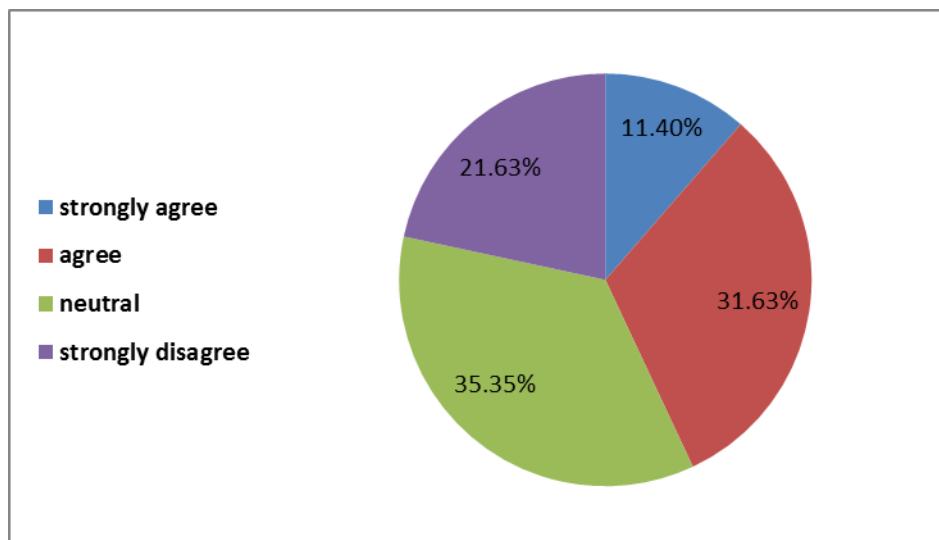
6.2.2.5 Educational assistance for students

Q25 The lecturer makes a real effort to understand difficulties I may be having in this subject.
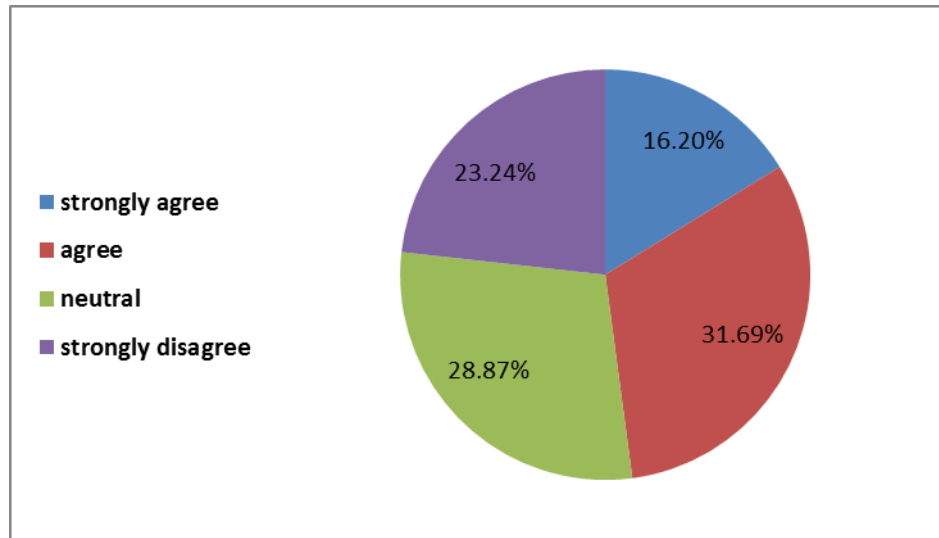
6.2.2.6 Student learning

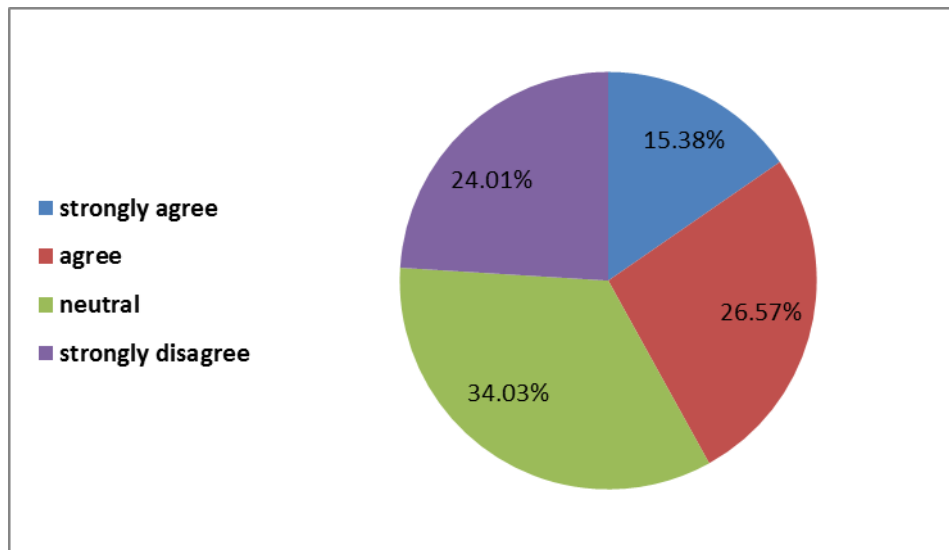*Q2* I tried to be critical of the interpretation of experts.

Q5 If I find it difficult to understand a particular topic, I consult other books of my own accord.

Q53 When preparing for this assessment I summarized a lot of material without understanding it.
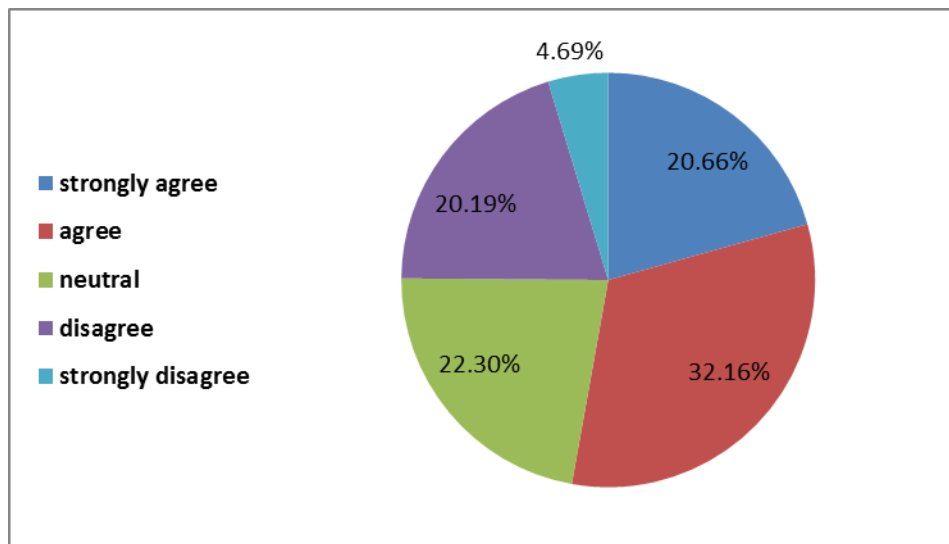
Q21 My capacity skills for research and inquiry in this course are developing.

Q19 The workload in this course is too heavy.

Q63 My degree course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.

Appendix 12

Comparisons between Sciences and Humanities Faculties, of Teachers and Students Responses across University X & Z, on Six Themes Associated with NCAAA Recommendations
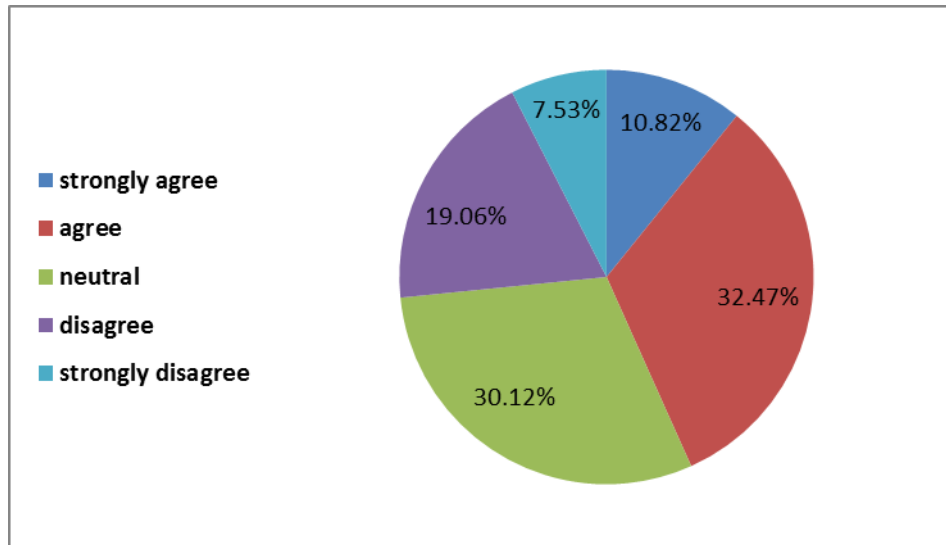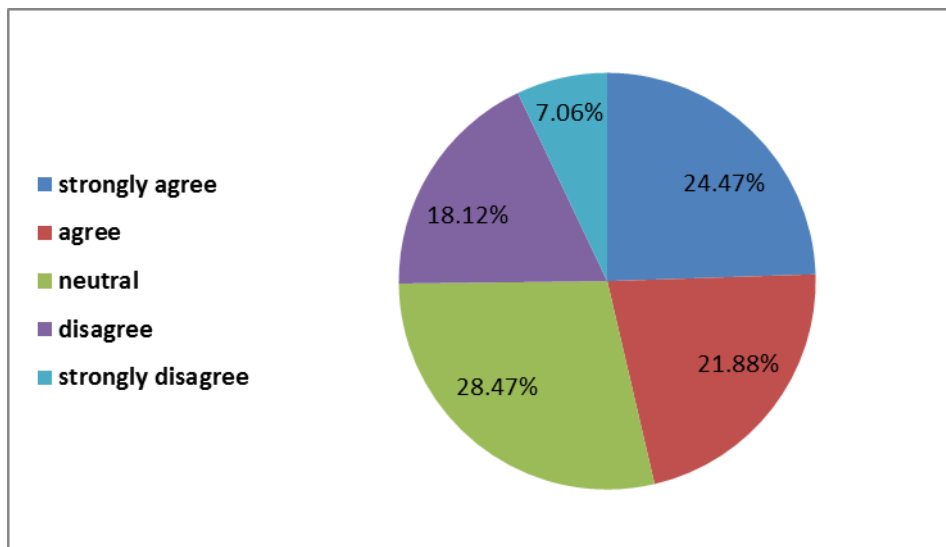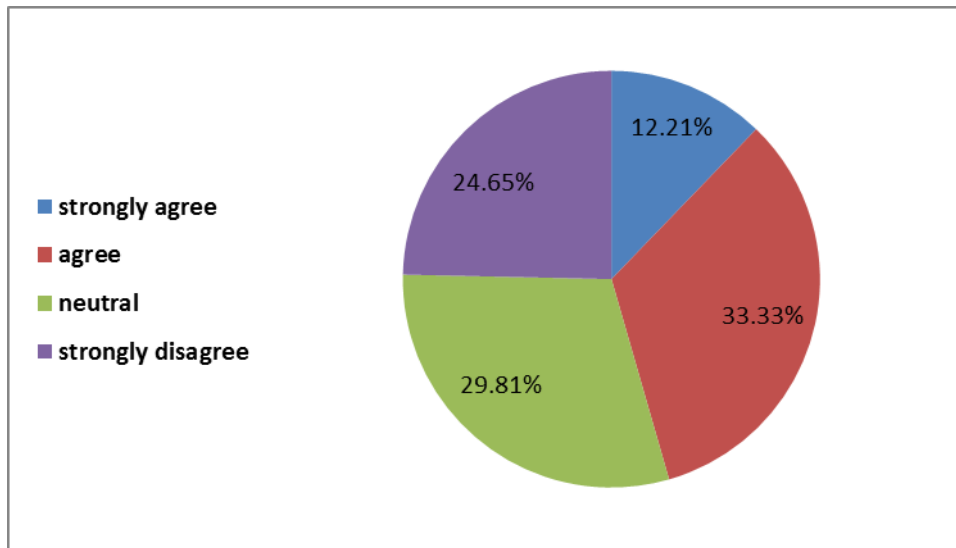
Theme 1 Teaching for meaningful understanding

Q1 Teacher: In my discipline it is important that by completing a course the student should be able to analyse a situation and display logical and rational thinking.

Q33 Student: The lecturer is concerned to engage me in the learning process to be able to analyze a situation and display logical and rational thinking.

Table (1) Teachers; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 39)	20 (83%)	15 (100%)
Z (total = 39)	26 (90%)	9 (90%)

Table (2) Students; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 229)	45 (34%)	41 (43%)
Z (total = 201)	69 (46%)	24 (50%)

Table (3) All respondents (teachers & students) for both of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Respondent Status	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
Teachers (total = 78)	46 (87%)	24 (95%)
Students (total = 430)	114 (40%)	65 (47%)

Table (4) All respondents (teachers & students) for each of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Respondent Status	
	Teachers	Students
X (total =268)	35 (92%)	86 (39%)
Z (total = 240)	35 (90%)	93 (48%)

Theme 2 Teaching orientation

Q8 Teacher: My teaching approach is more focused on transmission subject information to the student.

Q38 Student: Lecturer teaching approach is to impart subject information.

Table (5) Teachers; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 39)	20 (83%)	8 (53%)
Z (total = 39)	18 (62%)	9 (90%)

Table (6) Students; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 229)	84 (63%)	61(65%)
Z (total = 201)	98 (64%)	35(71%)

Table (7) All respondents (teachers & students) for both of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Respondent Status	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
Teachers (total = 78)	38 (73%)	17 (72%)
Students (total = 430)	182 (64%)	96 (68%)

Table (8) All respondents (teachers & students) for each of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Respondent Status	
	Teachers	Students
X (total =268)	28 (68%)	145 (64%)
Z (total = 240)	27 (76%)	133 (68%)

Theme 3   Understanding and supporting of student's learning

Q4 Teacher: In my discipline I am interested in understanding the difficulties that my students might encounter in studying the subject.

Q41 Student: The lecturer is interested to know the difficulties that might an encounter me in studying this subject.

Table (9)Teachers; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 39)	23 (96%)	15 (100%)
Z (total = 39)	29 (100%)	10 (100%)

Table (10) Students; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 229)	29 (22%)	30 (32%)
Z (total = 201)	55 (36%)	15 (31%)

Table (11) All respondents (teachers & students) for both of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Respondent Status	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
Teachers (total = 78)	52 (98%)	25 (100%)
Students (total = 430)	84 (29%)	45 (32%)

Table (12) All respondents (teachers & students) for each of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Respondent Status	
	Teachers	Students
X (total =268)	38 (98%)	59 (27%)
Z (total = 240)	39 (100%)	70 (34%)

Theme 4   Clarity of assessment procedure

Q22 Teacher: In my discipline and from the start the assessment procedure is explained for the students.

Q43 Student: At term beginning, assessment procedure is determinate in this subject.

Table (13) Teachers; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 39)	21 (87%)	15 (100%)
Z (total = 39)	22 (78%)	9 (90%)

Table (14) Students; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 229)	43 (33%)	29 (31%)
Z (total = 201)	70 (47%)	22 (47%)

Table (15) All respondents (teachers & students) for both of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Respondent Status	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
Teachers (total = 78)	43 (82%)	24 (95%)
Students (total = 430)	113 (40%)	51 (39%)

Table (16) All respondents (teachers & students) for each of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Respondent Status	
	Teachers	Students
X (total =268)	36 (93%)	72 (32%)
Z (total = 240)	31 (84%)	92 (47%)

Theme 5   Constructive feedback

Q16 Teacher: I provide each one of my students with a helpful feedback on his progress in this subject.

Q34 Student: The lecturer provides me with a helpful feedback on my progress in this subject.

Table (17) Teachers; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 39)	14 (58%)	10 (67%)
Z (total = 39)	18 (62%)	6 (60%)

Table (18) Students; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 229)	19 (14%)	21 (22%)
Z (total = 201)	45 (30%)	9 (19%)

Table (19) All respondents (teachers & students) for both of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Respondent Status	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
Teachers (total = 78)	32 (60%)	16 (64%)
Students (total = 430)	64 (22%)	30 (20%)

Table (20) All respondents (teachers & students) for each of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Respondent Status	
	Teachers	Students
X (total =268)	24 (62%)	40 (18%)
Z (total = 240)	24 (61%)	54 (24%)

Theme 6   Evaluation of teaching

Q18 Teacher: In my discipline, I am interested to know my students' opinions concerning the effectiveness of my teaching approach and its potential influence on their learning approaches.

Q39 Student: The lecturer in this subject is interested to know my opinion concerning the effectiveness of his teaching approach.

Table (21) Teachers; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 39)	16 (69%)	12 (86%)
Z (total = 39)	28 (96%)	9 (90%)

Table (22) Students; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
X (total = 229)	28 (21%)	35 (37%)
Z (total = 201)	64 (42%)	15 (31%)

Table (23) All respondents (teachers & students) for both of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Respondent Status	Faculty Membership	
	Sciences	Humanities
Teachers (total = 78)	44 (82%)	21 (88%)
Students (total = 430)	92 (31%)	50 (34%)

Table (24) All respondents (teachers & students) for each of X and Z Universtiy; those who 'agree' or 'agree strongly'

Institution	Respondent Status	
	Teachers	Students
X (total =268)	28 (77%)	63 (29%)
Z (total = 240)	37 (93%)	79 (36%)