

**HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY-BUILDING IN KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ:
PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVES**

by

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Abstract

This study examines the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives with regard to the new higher education policy-making in Kurdistan. It attempts to explore the development and implementation of the policy's first priority, the aim to bridge the gap between quality and quantity in higher education. A mixed-methods case study research is employed by applying qualitative methods in a series of interviews carried out with nine faculty members from a University in the Kurdistan Region. The interviews were followed by a survey of a representative sample of 305 faculty members from all faculties of the university, with responses from 148. Both research methods explored the implementation of quality assurance initiatives under the quality teaching reforms. The aim is to identify what type of quality culture in higher education is being encouraged and if it will enable higher education to serve as a bridge for Kurdistan to the global knowledge economy.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to nine of my father's family members who were tragically taken away from us in 1988. After the assassination of my uncle, his wife and one-month old daughter, my grandparents and four aunts were executed by Saddam Hussein's regime simply because they advocated and fought for justice, democracy, and freedom. They did not live to see Iraq's liberation, but they did not die in vain because their story gave me the strength and willingness to do this research so that the people of Iraq can use it to create a better life. This research is my first attempt to make a difference, and it is my wish that it will spark the attention of other researchers to study the education system of Iraq.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Since the US-led coalition entered Iraq in 2003, international agencies and foreign governments have transformed Iraq into a unified federal democracy that is market oriented and has potential to become a regional economic powerhouse. The democratic process gained some ground when Iraq witnessed its first election in 2005, creating a shift in power among different political forces. After a long period of dictatorship under Saddam Hussein, the election was a positive development more particularly for the Kurdistan region (in the northern part of Iraq) than for other parts of the country. Kurdistan has successfully created its own autonomous regional government, that functions at a sub-state level by having its own parliamentary democracy with a regional assembly. It largely focuses on building the foundation for economic growth, revitalizing the private sector, improving people's quality of life and reinforcing good governance and security. It has prioritized the transformation of the education system, developing a new higher education policy under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR).

One of the primary goals of the policy is to improve the standards and quality of universities in order to meet the demands of the current market economy and engage in international competitiveness. The policy outlines four strategies:

1. Bridging the gap between quality and quantity in higher education
2. Introducing teaching and research quality assessment systems, implementing auditing mechanisms; reforming university management structures, and introducing funding schemes for student scholarships and research grants
3. Pushing for universities to become independent financially, academically and managerially
4. Redrafting the Higher Education law.

This policy agenda has been strongly supported and guided by American and British agencies that offer funding and operate mainly on the basis of an economic rationale shaped by neo-Liberalism and the Washington Consensus.

This study will investigate the first priority of the policy that focuses on quality in curriculum, teaching and learning. In the report, *the Roadmap to Quality: Reforming the system of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq* there are five components under the section: ‘reforming teaching to ensure quality.’ The five mechanisms are as followed: teaching quality assurance (TQA), continuous academic development (CAD), curriculum development, assessment of teacher’s portfolio and licensing and accreditation. Assessment, student feedback, external assessors and peer review were integrated into the TQA program. Course review and objectives, course books, and curriculum development (e.g. critical thinking, scientific debate) were put together in the CAD program.

1.1 Objective and Research Questions

This research will address the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives with regard to the new higher education policy-making in Kurdistan. The thesis will explore the development and implementation of the policy’s first priority, the aim to bridge the gap between quality and quantity in higher education. The perception of the university representatives will help identify what type of culture of quality in higher education is encouraged and if it will enable higher education to serve as a bridge for Kurdistan to the global knowledge economy.

1.2 Sub-questions

The following sub-questions will attempt to examine the type of quality system that is implemented in Kurdistan’s universities as well as how quality issues are perceived and coped with by academics.

1. How was the quality of higher education during Saddam Hussein's regime? How different is it now?
2. How is the new quality culture promoted within institutions of higher education? What are the main elements of such a culture?
3. How do university representatives react to the new quality policy that aims to reform teaching to achieve quality through quality assurance initiatives? Do they adopt, resist or make and shape this policy on quality?

1.3 Organization of Thesis

This introductory chapter will be followed by a literature review in chapter two, which will focus on reviewing relevant literature to which this study is connected. The literature review will outline the tenets of neoliberalism and its deep impact on education systems. It will analyze how education has become a key sector in the global knowledge economy. Chapter three will provide the theoretical and conceptual framework by discussing the origins of quality, considering the various definitions, conceptual issues, and the relationship between quality and culture.

Chapter four will explain the methodological framework, including the reason for selecting a mixed-methods case study research methodology to examine the research questions of this study. Chapter five will offer a description of the context in the pre-Saddam and post-Saddam periods. It will review the political, economical and educational changes after 2003 and how the Northern part of the country experienced more prosperity than the Southern part of the country. It will outline in detail the new higher education policy strategies and ways they have been implemented.

Chapter six will apply the theoretical and conceptual framework in chapter three to analyze the data generated from the qualitative and quantitative results of the study. It will

analyze the interview and survey data and locate common themes and issues found through both research methods. Lastly, chapter seven will conclude by discussing the implications of this study, listing the challenges and opportunities presented and suggesting areas for future research. It will identify the gaps found in the new policy, reasons for considering the perception of university representative and ways to improve the new educational processes implemented under the new policy.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Over the recent decades, the rise of a philosophy of neoliberalism has transformed the economic and social settings of many countries around the world. The neoliberal agenda is based on economic prosperity for the individual instead of society. In order to achieve higher rates of profit, government officials and institutions promote the deregulation of the economy, trade liberalization and revitalization of health and education systems. This chapter outlines the origin of the ‘Washington Consensus’ and the principles of neoliberal ideals that are the basis for this consensus. A discussion will be provided on how the neo-liberal model has a deep impact on education systems and how education has become a key factor in the global knowledge economy.

2.2 U.S.: The New Imperial Power and the ‘Washington Consensus’

Since the end of the Second World War, and throughout the Cold War, the U.S. has utilized its political, military and diplomatic strategies to assert its interests and achieve its goals internationally. Since the end of the Cold War in 1991, this has taken a new form, as it has been incorporating other nations’ economies into the emerging global economy (Tikly, 2004). This economic integration provides the path to continuously extract surplus value by inflicting trade liberalization measures with the purpose of opening up new markets in developing countries for Western goods and services. The political integration includes the Western liberal vision that promotes a way of governing the populations of those countries, which is characterized by liberalism and reduced regulation. The intention is to drive the forces of global capitalism and expand capitalist markets throughout the economies of developing nations. According to Tikly (2004), the Washington Consensus was based on helping low-income countries to implement policies of trade liberalization, export-led growth, and the formation of positive conditions to

draw foreign direct investment, such as “cuts in government expenditures, the use of users fees in public service, and an end to price controls of basic commodities” (p. 178).

The consensus was followed by governmental methods that put these ideas into practice such as the structural adjustment programs of the IMF, oriented to connecting economic development with the growth of individual entrepreneurialism and the expansion of the market into the social arena. Accordingly, the current neoliberal framework is the basis for this consensus in which American political and economic systems are having an influence throughout the world. The discourse of neoliberalism is politically imposed; it amounts to a kind of hegemonic discourse of western countries. Its key features appeared in the US in the 1970s as a reaction to stagflation and the collapse of the Bretton Woods system of international trade and exchange. The result of this was the abolition of capital controls in 1974 in America and 1979 in Britain (Olssen and Peters, 2005). The sustainability of Keynesian demand management was extremely affected. Financial globalization had a huge impact as “exchange rates were floated and capital controls abolished, giving money and capital the freedom to move across national boundaries” (Olssen and Peters, 2005, p. 314). Technological advancements guided these changes, quickly moving financial capital through the assistance of microelectronics and computers.

2.3 Neoliberalism: Its Tenets and Assumptions

The main characteristics of neoliberalism can be understood from the principles of classical liberalism, specifically classical economic liberalism. As outlined by Olssen and Peters (2005), the main assumptions are a) individuals are economically self-interested subjects; b) assigning resources and providing opportunities is best done through the market; c) a dedication to laissez-faire principles is important and state control is given a negative connotation and d) a

commitment to free trade that engages in eliminating tariffs or subsidies or other forms of state-imposed protection.

The central point is to understand the difference between the discourse of classical and neo-classical liberalism that has influenced the OECD countries over the last 30 years (Olssen and Peters, 2005). The former philosophy has a negative conception of state power, in which an individual who is self-directed can exercise freedom and the interventions of the state should be reduced as far as possible. The theory has a positive conception of state power in terms of the state's role in establishing the laws, institutions and conditions needed for the operation of the market. The state thus attempts to produce individuals that are enterprising and can be competitive entrepreneurs (Olssen and Peters, 2005). According to Olssen and Peters 2005):

For neoliberal perspectives, the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state acting now in its positive role through the development of the techniques of auditing, accounting and management (p. 315).

Allowing the services in the marketplace to be separated from central state power limits state control over the labor market.

2.4 Neoliberalism and International Organizations

Neoliberal principles of individualism, privatization and decentralization are evident in the economic, social and education policies of many developing countries. Various international organizations such as the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank are dominated by neoliberal ideas, which they impose on a wide range of societies in the form of various demands for restructuring. It is clear that these international institutions operate under a Western liberal paradigm that directly and indirectly exports neoliberalism around the world (Ritzer, 2010).

The neo-liberal perspective of the World Bank emphasizes three main features, a) a coherent policy framework; b) an enabling regulatory environment; and c) appropriate financial incentives to promote knowledge-driven progress while guaranteeing quality, efficiency and equity in higher education (George, 2006). These are also features of the ‘new managerialism’ approach to managing higher education and public administration (Braun and Merrien, 1999). A few of the main factors of managerialism that are outlined in the model of public management put together by the core of the OECD include decentralization, deregulation, accountability and quality control (Braun and Merrien, 1999).

The new managerialism is a big change from the standards of public management formerly embraced by the OCED. Higher education is responding to the changes in the labour market as they are told the market is a reliable indicator of skills shortages. The way to bring competition between higher education institutions is to “increase the efficiency of education, and achieve higher rates of return on education investment” (George, 2006, p. 599). For neo-liberal proponents, the key to meeting the needs of the market and to making appropriate education decisions, is for the government not to provide a high level of subsidies to higher education.

The neo-liberal model, developed by theorists at the World Bank and exemplified in practical approaches taken by the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand limits the control of state power over privatization and individualism. However, it is not the only available model. The state-centric model that is founded on the experience of nations that have adopted the Asian model of economic development, such as Vietnam, Singapore, China and Korea, would also be applicable to European models of higher education and former Soviet Union countries. Education for the state-centric model is seen as joining various ethnic and linguistic groups within countries with diverse populations and responding to colonial hegemony in a post-

colonial world. Table 1, taken from George (2006) outlines the issues that higher education is encountering, specifically finance, administration and curriculum, integrating research and innovations into practical commercial products, showing the differences between the state-centric (state directed) and neo-liberal (openly competitive and less state directed) models. Table 1 focuses on the role of individuals in the management of higher education, for example who decides on the curriculum or how separate responsibilities for activities are associated with certain beliefs as to how a country's developments should proceed. This table is not to demonstrate that any higher education system will fall evenly under one of these models, since any country theoretically could have some of the characteristics of both options, but practically higher education governance systems have a propensity to either be more neo-liberal or more state-centric (George, 2006).

Table 1: Governance Systems for Higher Education and Development

Issues	State-centric Model	Neo-liberal Model
Beliefs about change	-Assumes direction of change is knowable and can be state driven; or that higher education can be achieved independently from societal change. - State direction is most efficient means of achieving desired outcome.	-Assumes direction of change is unknowable, and best anticipated through a variety of educational structures. -Free market competition will produce the most efficient use of educational resources
Finance	-Principally state funded or state directed funding. -Funding allocated according to state development priorities or based on historical levels.	-Competitive bidding among universities for finance -Use of performance output indicators to allocate final -Large number of private institutions. -Significant proportion of non-state finance.
Administration	-State has important or deciding role in areas such as: appointing teachers, deciding curriculum, awarding degrees and enrolment. -Existence of 'peak' universities that offer guidance to others.	-High level of decentralization of responsibilities to individual universities or even teachers. -Use of performance indicators as a management tool -Creation of extra-state bodies to supervise particular issues.
Curriculum and Teaching	-State with high level of influence on curriculum. -Curriculum changed with difficulty, requiring higher levels of approval. -State (or peak university) control of entrance examinations. -Emphasis on quantity of knowledge and memorization. -Curriculum emphasizes respect of authority and status quo.	-Interactive teaching and problem solving. -Emphasizes competition in class. -Use of credit system/student choice in the curriculum. -Curriculum decided at lower levels of higher education structure, perhaps even by teacher.
Marketing Innovation	-State-directed research programmes in areas of perceived need. -State directs application of research and innovation in economy.	-State provision of competitive funding for research in priority areas. -State provision of competitive funding to facilitate linkages between industry and tertiary institutions.

Source: George (2006), Higher education for the knowledge-based economy

2.5 The Structure and Vision of International Organizations in the Higher Education Sector

The objective of international organizations operating under neoliberal principles is to push universities to be more accountable, business-oriented and measure research in terms of its cost impact. It is believed that such a system focuses on achieving excellence in teaching, research, and community services, with the objective of helping with the development of the nation's human capital, technological transformation and social and cultural identity. This is the global capitalism that is promoted in developing nations that reduces universities to a technical

ideal of performance within a contemporary discourse of ‘excellence’ (Peters, 2007). It is linked to the rise of finance capitalism, current information and communication technologies, and deterritorialization of knowledge that serves the interests of national economies and global corporations (Peters, 2007). The international organizations that are facilitating this are part of transnational capitalism, a form of capital system of globalization. They have moved away from being an inter-national system to a globalizing system that disengages from any specific nation-state. The transnational capitalist class tends to share global interests and may not be capitalist in a traditional sense. They apply different kinds of power across nations, controlling the economy in the workplace and politics in the domestic and international area (Ritzer, 2010).

2.6 Knowledge as the New Form of Capital Under Neoliberalism

“The most important economic development of our lifetime has been the rise of a new system for creating wealth, based no longer on muscle but on mind (Toffler 1990, p. 9)

A key change in the twenty-first century that adds force to neoliberalism is the rise in the importance of knowledge as capital. This is an outcome of the Washington Consensus that is modeled by world policy agencies such as the IMF and World Bank. The “knowledge economy”, are twin words coined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in a report entitled *The Knowledge Based Economy* (1996). In this report, “the economy has become a hierarchy of networks fuelled by the rapid rate of change in all aspects of life, including learning” (Gibbs, 2008, p. 6).

There is a difference between the traditional industrial economies and the new global knowledge economy with regard to their core ideas. The new knowledge development shares many of the properties of global public good, the need for governments to protect intellectual property rights in a global economy (Olssen and Peters, 2005). The changes of knowledge

production and its legitimation are vital to becoming aware of neoliberal globalization and its impact on education policy. According to Olssen and Peters (2005),

If transformations in knowledge production entail a rethinking of economic fundamentals, the shift to a knowledge economy also requires a profound rethinking of education as an emerging form of knowledge capitalism, involving knowledge creation, acquisition, transmission and organization (p. 331).

The idea of a knowledge economy stimulates the rethinking of the traditional connection among education, learning and work, concentrating on the need for a new alliance between industry and education. The term knowledge economy came out of a series of reports that appeared in the late 1990s by the OECD (1996a) and the World Bank (1998) before they were received as a policy template by world governments in the late 1990s. Education in these reports was reconceived as an underrated form of knowledge capital that can decide the future of work, the organization of knowledge institutions and the shape of society (Olssen and Peters, 2005). Knowledge distribution or investments is discussed in the OECD report as being important to “economic performance and codification of knowledge in the emerging ‘information society’” (Olssen and Peters, 2005, p. 333). The model of innovation is highlighted in the knowledge-based economy report that is composed of knowledge flows and interactions between government, academic institutions and industry in the expansion of science and technology. According to the OECD (1996a), to meet the needs of the large demand for more highly skilled knowledge workers,

Governments will need more stress on upgrading human capital through promoting access to a range of skills, and especially the capacity to learn; enhancing the knowledge distribution power of the economy through collaborative networks and the diffusion of technology; and providing the enabling conditions for organisational change at the firm level to maximise the benefits of technology for productivity (p. 7).

The main elements of the knowledge economy are public research laboratories and institutions of higher education. However, there are challenges to knowledge production. Thus the report discusses knowledge in regards to '*know-what*' and '*know-how*', adapting factual and scientific knowledge, while '*know-how*' and '*know-who*' are form of tacit knowledge that are hard to codify and measure. This type of knowledge in regards to skills is important to deal with codified knowledge in the market-economy, making it a rationale that education should be the focus of the knowledge-based economy and learning-by-doing an important method to achieve individual and organizational advancement (Olssen and Peters, 2005).

Further, Knowledge for development also emerged in the World Development Report, which argued that collection of physical and human skills are not the only attributes for building economies, but information, learning and adaptation are the basis (The World Bank, 1998). This perspective uses knowledge to examine the problems of development. Joseph Stiglitz, ex-Chief Economist of the World Bank, stated that the World Bank has become a '*Knowledge Bank*' instead of a bank for infrastructure.

We now see economic development as less like the construction business and more like education in the broad and comprehensive sense that covers, knowledge, institutions and culture (Stiglitz, 1999, p. 2)

He argues that knowledge shares the properties of a global public good, becoming a vital role for governments in protecting intellectual property rights. The report Knowledge for Development outlines two types of knowledge: knowledge about technology and knowledge about attributes. The former is '*know-how*' such as software engineering, the latter focuses on the quality of product or the effort of a worker. The '*know-how*' is less seen in developing countries, for which reason the World Bank identifies '*knowledge gaps*.' They can also lack knowledge of attributes, which the report calls '*information problems*' (Olssen and Peters,

2005). Development is drastically changed in this conceptualization, reducing knowledge gaps by introducing national policies and strategies for acquiring, understanding and communicating knowledge. As well by tackling information problems by means of designing national policies that will process the economy's financial information, raise knowledge of the environment and discuss information problems that affect the poor. Education in this regard is used as a way to obtain knowledge through the utilization and adaption of knowledge that is created all over the world through an open trading regime, foreign investment, and licensing agreements (Olssen and Peters, 2005). This intensifies 'knowledge gaps' in developing countries since local knowledge production is limited only to research and indigenous knowledge is constructed through Western methods rather than local ways of conceptualizing and transferring knowledge.

2.7 The Implications of a Knowledge-Economy for Higher Education: Contradictions and Tensions

In both developed and developing nations, higher education has been considered to be the basis to the continuing growth of national economies. As discussed earlier, a country with a knowledge-based economy according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is the one where "the production, diffusion and use of technology and information are key to economic activity and sustainable growth" (OECD, 1999, p. 7). This economic approach, that the production of knowledge is the basis of the economy, utilizes the triple helix model of innovation, which consists of universities, government, and industry (Leydesdorff, 2006). According to this view building up the university and its relation with the market is important to innovation and economic progress. The issue with this approach is that higher education is turned into a commodity, and as they participate in competition for students, resources and rankings, the activities of learners and educators are indirectly rearranged according to market ideals. "Students are clients, educators are service providers, and 'quality'

teaching, learning objectives and student attributes and outcomes are the new language of pedagogy” (Saltmarsh, 2011, p. 115).

In this context, the university has a higher status and the nation-state stays at the center of control in this new economy. Much of the data and theories promoting higher education as a commodity are held by neo-liberal economists, stressing individual choice and instilling market-like approaches into the public sector. In the higher education system these principles develop in an attempt towards marketization and privatization, decentralization of school management, centralization of accountability practices and elimination of trade barriers. The problem with such a model is that it heavily promotes the autonomy of individual institutions and less government intervention as well as the introduction of performance indicators to analyze the productivity of institutions. Consequently this impacts both student learning and academic work, since universities serving the global knowledge economy encourage the outcomes-driven rather than learning-oriented study.

2.8 Conclusion

My criticism of the neoliberal model and the knowledge-based economy is that rapid privatization, decentralization and deregulation of economy could potentially hinder the social and cultural health of nations that are moving towards a free market-economy. This model is currently active in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where the effect of globalization and internationalization is evident through the revitalization of the higher education system. The new higher education reforms implemented to complement the diversified systems around the world are questionable since the relationship among different systems and their governments differ considerably across the globe, reflecting differences in tradition and stage of development.

The neoliberal model and the state-centric model are both visible in Kurdistan. Although the state has a total control over the implementation process and monitoring mechanisms of

higher education reform, the approaches to reform and mechanisms for quality assurance are brought in by various international agencies from the US and the UK. Theoretically and practically Kurdistan adheres to aspects of both models at the present moment. However, the way to examine the impact of neoliberal ideology and ideas of the knowledge-based economy in Kurdistan, is to study how university representatives are dealing and responding to these reforms, as well as if there is any assertion of local identity in the response to the new quality initiatives and if the Ministry is imposing this neoliberal order or asserting their own standards of quality and their own methods of quality assurance.

Chapter Three: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

The knowledge-based society is strongly connected with state and society, and neoliberalism has opened many ways for the public arena to apply practices from the market. In developing countries, some governments have initiated the restructuring of the economic sector in order to develop a knowledge-based society; however this process has been hindered by the quality of education systems. Their response has been to invest more in higher education but they encounter impediments to curricular refinement, teaching practices, methods of examination and research.

Another barrier is seen in their higher education policy agenda that attempts to establish new quality improvement initiatives, such as adopting quality assurance as the new quality control mechanism that will evaluate the input and the output of the higher institutions (Bernhard, 2012). The issue here has been that even if quality is introduced into the discourse of higher education, the development of a quality culture tends to fall behind the implementation of quality assurance procedures.

Maintaining quality and standards in diversified higher education systems is questionable since the relationship between different systems and their governments vary significantly across the globe, reflecting differences in tradition and stage of development (Yorke, 2000, and Brennan, 2004). Differences among national viewpoints on higher education such as the Humboldtian approach adopted by parts of Europe or the unitary systems followed by the UK demonstrate how policies for establishing quality and assessment are constructed differently. Therefore, this chapter will provide a theoretical and conceptual framework by offering a discussion of the origins of the concept of quality, considering the various definitions of quality, related conceptual matters, and the relationships between quality and culture.

3.2 Quality: Its Definitions and Typology

The discussion of quality has produced many different perspectives due to the difficulties of defining it. According to Vroeijenstijn (1995), quality has always existed but the relationship between society and higher education has changed, demonstrating the contextual transformation of higher education (Newton, 2007). In this period, society has been moving from 'elite' to a 'mass' system, leading to the state promoting quality, seeking accountability and organizing national quality bodies (Newton, 2008, p. 14). This mass system, as well as the internationalization and marketization of higher education, are growing rapidly, and assuring quality through the process of evaluation, external examiners, and audits is becoming essential.

The term quality comes from the Latin word *qualis* meaning 'what kind of' (Mishra, 2007) while Pfeffer and Coote (1991) refer to it as a 'slippery concept' due to the different meanings and connotations associated with it. Pirsig (1974) demonstrates the slippery nature of quality by stating:

Quality...you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about it. But if you can't say what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes, it doesn't exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really does exist... So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding any place to get traction. What the hell is Quality? What is it? (p. 171, also quoted in Mishra, 2007, and Westerheijden, Brennan and Maasen, 1994).

On the other hand, Green and Harvey (1993) outline five different ways of defining quality as exceptional, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformative. The

exceptional view links quality to the concept of excellence, that is associated with reaching high academic standards. Quality as perfection sees quality as a consistent outcome, in terms of “zero defects” and “getting it right the first time” which could be applied to academic judgment instead of learning situations. Quality as fitness for purpose is when a product or service meets the purpose. In the education sector, fitness for purpose is based on the capacity of an institution to satisfy its programme of study to fulfill its goals. Quality as value for money perceives quality in terms of return on investment, achieving efficiency and effectiveness when the same outcome is obtained at a lower cost. Government’s expecting accountability from higher education reflects a value for money approach. Lastly, quality as transformation sees quality as a process of achieving a qualitative change, such as a transformation in educational sense, which is about enhancing and empowering students or the progress of new knowledge (Westerheijden, Brennan & Maassen, 1994, and Woodhouse, 2003). While Garvin (1988) categorized different definitions of quality into five main groups: a) transcendent definitions see quality as subjective, personal and more related to concept than measurement, b) product-based definitions see quality as a measurable variable that looks at the objective characteristics of the product, c) user-based definitions see quality as a means for customer satisfaction, which to a certain degree is subjective, d) manufacturing-based definitions see quality as conformance to requirements and conditions, and lastly e) value-based definitions see quality in term of costs as what offers good value for money (Largosen Seyed-Hashemi and Leitner, 2004).

However, to promote specific forms of quality assurance, Brennan and Shah (2000) identified four major types of “quality values”. The first value is based on an academic approach that focuses on the subject matter and professional authority over the criteria of quality, the second value is based on a managerial approach which is associated with good management, the third value is based on a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the delivery of the subject

matter, and the final value is employment-focused which assesses the learning outcomes of graduates. On the other hand, Conrad and Wilson (1985) describe four models of quality assurance: the goal-based approach which assesses how the program has performed based on its goals; the responsive model which recognizes program accomplishments and lets the program participants identify the steps needed for improvement; the decision-making model, which is based on connecting decisions to evaluation methods, and the connoisseurship model, which consists of disciplinary experts initiating the quality evaluations on the basis of their expertise.

3.3 Different Analytical Frameworks for Defining Quality

Quality thus has a wide range of meanings that come from values operationalized through the practices of individuals or institutions. The way it is perceived and adopted by different countries varies. Lomas (2002) looked at four of Harvey and Green's (1993) five definitions of quality as an analytical framework to investigate whether the massification of higher education is causing the demise of quality. His research with senior managers in higher education institutions in the UK illustrated that fitness for purpose and transformation were the most suitable definitions of quality, but the latter definition experienced practical difficulties due to its lack of capacity for measuring. From another standpoint, Idrus (2003) saw that developing countries are not capable of developing and sharing transferred concepts or practices. One of these concepts is quality, as many seem to have problems adapting it, and culture is not the only reason for their negative response, but rather the politics of quality is an issue. According to Van Kemenade, Pupius and Hardjono (2008), Garvin's (1988) and Harvey and Green's (1993) five approaches to defining quality are not describing the recent quality issues in higher education. Rather, these authors argue that the concept of quality consists of objects, standards, subjects and values. Their quality procedures management is composed of commitment, control, and continuous improvement as a way of describing the expansion of quality management in higher

education.

An alternative perspective is presented by Lemaitre (2002), arguing that globalization is the new method of explaining the imposition of cultural, political and economic priorities previously linked with imperialism. Higher education is frequently not present in this discussion. Lemaitre argues that globalization has created two opposing views of higher education. As discussed by Harvey and Williams (2010), for some the changes are radical and traditional methods no longer apply; thus the loss of cultural autonomy has been caused by the domination of the market and a decline in state sovereignty. A contradictory perspective argues that these processes were always present, but the expansion rate of capital, labour, production, consumption, information and technology is now different. Developing countries according to Lemaitre are faced with a quality that is “colonized by consumerism and short-term effectiveness” (Harvey and Williams, 2010, p. 6).

These multiple perspectives are reviewed for the purpose of demonstrating that the examination of quality has a political undertone and should not be separated from context and purpose.

3.4 How Academics Cope with Quality Issues

According to Newton (2007), research on the perception of academics and their management of quality is lacking and not much literature deals with the reaction of academics to higher education policy. Some of the studies offered important internal views on how quality is seen and used in certain institutions. These studies looked at the background of quality in the 1990s and the current focus on the ‘situated meanings’ and their context (Newton, 2007). The conclusion of these studies was that quality systems were connected with fulfilling the needs of accountability, which meant ‘bureaucracy’ rather than ‘improvement’ (Newton, 2007, p. 18).

The main questions the studies looked at were on how quality issues are perceived and coped with by academics, which were outlined in Newton's (2007) article:

- 1- How do academics respond to quality assurance and monitoring regimes?
- 2- How do staff engage with quality frameworks and policy?
- 3- What meanings do front-line staff attach to different facets of quality?
- 4 - Are they adopters of policy, or resisters, or makers and shapers of quality policy and quality initiatives? (p. 18).

The author deconstructed quality from 'formal meanings' to 'situated meanings' in the early 1990s by disentangling the politics of quality and stating that formal meanings of quality and situated perception of quality were different (Newton, 2007, p. 18) (*See Table 2*).

Table 2: Formal Meanings to Situated Meanings

Dominant formal meanings of 'quality in the early 1990s	Situated perceptions of 'quality' of front-line academics: post-1990s
Quality as 'Perfection' or 'consistency'	Quality as 'failure to close the loop'
Quality as 'value for money'	Quality as 'burden'
Quality as 'total quality'	Quality as 'lack of mutual trust'
Quality as 'management commitment'	Quality as 'suspicion of management motives'
Quality as 'culture change'	Quality as 'culture of getting by'
Quality as 'peer review'	Quality as 'impression management' and 'game playing'
Quality as 'transforming the learner'	Quality as 'constraints on teamwork'
Quality as 'fitness for purpose'	Quality as 'discipline and technology'
Quality as 'exceptional' or 'excellence'	Quality as 'ritualism and tokenism'
Quality as 'customer satisfaction'	Quality as 'front-line resistance'

*(Source: Newton, 2007)

Therefore, how quality is viewed under its formal meanings is different from how it is viewed in situated meanings, making it essential to consider the perceptions and perspectives of academics on quality policy as well as their coping strategies. It is also necessary to realize that academics are makers and shapers of quality policy, and transformative concepts of quality could possibly be weakened in practice by 'situational restrictions' and 'contextual issues' (Newton, 2007, p. 19). Consequently this shows that there are differing discourses, in which

academics and administrators may see quality in their own way and quality can change at the operational level since front-line staff constructs it differently.

3.5 Quality and its Relationship to Assurance Processes

The development of international quality standards is grounded in the ideas of globalization and the significance of the university to the knowledge economy. Before the nation-state started to govern higher education systems, the main focus of the university was on the quality of input such as university admission or staff employment (Brennan and Shah, 2000). Due to higher education developing mass systems, the new focus of quality moved to input, output, and process. The U.S. created national accreditation bodies in the late nineteenth century to monitor the quality of higher education institutions in order to assess and share practices in the region. According to Bernhard (2012), during this period, all countries were faced with the “quality industry” or “audit culture” (p. 43). By the end of the 1990s, quality and standards became international, making quality the primary matter for institutional and political plans of higher education policies (Bernhard, 2012).

The massification, internationalization and privatization of higher education as well as the government’s indirect control of higher education and linking programs to labour needs have appeared to be the central issues for the development of quality assurance procedures (Westerheijden, Brennan & Maasen, 1994). In this regard, a quality assurance system ought to guarantee accountability of higher education programmes. As well it should be comprised of regulation, development, and improvement of quality mechanisms that demonstrate to stakeholders such as policy makers, university administrators, parents, and students that the input, process and outcomes fulfill internal expectations (Brennan and Shah, 2000 and Harvey, 2004a). The stakeholders in an international quality assurance standard are the national governments, international organizations, university officials, parents, and students. The

assumption of quality assurance is that an external body will engage in quality judgment and has a particular level of authority in the process (Westerheijden, Brennan and Maasen, 1994). However, each country has responded differently to the implementation of quality assurance systems. The process could be developed differently such as focusing on expanding current practices, fulfilling the needs of public accountability and complying with government plans. The procedures of quality assurance have different methods, from “self-evaluation processes, to external peer evaluation to using performance indicators, statistical benchmarking and standardization of practices” (Strydom et al., 2004, p. 208). Peer opinions are the bases for the decision-making while institutional audits and departmental reviews are the units of analyses.

3.6 The Evaluation Methods of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a continuous process that needs to be evaluated. There are different elements for measuring quality, such as accreditation, assessment and audit. Accreditation is seen as fulfilling the minimum acceptable standards through its assessment outcome, while assessment consists of all processes employed to evaluate an individual or group performance and audit is a current method that answers to all the expectations of external quality control and enhancement (Bernhard, 2012). Part of audit is for an external person to ensure that quality assurance procedures are conducted efficiently. In this regard, each process can run at an institution or program level and consists of self-assessment, peer-review and external-evaluation.

Internationally, quality assurance is accomplished first by self-evaluation, such as peer review by a group of experts that use performance indicators such as surveys of students and graduates. This approach also examines students’ skills, knowledge and competencies. Quality is more sustained through self-assessment, since individuals know what their strengths and boundaries are as well as having the opportunity to be self-critical. In higher education,

benchmarking is a new idea that offers incentives for continuous development of quality since it recognizes the 'best practices' that are acknowledged in the business and industry (Mishra, 2007, p. 32).

External quality monitoring (EQM) is an accreditation that has become mandatory in many countries' higher education systems (Harvey, 1998). EQM reassures external stakeholders, for example, employers, professionals and the public, about the legitimate quality of higher education system. It provides objective instruments for evaluating the educational institution by an external peer group, and this is a common practice in EQM since the self-assessment report and quality criteria are critically examined. The group analyzes institutional reports and policies, meets with teachers, students and top management. EQM is frequently perceived as intruding on the 'autonomy and 'academic freedom' of the educational institution (Mishra, 2007, p. 33). In the unit of assessment, quality assurance and accreditation are practiced at different stages, in which strong departments support program-level accreditation, creating complicated evaluation outcomes. Lastly, the market-driven method is seen in a huge emphasis on ranking educational institutions for the benefit of business. Universities from different countries are assessed and ranked by media such as the US News, in which most ranks rely on the opinions of the graduates; therefore they are perception based (Mishra, 2007).

3.7 A Culture of Quality in Higher Education

Many developing countries are undergoing a serious transformation, as they are faced with the challenges of economic globalization, knowledge as a driver of growth, and information and communication. Adequate development of a quality culture is necessary to produce a high quality of teaching to enhance their role and image for important stakeholders and to use it as a marketing tool. The procedures of implementing quality evaluation and

assurance have shown to be ineffective when they are not guided by universities' organizational culture towards a quality culture.

Quality as a culture identifies the significance of an organizational perspective of quality as a process of transformation, in which each unit matters. The concept of culture is based on the Latin word *cultural* that comes from *colere*, meaning, "to cultivate" (Ehlers, 2009, p. 345). Presently it is commonly defined as patterns of human behaviour and symbolic structures that offer their meaning (Williams, 1983, and Ehlers, 2009). However, there are many different definitions and meanings of culture that emphasize the theoretical basis of understanding human activity. Kogan (1999) argues that it is difficult to find a common definition that all agree on, as there are diverse views in the literature. According to Bodley (1994), culture is "shared, learned and symbolic" (in Harvey and Stensaker, 2008, p. 429). It is shared because it is a social and observable phenomenon that is learned and has symbolic significance. It is transferred and integrated across generations, allowing it to survive beyond the life of any one person or groups of people (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008).

Looking at the different definitions of culture paves the way to understanding how culture is now used as an instrument for improving organizational performance. The concept of 'organizational culture' has been recognized as a way of understanding human systems with a strong influence on quality of teaching. According to Schein (1992), organizational culture is

The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be thought by new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p. 9).

Following Schein, organizational culture has structures such as hidden assumptions, conscious values and observable elements (Kowalkiewicz, 2007). In this regard quality is perceived differently depending on how it is defined. For example, quality of teaching can be defined in reference to the higher education institution's declared purposes with the concentration on the teaching context and procedures. The shared values among teachers and students determine the ways the resources are used. For instance, advanced technology will not be used if academics are not innovative or students will not learn properly if teachers are not sharing their knowledge or using appropriate teaching methods (Kowalkiewicz, 2007). These illustrations demonstrate the proper values of quality culture for achieving quality of teaching. Only too often, however, the method used to develop, assess and assure quality do not consider the cultural situations, even when the quality of interaction in teaching and learning between educators and students is influenced by various organizational backgrounds, structures and values (Ehlers, 2009).

In higher education, there are two opposite tendencies, with the first one focusing on structures, accreditation, rules and regulations, while the second one sees culture as the fundamental concept for the improvement of organizational performance (Ehlers, 2009). The latter may be more important, as organizational accountability, quality development and quality management shape the demand for expansion of organizational culture that is founded on shared values, skills and new professionalism. This demonstrates a shift from the mechanistic perspective to developing a more holistic and cultural view of quality in education. Ehlers (2009) argues that in the past, implementing tools of quality assurance or accreditation were more valuable than bringing about change and allowing individual professionalism and ownership. Concepts such as quality control assurance and managements are now seen as top-down methods that are often unsuccessful in higher education. Ehlers (2009) continues to argue that the focus of the new generation is change, development and innovation, in which quality

should be created from negotiation and stakeholder participation. It is therefore essential to consider the organizational cultural perspective since “it is important to approach quality holistically and combine cultural elements, structural dimensions and competencies into one holistic framework, enabling stakeholders to develop visions, shared values and beliefs” (Ehlers, 2009, p. 344).

3.8 Different Approaches to Achieving a Quality Culture in Higher Education

The model for a quality culture in higher education consists of four main components: structural elements, enabling factors, quality culture, and transversal elements. Structural elements of quality are represented by quality management approaches, which can be the mechanisms to assure and accredit quality. There are various methods for quality management in educational setting, and most of these have their own accreditation, evaluation, and certification bodies (Ehlers, 2009). Enabling factors consists of elements that allow individuals and groups to engage in the new processes, regulations, and rules that are in the quality systems. Three processes suggested are commitment, negotiation, and competences for quality development. While the first one focuses on individuals identifying with the organization’s goals, the second one sees that negotiation among learners and the educational setting has to be developed. Lastly, competencies are the foundation for any quality development process since building the capacity of professionals will lead to the improvement of educational processes and quality cultures in organizations (Ehlers, 2009). The cultural components are affected by quality development processes, particularly the assumptions that exist about quality and teaching in the newly shared values, rituals and cultural artifacts. Effective quality improvement processes, as well as values about teaching, need to be agreed upon and organization of these is part of shared practices, symbols, and stories (Ehlers, 2009). Finally, transversal elements demonstrate that organizations can have a variety of cultural patterns; thus communication and participation

create the harmony within organizations' subcultures. Participation of stakeholders and communication between internal and external bodies are built through cultural representations of concepts. Trust is an important feature that should be established through individual and collective efforts, as it can turn quality into culturally rooted quality realities through rituals, symbols, values and artifacts (Ehlers, 2009).

This new generation demonstrates the holistic quality approaches in higher education with the aim of establishing an organizational culture of quality. It demonstrates that quality management systems, competencies, individual and collective values are united in the concept of quality culture. Cultural change in an organization is a complicated process, thus using organizational culture to conceptualize the development of quality culture is important, especially using the four basic elements discussed above in the form of participation and communication among individuals and groups.

Another model is presented by Deming's 14 principles for transforming a service and what the management would need to do. Six of these principles are outlined and summarized by Redmond, Curtis and Keenan (2008). According to the authors, Deming's six principles for transformation are as followed:

2. Adapt a new philosophy with management learning what their responsibilities are and assuming leadership for change. Deming argues that in order for management to go through transformation, it must survive in today's marketplace. Quality and change are central points that should start at the individual level to develop a new culture within the organization. This could create a new management that consists of expert employees who make decisions collectively and eliminate barriers. In relation to higher education, this type of institution has been moved towards commercial competition due to the expansion of education internationally and decreases in government's educational funding. Quality management procedures are

necessary for higher education to tackle the shortcomings that Engelkemeyer (1993) lists such as “poor teaching, anachronistic programmes, incoherent curricula, excessive price, and inefficient administrative bureaucracies” (in Redmon, Curtis and Keenan 2008, p. 435).

3. *Cease dependence on inspection by building in quality into the service.* The traditional method to protecting quality in manufacturing is inspection, such as random testing of the products for their fitness for purpose. According to Redmon, Curtis and Keenan (2008), conducting inspection at different intervals is a hit and miss method to achieve quality, which could lead to errors and flaws happening. For higher education, receiving a warning about an inspection allows the sensitization to occur which could lead to making corrections ahead of the inspection. This could lead to weak educational practices, and according to Deming, it is necessary to “build quality into their service delivery” in order for a service to be effective in generating quality (Redmon, Curtis and Keenan 2008, p. 435).

5: *Aim for continuous improvement of the service to improve quality and decrease costs.* Previous quality focused on inspection, quality control and quality assurance. Today the highest level of quality is quality management. This new approach needs the organization’s inclusive commitment to continuously enhance its service and meet the needs of its customers, preserve its status quo and have competitive strategies. For higher education, it needs to be receptive to students and stakeholders’ needs, develop and improve curricula, encourage high a level of teaching and research scholarship and constantly ensure courses are reaching their proposed outcomes (Redmon, Curtis and Keenan, 2008).

7. *Institute leadership with the aim of supervising people to help them to do a better job.* Leadership is about eliminating the causes of failure and assisting individuals to do effective work, as this will achieve high quality. Deming stressed that leaders should deal with their workers with respect and fairness as well as to offer good conditions that expand the skills and

abilities of employees. They should also lead the way in creating and promoting cooperation and eradicating obstacles within the organization. Leadership has a strong ability for building up the quality culture in higher education by focusing on teamwork and shared responsibilities (Redmon, Curtis and Keenan, 2008).

8. Drive out fear so everyone can work effectively together for the organization.

Fear is always present in any organization and allows quality to suffer since it affects the employee's effectiveness at work. Knowledge transmission, research and development are the work commodity in higher education that can easily be hindered by fear. Tackling fear could potentially lead to loss of reputation or career, interpersonal rejection, loss of self-esteem, and job relocation or demotion (Redmon, Curtis and Keenan, 2008). These can have a major impact on educators, as their fear can be obstructive, individually geared, or hold employees back from speaking up. This speaking up can lead to view that "nothing will change; avoidance of conflict; and don't want to cause trouble for others" (Redmon, Curtis and Keenan 2008, p. 438). Thus higher education managers should eliminate fear in order for employees to work effectively in an organization since this is particularly important in encouraging academic freedom and improving productivity (Redmon, Curtis and Keenan, 2008).

9: Break down barriers between departments and encourage departments to work together. It is important for higher education to build teamwork and collaboration between all stakeholders including academics, administrators, funding agencies, students, employers and society in general. From this collaboration, cooperation, trust, accountability, autonomy and communication are created (Redmon, Curtis and Keenan, 2008). Although obstacles to collaboration in higher education exist, such as weak negotiation skills, lack of knowledge of others' roles and yearly performance review, teamwork in higher education is necessary and can be obtained through multi-disciplinary groups. It should include different opinions and

experiences with good communication skills, mutual respect, teamwork abilities, and familiarity with each other's position and competencies. These can eliminate professional and institutional obstacles; produce new ideas and information that will enhance the quality of the services offered by both (Redmon, Curtis and Keenan, 2008).

3.9 Quality Culture and its Ambiguity

When connecting quality culture to a more developed perspective on culture, its definition and understandings are described with a high level of ambiguity. On one hand it is difficult to define quality culture since every higher education institution is distinctive, while on the other it could be explained by structural efforts that promote shared values and beliefs. However, an argument could also be made that the concept of quality culture is strongly connected to national and international political ambitions. They aim to change the way higher education institutions function and deal with external demands and internal developments.

According to Harvey and Stensaker (2008), it is essential to look at the recent developments of quality culture in higher education since they raise important issues such as the perception of culture as a homogenous concept, culture as a learned way of life and as knowledge production, culture and economy having a dialectical connection and subcultures being the place of resistance. This complexity is connected to an implied understanding of quality culture as 'manipulative, 'an end product' which are linked to different functions coming from external and internal stakeholders in higher education (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008, p. 435). When accepting culture as a way of life, quality culture becomes an instrument that can be used for examination and dialogue in higher education. A shift in perspective is implied here, by asking 'who we are' instead of 'who do we want to be' as well as developing tools that could assist in answering basic questions about individual, group and organizational operation (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008, p. 435). Following this, a possible approach is Douglas' (1982) Cultural

Theory that is outlined by Thompson et al. (1990) which offers two group dimensions: “if individual behaviour is group-controlled” or “if individual behaviour is prescribed by external rules and regulations” (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008, p. 435). The positive thing about this theory is that it minimizes complexity by connecting beliefs, actions, values, and structure within an incorporated framework (Maassen, 1996). This illustrates that there are limited numbers of possible ways of life as well as at times there are political aspects linked to quality and quality assurance. Harvey and Stensaker (2008) suggest that joining the group dimensions as offered by Douglas (1982) results in four potential Weberian ideal-types of ‘quality culture’:

Table 3: Ideal-Types of Quality Culture

		Degree of Group Control	
		Strong	Weak
Intensity of external rules	Strong	Responsive quality culture: led by external demands, opportunistic, combining accountability and improvement, but perhaps also sometimes a lack of ownership and control	Reactive quality culture: reward or sanction led, task-oriented, doubts about the potential of improvement, compliance, reluctant (“beast to be fed”)
	Weak	Regenerative quality culture: internally oriented with strong belief in staff and existing procedures, widespread, experimental, although not always adaptive to external demands and developments	Reproductive quality culture: wanting to minimize the impact of external factors, focusing on sub-units, lack of transparency throughout the institution, emphasize the expertise of the individual

**Source: Created by Harvey (2009) but adapted from Harvey and Stensaker (2008)*

Responsive Quality Culture is an ideal-type that is mainly guided by external forces. The responsive mode accepts the opportunities provided by the institution, which are used to review the practices, develop new agendas and improve the policy of quality assurance. It initiates ways to learn from culturally related good practice, attempting to accept it while still perceiving culture as a way of handling evaluation issues and as a way of being a solution to a problem (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). However, this could internally be worsened by the lack of the

need to see quality culture as a way of life, but quality culture will continue beyond their control as the institution encourages its staff to include it in their daily experiences (*See Table 3*).

Reactive Quality Culture is an ideal type that reacts to external requirements and benefits from the opportunity when action is connected to reward. It is unwilling at times to accept most forms of quality evaluation and will have uncertainty about improvements coming from evaluation. The reactive mode handles situations one at a time, with “a rather disjointed or dislocated cultural ethos that may well reinvent wheels” (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008, p. 436). Quality culture is externally constructed, directed and inflicted, with a minimal sense of ownership (*See Table 3*).

Regenerative Quality Culture is an ideal-type that concentrates on internal developments while being aware of external expectations. It facilitates plans for its own internal regeneration in which external opportunities are incorporated in areas where they add value. The regenerative quality culture is motivated by continuous reconceptualization of its future path, what it knows and follows. The regenerative mode expects that its ongoing improvement plan is a type of accountability when the improvement process is unappreciative. This mode looks for learning opportunities, benchmarking and evaluation (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). Quality culture is ideologically adjusted with the ambitions of the team when it is not recognized in daily practice (*See Table 3*).

Reproductive Quality Culture is an ideal-type that centers on replicating the status quo, controlling the situation in order to lessen the influence of external pressures. The internalized quality in reproductive mode has created its own norms and may not reconceptualize main concepts. Quality culture is not translucent, but ideologically displays the knowledge of members to create a more open approach that possibly leads to an implacable opposition to a so-called quality culture (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008) (*See Table 3*).

The following four ideal-types for quality culture have features that are founded mostly in different higher education systems and could be used as the initial steps to examine how structure and culture can be coordinated with quality assurance. According to Harvey and Stensaker (2008), “structures of quality assurance are often designed without taking into account existing social structures and tacit institutional ways of handling quality assurance issues” (p. 437). It is clear that quality assurance procedures and quality cultures are inclined to appear different within reactive or regenerative cultural settings. Harvey and Stensaker (2008), argue that

‘Localised’ knowledge and practice should play a more important part in developing institutional quality assurance schemes, and that it is only when including such localized knowledge that the structure and culture will merge into a specific ‘quality culture’ (p. 437-438).

The authors have used the cultural theory to demonstrate this point, however there are a number of other approaches to encapsulate ‘localized’ knowledge. No matter which approach is selected, the most important step is conducting an empirical investigation into the culture and the organizational environment of the institution. Structures are not enough to improve quality even if the concept of quality culture is implemented within the quality assurance systems.

Furthermore, although localized knowledge and practice are fundamental in developing a specific quality culture, another important step that should be considered is adopting a form of democracy that is build on the existing social structures and culture. The key is to first understand that human beings have “struggled with the tensions between moral values and policies and leadership, as well as the contradictions in and dangers of slogans” (Portelli and Simpson, 2007, p. 7). Portelli and Simpson (2007) continue to argue that there is a continuous need to let educators, policy makers, and leaders to know about the importance of questioning

views and practices from a critical-democratic philosophical perspective. In this case the essential step is to develop a way of life that is rooted in thoughtful action and dialogue that Paulo Friere argues for. This can be achieved by becoming aware of the present situation that encourages a neoliberal perspective that favours the technical and competitive viewpoint through the characteristic mechanism of the market. According to Portelli and Simpson (2004), the neoliberal discourse has designated the use of the terms democracy and leadership to a point that they are not considered valuable if they do not reflect this discourse.

It is therefore imperative to look at various conceptions of democracy, even when there is no agreed definition of it. Democracy can take on many different forms or stages, however what comprises true democracy is always open to dispute. On one hand, democracy emerges “as a decision-making method” and “as a set of political institutions” that represent certain basic democratic principles (Blaug, 2002). On the other hand, what is seen now is the reintroduction of the ancient concept of democracy “as civic virtue, as a way of life, as a mode of interpersonal conduct oriented to what is good for all, in other words, as an ethical ideal” (Blaug, 2002, p. 105). The key is to understand that there is a difference between “democracy as a form of government and democracy as a way of life”, and a difference between “participatory or public democracy”, and “protectionist or minimalist or managed/market democracy” (Portelli and McMahon, 2004, p. 40). In this case, the concept of democracy is based on participatory democracy as a way of life; it is a continuing reconstructive process that is connected to equity, community, creativity, and consideration of difference (Portelli and McMahon, 2004). This is a form of critical democracy, that “involves rapid transformations of citizen capacities, interrelationships and self-descriptions”, and participation in this type of democracy is described by “dedication and sacrifice, energy, resourcefulness and disinhibition” (Blaug, 2002, p. 106). According to Blaug (2002), this form of democracy develops into an experience instead of an

institutional type, and it becomes a way of life - “an attempt to enact the ethical ideal of self-rule-in old parlance, a set of civic virtues” (p. 106). This allows members to engage in a personal elimination of suppression that is essential to their identity. Therefore, this will allow students and academics to engage in critical inquiry and become aware of the kinds of indoctrination, oppression, power, and autonomy that have shaped and controlled their way of thinking. Further, participation and dialogue taking place among all stakeholders involved in the process of teaching and learning can lead to a democratic transformation. Through a critical democratic framework, inconsistencies in the neoliberal understanding of democracy and existing practices can be exposed while challenging common practices in the West that declare themselves to be democratic while actually exhibiting imperialistic tendencies in their attempts to extend the influence of their version of democratic values (Portelli and Simpson, 2004). The goal is to facilitate critical dialogue and forms of literacy that empower all the actors involved in higher education based on active citizenship and genuine democratic values.

3.10 Conclusion

A conceptual framework for my study has been formulated based on the theoretical framework provided in this chapter on the different definitions of quality, its relationship to quality assurance programs and the several approaches to achieving quality culture in higher education. Although many theories and concepts of quality are examined in this chapter, this study will use Newton’s (2007) deconstructed quality from ‘formal meanings’ to ‘situated meanings’ (*See Table 1*), a frame which he formed from the various studies he carried out and from disentangling the politics of quality. This will be used to analyze the perceptions and operational assumptions of faculty members on quality policy. However, the analysis of the quality culture and quality assurance of this study will be examined in the way that Harvey and Stensaker (2008) have suggested, which is to develop an ideal-typical set of quality cultures

based on two dimensions, if the individual behaviour is grouped-controlled and if individual behaviour is prescribed by external rules and regulations. The dichotomization of these dimensions has led to four potential Weberian 'ideal-types' of quality cultures: responsive, reactive, regenerative and reproductive (*See Table 2*). These four ideal-types for quality culture are indicative only. None are desirable in a broad sense but a specific type may be preferable in a particular context.

Chapter Four: Facilitating a Mixed-Methods Case Study

4.1 Methodological Framework

This chapter will explain the methodological framework, methods and analytical process that were used to examine the research questions of this study. It will provide a rationale for selecting a mixed-methods case study research methodology to examine the perceptions of university representatives regarding the new higher education policy-making in the Kurdistan region's higher education system.

Data collection in a case study has many sources of evidence (Yin, 1994). For this research, case study is a suitable methodology when the questions asked focus on issues of "how" or "why" (Yin, 1994). These allow the research to describe a specific phenomenon. The goal of my research is to look at the perception of the university representatives with regard to higher education policy-building in Kurdistan, based on a specific university in the Kurdistan Region (for the purpose of protecting the confidentiality and privacy of the institution and the participants involved in this study, the university that participated in this research will be referred to as UKR). One of the goals is to look at the culture of quality that is encouraged in UKR. This institution was selected as a case study due to it being the oldest university in the region and the one that first adapted the new policy on achieving quality. Consideration of this case makes possible an analysis of the roadmap to achieving quality culture, where many economic, historical, political and cultural factors have influenced the development and implementation of this process in the Kurdistan region. There is little concrete data about this contemporary issue and until now it has not been the subject of much research. Fieldwork was an essential tool for investigating the topic.

There is also a historical connection to this institution for myself. My father worked there as an accountant, and had at various times taken me to this university when I was growing

up. As I reminisced, every time I walked through the different campuses, I would tell my father that I would study here one day. Leaving Iraq did not give me the opportunity to attend this university, but after many years I walked in these same campuses to conduct my MA fieldwork. This time my father escorted me as a foreign researcher, an identity I had never envisioned myself to have.

The application of a qualitative approach was decided on, in order to understand and to answer the “how” questions. According to Merriam (1988) and Yin (1994), a qualitative method can offer a holistic and deep examination of a current issue, as well as concentrating on investigating the history, context and cultural background of the institution being studied. Although the researcher has given careful attention to the context, there has also been a serious effort to control potential personal bias.

There are limitations to a case study done with an entirely qualitative approach since it does not provide a basis for scientific (sample) generalization. It has therefore been helpful to add a quantitative dimension, in the form of a survey of faculty. This quantitative part of the study will aim at explaining and answering the “why” questions. The idea of inferential statistics, generalization from a sample to the whole population, has been used to gauge the thinking of the whole population of the institution. A sample of the faculty population that represents the larger whole was surveyed, since the use of a random sample minimized risks. Therefore, this is a case study design with a mixed-methods research approach that includes a survey questionnaire and structured interviews. The survey will make it possible to judge the degree to which the findings of the interviews represent the broader population of university faculty.

4.2 Inter-relationship Between Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research: Mixed-Methods

The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods within this study produces an interesting relationship. Using both methods has been very enriching since each approach has its own strengths and boundaries; thus the limitations of both are minimized. Qualitative research is mainly utilized to obtain a first understanding of primary reasons for individuals' attitudes, preferences and behaviour. The aim is to acquire adequate knowledge about the range and the character of a problem that may subsequently be used to inform quantitative research. The results from qualitative research may be employed to develop assumptions or hypotheses that can be tested quantitatively. This study took this approach by carrying out the qualitative part first through a series of interviews and later administering a survey that tested the validity of the interview findings through a set of questions asked to a large representative sample of faculty.

4.3 Methods

4.3.1 Data Collection

In March 2012, I received ethics approval from the Ethics Review Board at the university I attend to recruit participants and conduct this study on their campus (*See Appendix L: Ethics Approval Letter*). I pilot tested the research tools, including a mixed-survey and interview questions, with university representatives at UKR. The participants for the interviews were chosen based on their years of teaching experience, their former and current position, their educational background and their engagement with the new policy. Each interview took place at the participant's office and lasted 1.5-2 hours. The participants for the survey were then randomly selected to represent the population of each faculty.

Data was collected in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq at UKR due to the fact that development and implementation of the new higher education policy has taken place earliest at this institution. Data was gathered in three phases. The first phase analyzed the new policy documents and interviewed a staff from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to develop an understanding of the new policy and the situation of the university under this policy. Phase two used a qualitative approach that involved interviewing university representatives at UKR. Finally, phase three used a quantitative approach by administering a survey questionnaire to a representative sample of academics from all 13 faculties at UKR (*See Table 4*). The starting point to my research was qualitative method based on interviews. However, after selecting participants for the interview, I was approached by many university staff that wished to participate in my study. Therefore I decided to create a survey instrument that would make it possible to gather views from a representative sample of the entire population of the university. This made it possible to control personal biases, which might have had some influence during the interviews.

In the first phase, current relevant documents were analyzed, including the new higher education policy documents and the interview findings from the Ministry. Any articles, workshop presentations and descriptions of the policy provided by the Ministry or UKR were also studied. In the second phase, nine university representatives were selected from different faculties, the majority of whom have been teaching since the old regime up to the present. Interview questions were much more detailed than survey questions, which meant the participants were able to shed considerable light on the differences between the old and the new systems. For the third phase, a total number of all faculties at UKR was obtained, and a 30% representative random sample was selected from the 1461 total staff in order to represent and generalize from the whole population.

Table 4: Sample Size from each Faculty at UKR

Faculty Name	Number Of Samples Per Faculty From 305 Samples
Law and Politics	19
Education-Scientific	30
Education-Humanity	16
Education-Basic	15
Physical Education	16
Languages	27
Arts	27
Fine Arts	6
Agriculture	36
Science	48
Engineering	35
Administration and Economics	20
Islamic Studies	10

4.3.2 Interview Questions

The interview questions were developed on the basis of the policy goals put forward for the reform and the interviews were all conducted in person. The questionnaire consisted of 3-4 categories with a set of common questions and a few questions specific to each specific sub-group (*See Appendix A*). There were four main categories: background, change, tools, and impact. The interview informants were divided into three categories:

1. UKR's administrators such as Deans or vice-Deans, heads of departments
2. UKR's faculty members who have been teaching since the 1990s
3. UKR's professors who are involved in administration and implementing the new changes

4.3.3 Survey Questions

They were constructed based on the interview questions, with four open-ended questions. The questionnaires are 7 pages long, with 20 questions that are written in Arabic and English (*See Appendix B*). The target population included 1460 fulltime teaching faculty from all the faculties in UKR. A random sample of 305 faculty members was identified to ensure that

the characteristics found in the sample faithfully reflect those in the whole population of 1460, within a 30% range. A total of 148, roughly 48 percent of faculty members completed and returned the questionnaires.

The survey, however, faced some major obstacles. One of the challenges was that majority of staff did not take the survey very seriously. The second challenge was that the distribution of the survey happened around the final exam period; thus many faculty members were occupied with either supervising or marking the exams. At this point, the author accepted some administrative assistance, whereby a university administrator and I handed the surveys to the faculty members. Power played a role here, as many returned the survey to the Dean's office.

4.3.4 Recruitment

Permission was first granted by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and a letter was provided to show to the president of the university before seeking organizational consent. Permission to recruit university representatives from UKR was later granted by the president of the university (*See Appendix D*). The president wrote a letter to all the university administrators describing the study and assuring approval for participation. Meetings were arranged through emails that were sent out to the administrators and professors (*See appendices G and I*).

Contact information was mostly obtained from the website and emails were sent out to the faculty members and the university president. One of the problems was that many do not check their emails regularly since e-mail is relatively new, and thus the researcher had to call the key informants to arrange a meeting. The first meeting was to introduce the research and to provide background information on myself as well as the questions I would be asking during the interview. The second meeting was for the interview itself, if consent was given. All the

participants that were approached agreed to an interview and also signed the consent form (*See Appendices H and J*).

4.3.5 Analysis and Validation

The interview answers were transcribed and common themes were grouped together. Using Crestwell's (2009) four steps: a) identify statements that relate to the topic, b) group statements into meaning units, c) seek divergent perspectives, d) construct a composite to be used as a foundation to sort out themes while constantly rewriting topic categories or omitting unnecessary themes. Later, the specific themes that were taking from the interview answers were connected to the themes found in the survey data.

4.4 Conclusion

Since every organization has its own culture, the most important methodological approach is to spend a short time inside an organization to study its values and behaviours from within. It is essential to recognize if these can be studied through both qualitative and quantitative methods. For both approaches, it is necessary to follow a model that gives attention to the perception of organizational culture. A combination of a critical and a functionalist paradigm is adopted in this research by applying both research methods. Quantitative survey techniques measure views from a broad sample, which can then be generalized to the whole population. The knowledge generated from the qualitative part of the study is more critical and provides greater depth than the findings from the quantitative part of the study. In this case, qualitative method was used first, to set the parameters of the quantitative part of the study. The survey then helped identify broad perceptions of a quality culture, and the ways in which it had been implemented and measured.

Chapter Five: The Context of the Case Study: An Overview of the Pre-Saddam and Post-Saddam Periods and a Review of the Political, Economical and Educational Changes After 2003

5.1 Introduction

Iraq known as Mesopotamia was historically the place of ancient civilizations in the world. It is the land of the Tigris and Euphrates, Hammurabi and the Babylon's golden empire. It introduced writing, the wheel, law, and mathematics into the world. The territory was once under the rule of the Ottoman Empire until when this rule ended with World War I and placed Iraq under the authority of the British Empire until the country gained its independence in 1932. However under the British mandate, a Hashimite monarchy was imposed on Iraq and created territorial boundaries without considering the politics of the various ethnic and religious groups in Iraq, especially for Kurds and the Assyrians in the north. The Kurds and Shiites battled for independence, while the country turned into an oligarchy government. The most significant period was when the Baath Party, originally known as the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party under the leadership of the general Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr took power in 1963 and imposed the party's political ideology on all aspects of the country. Under this regime, a campaign was initiated to terminate the Kurdish insurrection and an Arabization program in the oil rich cities was enforced. A decade or more later, the country experienced more wars and territorial disputes under the regime of Saddam Hussein who assumed office in 1979 after the resignation of Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr.

Beside all this turmoil, it is important to reference the most remarkable period for Iraq, which was between the 1970s and the early 1980s, when its education system was recognized as one of the best in the Middle East. According to Al-Tikriti (2005),

Observers recall a vibrant and exciting ventures, when the university sector engaged in international research ventures, published top-flight in the humanities and the sciences,

surveyed the country's unrivalled archaeological sites, catalogued Iraq's impressive manuscript holdings, and sent its best graduates to earn Ph.D.'s at the foremost research universities in Europe and North American (p. 24).

Further, laws were passed to eradicate illiteracy, promote free public education and compulsory primary education. This also led Iraq to achieve nearly universal enrollment at the primary level, that in turn created a huge growth in students wishing to pursue higher education and government attempts to expand existing universities (Alwan, 2004). This level of education under Saddam Hussein's regime, however, was devastated by wars and economic sanctions. The destruction continued up until 2003 when the US-led coalition removed this authoritarian government and tried to foster a process of democratization that was more positively embraced in the Northern region of Iraq known as Kurdistan than in the Southern parts of the country. For this reason, it is essential to examine the current situation in Iraq to set a context for discussing the direction Kurdistan's higher education is taking. This chapter will provide a historical overview of the educational structure under Saddam Hussein's government followed by the changes resulting from his removal by the US-led coalition. It will outline the current educational policies and goals of Kurdistan that are being implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) and international organizations.

5.2 Iraq's Past Education System Under Saddam Hussein's Regime

According to the World University Service (1990), most authoritarian governments are keen to control educational content since they depend on a minimum degree of legitimacy and acceptance from those who rule. Throughout history, academics and students have had an inclination to reform or revolutionize society, and to doubt the authority of their political structure. Saddam Hussein suppressed any form of opposition when he came into power in

1979. He was seen as a reformist leader who did not believe in radical Islam and abolished most of the courts and institutions that followed Islamic Sharia law (Rizvi, 2003). Prior to Saddam, in the 1970s, Delwin (1993) argued that the Socialist Baath Party's ideology was about "unity, freedom and socialism" (p. 167). The party strongly supported Arab unity and believed that education could awaken a person to the importance of Arab national unity. Their accomplishment was seen through their sudden replacement of the traditional ruling elite by supporting a new social group whose focus was on the lower and middle class and in the village. These tenets were reflected in Iraq's educational system, in which it considered education

A revolutionary activity that was aimed at achieving a decisive change in the structure of the individual personality; and, building new generations (through education) for the specific task of changing the 'objective condition' (from the traditional to a more modern society) (Delwin, 1993, p. 167).

The educational policy of the party recognized social justice and the equality and dignity of the individual as well as providing free education to all citizens at all levels. Conversely, Saddam's regime began political indoctrination that changed the education curricula from the Baathist ideology to highlight his leadership and personality in his fight against Iran. Since Shia Muslims were the majority of the population and they had ties to Iran and to the Kurdish region in the North, Saddam feared that his membership in the Sunni minority group was a threat to his political power and structure. This resulted in efforts to offer free and equal education to all, in order to develop a sense of allegiance to the revolution, rather than a sense of belonging to a specific group or region. He made the academic community "an integral part of a governmental apparatus that is itself repressive, restrictions are built into the academic and political system- rather than being caused by social unrest or political crises" (Altbach, 2000, p. 211). He repressed any traditions of political engagement as well as autonomy and freedom of expression

in all areas of living. Thus academics and students never challenged the dogma or expressed critical views nor did they actively participate in the struggles against his dictatorship. On the other hand, individuals who exercised oppositional ideas were subjected to a systematic campaign of intimidation and dismissal while those who sought access to elite schools were forced to become members of the Baath Party or the military (Delwin, 1993).

A major destruction to Iraq's economic and education systems under Saddam's administration occurred during a territorial dispute with Iran in 1980, a war that lasted eight years (Rizvi, 2003). Later Saddam's regime used chemical and biological weapons on Kurdish rebels in Kurdistan, including a mass chemical weapon attack on the city of Halabja that killed thousands of civilians. What subsequently followed was the invasion of Kuwait, in which the US-led coalition expelled Iraqi troops while economic sanctions were passed on Saddam's government by the United Nations. Both wars devastated the education sector since Saddam redirected the education budget towards funding the military, resulting in a rapid decline in educational performance, larger class sizes, and deteriorating structures. The sanctions regime that was expected to last for few months continued for nearly thirteen years, mainly because of US and UK insistence. Throughout the 1990s, the universities encountered gradual decline not only from being internationally abandoned but also intellectually and physically they were disconnected from the world. According to Al-Tikriti (2005),

Under sanctions, international exchanges ended completely, journal subscriptions were prohibited, high technology purchases were forbidden, and spare parts for previously purchased equipment were halted. Famously, even pencils were embargoed due to the "dual use" capability of lead (p. 24).

The fear of authoritarian ruling elite made many of top academics emigrate. Approximately 10,000 instructors left Iraq during the 1990s and those who stayed faced major improvisation (Al-Tikriti, 2005).

5.3 Post-Saddam Period: The US-led Coalition

After the removal of Saddam's authoritarian regime by the US-led coalition in 2003, all aspects of Iraq's life were reconstructed. Ethnic violence broke out mostly in the Southern region between Shia and Sunni. The violent outbreaks destroyed many schools, looted many universities, as well as damaged administration buildings and printing presses. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) became one of the main funders for rebuilding and revitalizing the education system along with MoHESR in the Southern region. The higher education Minister Ali Al-Adeeb in this region created a new higher education reform policy that covers the period of 2011-2014. The initial step of the policy is to depoliticize education by removing the previous political ideology from all the educational materials. Then financial and administrative independence will be given to universities as well as encouraging international cooperation and the recruitment of Iraqi talent aboard to be the main driver of the development of higher education. The aim has been to create a planning that is based on evidence, performance-driven evaluation, decentralized management, and the overcoming of institutional corruption. Al-Adeeb (2010) discussed how Iraq's education has been declining due to the destruction of the recent occupation, thus developing the quality of education, accelerating scientific development and labour markets and creating sustainable development will allow their higher education institutions to compete at an international level once again.

The implementation of this higher education policy on the ground is not going smoothly, however. Currently, dogmatic ideologies and religious fundamentalists are predominant in the Southern region, which has led to the large-scale kidnapping, punishment and even execution of

academic scholars, students and dissidents. Al-Adeeb, also a senior member of the Islamic Dawa Party, has been applying a strong anti-Baathist agenda and this has added to the corruption at the academic level by allowing the option for people to obtain fraudulent degrees and or buy their grades. As many as 20,000 people currently employed by the state may have acquired their jobs on the basis of forged educational qualifications, and these do not just apply to junior staff but also top level government members (Adriaensens, 2011). According to Adriaensens (2011), political unrest is still continuing in the South, since hundreds of people arrested by the security forces were in the fall of 2011 in actions taken against members of the banned Baath Party. The author argues that the exiles that returned to Iraq after 2003 have attempted to

Impose an artificial narrative in which the legacy of pragmatic cooperation with the Baathist regime is not dealt with in a systematic and neutral fashion as such; instead one singles out political opponents as “Baathists” and silently co-opts political friends without mentioning their Baathist ties at all (p. 4).

This is obviously a sectarian move towards the entire question of de-Baathification that is developing the Southern region in an unstable situation.

Since Al-Adeeb became the Minister of the MoHESR, he has discharged around 1,200 lectures and been pushing for Islamic law in universities through the imposition of sectarianism. As claimed by the Brussels Tribunal, since 2003 around 459 academics have been assassinated, with most of the victims being highly qualified with PhDs or equivalent. Of the 20,000 academics and professionals who fled Iraq, only 150 had returned but they still are the target of an ongoing campaign of intimidation, abduction, extortion, and assassinations (Adrianensens, 2011). Al Adeeb is intensifying this by removing the rest of the intellectual capital, and is replacing experienced professors with those who are affiliated with a party or people with

fraudulent university degrees. It is also been reported that Al Adeeab has the support of Iranian intelligence in organizing Shia death forces to annihilate Sunni academics, students, and officers who might have connections to the Baath Party. This situation dominates in the Southern region since in the past Shias were suppressed by the former government. After 2003, the Shia used this opportunity to gain more popularity in the area by removing any person that is connected to the Baath Party. Iran is collaborating to provide protection and support strictly because of their Shia background. Therefore, higher education in this part of Iraq is staggering under problems that include politicization of the educational system, internal displacement of teachers and students, security threats and corruption. The Brussels Tribunal has been observing the problems in Iraq under occupation very closely. They have publicized the campaign to draw attention to the struggles of academics, since they may be threatened or assassinated. Although the Southern region is continuously experiencing violence and corruption even after democratic elections, the Kurdistan Region is undergoing positive economic, political and social development.

The democratic process gained some ground as the country witnessed its first election in 2005, creating a shift of power between different political forces of dominant economic and political sectors. The election became a positive development after long periods of dictatorship, specifically in Kurdistan. During this election, the Transitional Administrative Law recognized the autonomy of Kurdistan's Regional Government (KRG), since this region gained its de facto independence in 1991 at the time of the invasion of Kuwait, and a year later a regional government was established. Currently KRG is under the control of Kurds (comprising 15%-20% of Iraq's population) and Christian minorities, who have been experiencing more freedom, security, and democratization than any other part of the country (Ala'Aleen, 2011). KRG functions at the sub-state level by having its own parliamentary democracy with a regional assembly that consists of 111 seats. They have been addressing their urgent need to rebuild their

rich traditions and restore its ability for future contributions by working with international organizations and encouraging non-Iraqi educators to stand in solidarity with their Iraqi counterparts. According to the National Development Strategy of Iraq (2005), the international agencies and foreign governments have transformed Iraq into a unified federal democracy and market oriented regional economic powerhouse that is now open to trade and foreign investment. Their concentration is to build up the foundations of economic growth, revitalize the private sector, improve the quality of life and reinforce good governance and security (Fitzgerald, 2010). Further, this capitalist ideology is at the forefront of Iraq's new higher education policy, which has great potential in the Kurdistan region.

5.4 Kurdistan's New Higher Education Policy

The Region has for the past ten years achieved development in building the infrastructure and consolidating the foundations of governance. They have widely opened their investment gates to foreign investment and forces of the international free market and. Thus the need to develop and establish higher standards in the areas of science, technology and management is prioritized in order to invest in people and increase the human capacities of professional cadres. Kurdistan's higher educational system is inherited from the 'old Iraq' - an outdated system that supported a closed-market and impeded educational progress. The former Minister of the MoHESR, Dlawer Ala'Aldeen, and the various international communities have reformed the higher education institutions in order to make the system responsive to the needs of the public for highly skilled professionals. According to Ala'Aldeen (2010),

It is not a secret that the current system of higher education, which Kurdistan has inherited from Iraq, is dated and largely dysfunctional. Its pyramid-style management structure concentrates decision-making authority at its summit. There is little transparency, democracy or accountability in the system, and the role of staff and

students in management is negligible. Internal audit, performance monitoring and quality assurance is virtually non-existing. In short, the existing system is a major barrier for progress, incapable of healthy evolution or modernization (MoHESR website).

Ala'Aldeen (2010) reviewed the system of higher education, and argued that any legal or administrative barriers will be eliminated in order to accommodate to the new policy, which aims to balance Kurdistan's demand-and-supply of university graduates. In order to achieve this goal, Ala'Aldeen laid out four strategies. The first strategy has focused on bridging the gap between quality and quantity since this region's economy is growing, creating more demand for professionals in the oil, tourism and other industrial areas. Accordingly universities in this region have to end the teaching of conventional topics since they do not accommodate to the present reality.

The second strategy has geared towards reviewing the role of the Ministry, since previously the Higher Education Council that is chaired by the Prime Minister controlled higher education institutions. The most important members were the presidents of the state-funded higher education institutions, demonstrating a lack of a central administrative body to maintain this structure. After the Iraqi liberation, the fifth Cabinet was created in 2006 and established the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR). Currently the Ministry has an important part in managing Kurdistan's higher education system. It has attempted to reform the management structure of universities, by bringing in a modern democratic system, which will provide the faculty ownership of their institution and offer protection to students' rights for quality education. The Ministry has been evaluating the financial system of universities through students' numbers, subject matter, quality teaching and research output. It has established teaching and research quality assessment procedures to evaluate performance and link them to pay and promotion. It is working on developing auditing

mechanisms to guarantee the rule of law, control of corruption, a safe environment, gender equality and the protection of minority rights. The Ministry has also introduced funding schemes for student scholarships and research grants, to maintain compatibility with the Kurdistan's economy.

The third strategy is based on the independence of universities. The goal of Kurdistan's government is to improve the standards of higher education institutions in order to be as successful as the universities in the West. Thus independence of higher education institutions is seen as a primary rationale, that the Ministry must give academic, administrative and financial control over to these institutions. In order to transfer power, the universities must become more democratic, transparent and accountable through radical reform of their management structure that will later lead to independence. Through this, power will be relocated from the Ministry to the institutions, and a senate will be established that will become crucial to all university functions. This step will allow individuals, academic staff and students to engage in decision-making processes as well as auditing and monitoring quality procedures. The last strategy focuses on redrafting the higher education law by collaborating with the Higher Education Committee, since the previous law was not suitable to modernization.

The main objective of the Ministry according to Ala'Aldeen (2010), is to help Kurdistan's higher education institutions to "achieve excellence in teaching and research, and become internationally competitive; make higher education increasingly market orientated and to help future graduates to be competitive and highly employable" (MoHESR website). The region has already expanded their private universities, as they currently have 10 public and 9 state-recognized private higher education institutions. These institutions include technical universities, comprehensive universities and specialized institutions at the university level. There are around 94,700 students in the higher education institutions within Kurdistan, and new

scholarship programmes have been initiated where the government is spending \$100 million a year to send graduate students abroad. In 2010, around 1,500 scholarship awards were granted to students (Ala'Aldeen, 2011). Further, MoHESR has changed the PhD program from three to four years of study, which includes a requirement that students need to study abroad for at least 18 months to gain extensive research opportunities.

KRG had created a vision and long-term strategy, which resulted in a new road map for reforming the higher education system. The government's first mission is to achieve quality in higher education and scientific research. The report, *A Roadmap to Quality: Reforming the system of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq* provides a summary of the strategy and how it is being implemented on several fronts since November 2009 (MoHESR-KRG, 2010). The report discusses the mission and the mechanisms of implementation as well as what the Ministry and the universities should do to assist the implementation of the new policy. The method to reform the system as outlined in the report is divided into the following areas:

- Reforming Teaching and establishing a modern Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) system.
- Reforming the research training and funding system to revitalize scientific research, promote innovation and link our scientists with their counterparts in international research centers of excellence.
- Building capacity by investing in people and infrastructure.
- Establishing an institutional licensing and accreditation system.
- Reforming the management structure of the universities and the technical institutes to promote University independence.

- Reforming the administrative system to minimize bureaucracy and put students and staff first (MoHESR-KRG, 2010, p. 12).

5.5 Developing Academic Standards: Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA)

The system-review and decision-making were initiated in 2010 and the following year the reform process was implemented by conducting a pilot project. Academicians were prepared for this pilot program through a series of workshops related to the TQA programme. According to the report, the implementation of this program was fully accepted by the teaching and administrative staff in universities and its success led to the creation of a new directorate in the Ministry to support and monitor the process of TQA. A directorate along with a committee was established in each of the universities. The success of the pilot project led to implementation of the reforms in all higher education institutions in the Kurdistan Region in 2012.

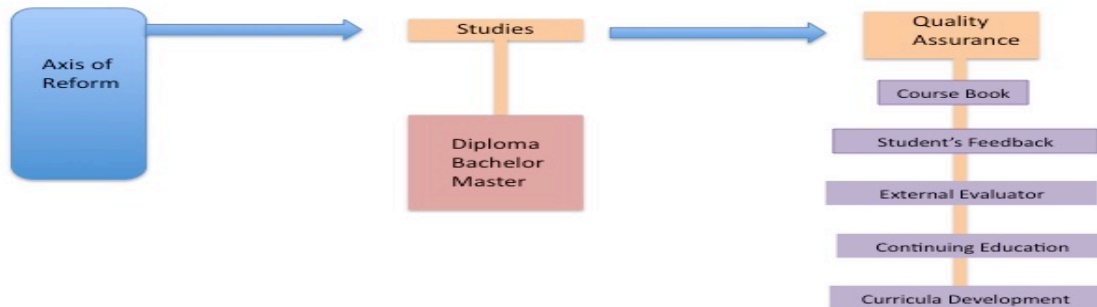
This study will investigate the first mission: reforming teaching to ensure quality and establishing a modern teaching quality assurance (TQA). The objectives of this reform is to, A) Establish a teaching quality assurance system in order to maintain quality learning and training, preserve the rights of students and teachers and raise the confidence in the awarded degrees and certificates. B) Begin a continuous academic development to increase the academic standard of the lecturers, open communication channels among academics as well as encourage collaborative teamwork and better research. C) Reform the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula in order to update education curricula, create training programs that are suitable to the needs of the market, increase the capacities of students and support them to be more self-learners and critical. D) Reform the postgraduate Masters studies for the purpose of enhancing the quality of teaching and research projects and generating new income sources for the universities. As well as encouraging collaborative teamwork between academicians, train more quality teaching staff for the new universities and professionals for the market needs. E) Modify

English language tests by having objective and international standards for evaluation, and raise the trust in the English language courses, establish social justice and stay connected with the outside world. F) Modify the student admission to link students' goal with the options provided and to adapt an electronic system (MoHESR-KRG, 2010, p. 16-17).

It is noted by MoHESR that the implementation of the TQA program is one of the top priorities of the Region's government as it is the only guaranteed way to assist in reaching and maintaining a high standard in education and training as well as raising the trust in the universities and the degrees they award. In the past the traditional approach to assuring quality of education was through monitoring the attendance of the students in the classroom and carrying out discriminatory final examinations. The present time has shown that the region's universities are incapable of achieving the required standard of excellence in education nor are they able to sustain a steady level in their respective fields (MoHESR-KRG, 2010). As a result, education standards constantly fluctuate due to political situations, financial restrictions of the country and the determinations of the teaching and the administrative personnel. In the report, it is argued that preserving a balanced level of quality is a difficult process, thus it is essential to have a continuous assessment of the educational curricula and the performance of students and faculty. There are various quality assurance systems worldwide, and each country attempts to develop and progress its quality assurance procedure in accordance with the inherited culture, history and local capacities. In Kurdistan Region, a modern system of quality assurance (*See Figure 1*) was implemented in 2010 through a pilot project that was carried out by academic leaders in the universities. The key purpose of this plan was to protect students' rights in knowing their program of study, the benefits of their program in developing their professional life, the limitation on their responsibilities, also letting them be acquainted with what they are examined on, ways they can partake in the process of education, training and management, and

lastly how to protect their rights and make use of channels to express their concerns and ideas (MoHESR-KRG, 2010, p. 27).

Figure 1: Reforming Teaching to Ensure Quality



Source: MoHESR-KRG, 2010

5.6 The Plan and the Mechanism for Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA)

TQA committee will be established in all universities to supervise the development and implementation of this program in order to ensure that the highest standards in each area of academic teaching, learning and administration are achieved. This will eventually lead to the creation of subcommittees in each faculty and department. They will follow their own rules and regulations and their members will be referred to as ‘Course Coordinators’. The number of coordinators will depend on the size and needs of the department. The chairman of the departmental committee becomes associated with the faculty’s Quality Assurance Committee. The faculty’s chairman serves for the Quality Assurance Committee of the university and works under the institution’s vice-president for scientific affairs and higher education. These committees are guided by the university’s quality assurance administration bodies who have the responsibility of implementing rules and gathering data that will be used for putting together the course books. They also analyze the data, collect student feedback and follow-up on the QA process. However, a coordinator is assigned to prepare the study program and is offered a book that has a schedule, curriculum information and student feedback forms before the start of

academic year. This book contains course and topics, lecture contents summaries, examination method and students' expectations. At the end of examination time, student feedback on the course is conducted and data results are presented to the TQA Committee. This process shapes the foundation for an evaluation of the curriculum, academic performance and the scientific division in their departments.

For laboratories and practical work, quality assurance procedures recognize, minimize and correct the shortages found in the different systems. TQA concentrates on details and taking the right measurements during experiments in order to obtain the same results every time. When “using appliances, chemical substances, or discovering inconsistent results”, quality assurance should not be disregarded (MoHESR-KRG, 2010, p. 100). Thus the duty of the laboratory staff is to maintain all the instruments used as well as make certain quality assurance processes are followed and experiment results are systematically filed. If unusual results are obtained, a written report is sent to a coordinator, who is a member that is chosen by the scientific committee of the department, has experience and knowledge in various fields, holds a Master's degree and is proficient in the English language. Coordinator's responsibility is to be the bridge for communication between students and the administration, organize course books for the students, guarantee student feedback for the lectures, and ensure classes are not delayed. A detailed report is presented each year to the faculty committee that describes how the previous courses were carried out. The duty of the lecturer is to conduct activities that make classroom experience useful by preparing lecture notes for each topic and providing a copy to coordinator to include in the student's course book. The lecturer must write out specific educational lectures on relevant themes that have current knowledge and examples. Lectures should be presented in power-point presentation format and handouts should be provided to students. The lecturer should put samples of questions and answers into the course books and examine them

throughout the semester or year. The samples contain two essays and five different multiple-choice questions. Guidelines are offered to students and they are expected to think in terms of how the lecturer will assess their answers. For each course three sets of questions are included in which the exam committee chooses from one of the sets at the end of the course (MoHESR-KRG, 2010, p. 101).

5.7 External Assessor

External assessment is conducted on selected courses at the end of each year. The external assessor is an advisor, examiner and a neutral arbitrator that is brought in from outside the university. He/she must be an assistant professor or higher and can be from an international university. A lower rank can be assigned if the university is unable to appoint someone higher. The individual should also be academically active with years of experience in his/her field of study, but having no prior contribution in lecturing or in planning the course topics. The assessor's role is to perform specific tasks in the TQA program to guarantee that the expected quality of courses stay at a high level. The duty of the external examiner is to evaluate the course plan and quality of teaching methods as well as to assess student's performance and examination questions by looking at the exam papers after they have been marked. The grading should include higher, intermediate and lower mark in order to make a decision if the papers were marked fairly. Student feedback is also assessed, and provides suggestions for the teachers regarding teaching and grading; in this teachers are expected to answer questions. The examiner presents the results to the TQA Committee and the heads of the departments.

5.8 Continuous Academic Development (CAD)

The continuous academic development program has been introduced to the TQA system in order to increase the academic standards of university representatives and allow students to

have access to modern knowledge and technology. Iraq has for thirty-year been isolated from the outside world, leading to the isolation of university academics from current developments in science and technology. The academics have a great desire to connect and participate academically and to continuously advance their scientific standards and methods. The previous economic and administrative rights have created more barriers to their progress and competition. Thus the CAD program is created to encourage academics in improving their teaching methods, to help them continuously update their knowledge and to preserve their rights. Each university faculty and teaching staff has participated in the CAD, with programmes arranged periodically in the form of academic seminars. At the beginning of each semester, lists of seminars are published with titles at the university and the faculties. Exchange visits, seminar presentations and networking between academics of different institutions in the Region are encouraged. As stated in the report the academics must allocate at least fifty hours per year to upgrading their knowledge and participating in different academic activities. The activities are used as measurement tools and each hour is counted as a unit. Participation in the seminars is calculated as one hour of academic development, and it should be no shorter than 45 minutes. The names of the attendees are given to the Scientific Committee of the faculty. It is expected that all teaching staff have to take active participation in the CAD program and this is documented and shapes the foundation for evaluating the performance of the faculty members. Their lack participation or achievement of the required level leads to losing academic privileges and ultimately being dismissed from their position.

Active participation is required from the academics in the form of attending and presenting at the following seminars periodically:

- Attending scientific seminars in various departments and faculties

- Presenting seminars on the subject of their research every six months to their colleagues at the their department and faculty
- Presenting seminars on the latest international innovations in their fields of specialty at least every three months
- A presentation of a scientific article should be carried out for the teaching staff of the faculty at least once every six months on different topics
- Participating in think-tanks, developing strategic plans and providing scientific and valuable advice to various institutions which are calculated as one hour for each participant if presented with proof
- Participating in international group discussion and drafting scientific policies
- Publishing peer-reviewed scientific articles in specialized journals count as one hour but two hours are credited for the evaluation of Master's thesis and four hours for PhDs thesis
- CAD project highly considers literature review which counts as one our while publishing an educational book on the field of study is credited as five to fifteen hours (MoHESR-KRG, 2010, p. 112-113).

The Quality Assurance Committee and Higher Scientific Committee (HSC) in each university monitor these series of seminars in order to guarantee the implementation of the academic development process is maintained. They also develop appropriate tools for the workflow; for example, the Scientific Committee of each faculty will gather the evidence of attendance by faculty at every activity. HSC receives the information and examines if attendance and quality assurance are ensured. It also collects evidence of achievement of the development process in the faculties while the quality assurance at the Ministry level is responsible for following up the project. The way quality is maintained is by providing

assessment forms that are distributed to the attendees at the seminars. Questions in the form are on scientific standard, style of presentation and the academic's attempt in arranging the seminar. Information is collected by the HSC of the university and analyzed the same way quality assurance project is conducted for students.

5.9 Curriculum Development

Reforming the curriculum is another part of the TQA program. The Region's recent labour market is in the state of constant development, particularly in the areas of science and technology, thus an attempt has been made to reflect on these developments in the content of curricula. A comprehensive program to reform the curricula in all the scientific and technical departments of the universities has been initiated; for instance the first academic year is dedicated to accomplishing the following objectives:

- Getting to know the basics of the field of specialization without over-burdening the student
- Enhancing language skills through learning a second or a third language
- Improving computer skills and the usage of the internet and email
- Ensuring Student learn how to search for information, self-educate and become increasingly independent
- Promoting peer teaching. Students should learn the basics of scientific debate and brainstorming
- Adopting novel topic-specific approaches to teaching and examinations (MoHESR-KRG, 2010, p. 33).

These teaching methods will be used from the second until the fourth year but specializations and training courses will increase from one year to another. This is to ensuring

students master the understanding of scientific and technical bases of their specializations, in order to assist them with their knowledge and experience after graduation.

5.10 Conclusion

There are various international pressures put on Iraq, particularly from the US, UK, UN and other countries and agencies that are funding reconstruction efforts. The American government has been controlling much of the rehabilitation of educational planning through the Pentagon's Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Castillo, 2003). The issue with USAID is that it allocated funding for short-term interests of Iraqi, in which the primary or secondary schools received more funding than higher education from the US government and the World Bank. Building International educational institutions were more encouraged in order to replace the state higher education facilities. The US administrators also offered corporate welfare to US companies in the form of reconstruction contracts. "This mode of funding has so far led to a uniquely American brand of corporate corruption" (Al-Tikriti, 2005, p. 25). The US taxpayers pay a lot of money to US companies for general works like painting primary schools. As a result local subcontractors are hired by these companies and get paid pennies on the dollar to physically complete the contracted job. Another issue with funding happened in 2003, where a new CPA Paul Bremer made public the "de-Ba'athification" policy. This led education institutions to lose many of their top professionals as well as the US officials detained their best researchers that were connected with the previous regime for developing weapons that later were never found. Although the aid provided by the US came with a cost, nonetheless, it mainly impacted the Southern Region of Iraq than Kurdistan. Furthermore, UNESCO also runs a Rehabilitation of the Higher Education System project along with USAID, IDA and World Bank by coordinating and controlling the development of quality assurance procedures, the transition

into decentralization, governance and management, curricula development, teacher training, and research knowledge. Other agencies that have held international education conferences in Kurdistan were from the UK. Their Higher Education Funding Council runs a Leadership Foundation that creates international dialogues, research inward programs, study tours, and scoping and consultancy. They attempt to develop academic link with the UK through the mentoring of Leadership and Management skills as well as enhancing the skills of higher education leaders and managers in Kurdistan. Department for International Development (DFID) is a similar organization operated by the UK government that promotes knowledge sharing, with the intention of increasing the ability of higher education leaders in Kurdistan to deliver professional skills, also to improve the quality of teaching, learning and research provided by academics. The goal of these international organizations is to improve programme outcomes to meet the requirements of the global market economy with minimal consideration of how these programmes are impacting the social and economic structure of the region.

Therefore, a most notable fact is that building social order is difficult in a culturally heterogeneous population, and Huntington (1993) once argued that “the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural” and this has been witnessed in Iraq as cultural conflict is seen between Christian and Islamic and among different ethnic groups. The chaos viewed daily produces a negative view on the country’s future, but the reconstruction reforms particularly in education encourage a positive future. This is mainly witnessed in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which has developed and implemented successfully the higher education reforms (such as quality assurance schemes) with the objective of progressing the country’s system by raising the standard of knowledge and continuously developing the technical level of work. However, it is essential for leaders to evaluate that the success of these reforms are not achieved through the destruction of social and cultural aspects

of the Region. On the other hand, the clash of cultures needs to be reconciled in the Southern Region in order to reach stability.

Chapter Six: Findings from Mixed-Methods Data

6.1 Introduction

The findings in this chapter are from investigating the culture and the organizational environment of UKR through mixed-methods research. This study looks at the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives on the new quality culture policy that UKR implemented under the direction of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR). The main strategy of this policy is to reform teaching to achieve quality, which has been initiated by employing quality assurance procedures. Interviews were conducted with nine faculty members, and later an empirical verification of the sample was carried out through the survey questions that garnered the opinions of 148 faculty members out of total of 305 who were surveyed. This research has examined whether faculty members are adopting, resisting, or making and shaping quality policies and initiatives. It attempts to understand what quality in education means to faculty members since transformative concepts of quality could possibly be weakened in practice by situational restrictions and contextual issues. Newton's chart differentiating dominant formal meanings of quality from situated perceptions of quality is applied to understand the meaning quality holds for university representatives. The findings on quality assurance procedures are further analyzed through Harvey and Stensaker's (2008) development of Weberian ideal-types of quality culture that was in turn influenced by the grid-group model from Douglas' (1982) cultural theory.

6.2 Research Questions and Central Themes

The main research question looks at the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives with regard to the new higher education policy-making in Kurdistan. It explores the development and implementation of the policy's first priority, the aim to bridge the gap between quality and quantitative progress in higher education. The perceptions of the

university representatives will help identify what type of culture of quality in higher education is encouraged and if it will enable higher education to serve as a bridge for Kurdistan to the global knowledge economy.

The following sub-questions are tackled in this research:

1. What was the quality of higher education during Saddam Hussein's regime? How different is it now?
2. How is the new quality culture promoted within institutions of higher education? What are the main elements of such a culture?
3. How do university representatives react to the new quality policy that aims to reform teaching to achieve quality through quality assurance? Do they adopt, resist or make and shape this quality policy and these quality initiatives?

This study is divided into the following three categories, a) quality of education during Saddam's regime to the present period, b) quality culture: reforming teaching to achieve quality, and c) quality culture: tools, impacts and gaps. The first finding is obtained from an interview with the Director of Quality Assurance at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR). The second set of findings is gathered from the nine university representatives that were selected from UKR. Faculty members were picked based on their years of teaching experience and academic background, specifically if they have been teaching from Saddam's regime to the present period. A few were selected based on their current involvement with implementing, evaluating and monitoring the new quality policy as well as getting a clear perspective on their teaching experience without having prior teaching background from Saddam's administration. The last set of findings is based on the survey results that were obtained from a random sample of 305 faculty members that faithfully reflect those in the whole

population of 1460, within a 30% range. A total of 148, roughly 48 percent of the faculty members who were approached completed and returned the questionnaires.

6.3 Interview Participants

The first interview was conducted with the Director of Quality Assurance (DQA) from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR). In the beginning, the goal was to interview the Minister who was behind the implementation of the new policy; however a new Minister had taken office two weeks prior to the start of this study. The DQA became the next best option to get a better understanding on the background, development, and implementation of the new quality policy. It was essential to gain this information from the DQA since scholarly literature about the new policy is lacking, and the MoHESR website does not offer adequate context for the new policy initiatives. Obtaining this data has clearly helped to clarify the intention of the policy and subsequently identify whether academics perceive the new policy differently from the Ministry, and whether the policy strategies are conducive to improving their present-day academic environment.

The second set of interviews were carried out with the following faculty members and administrators from UKR:

(P1) Head of Psychology Department in the Faculty of Arts, received his PhD from Baghdad University and has been teaching at UKR for 21 years.

(D2) Dean of Administration and Economics, received his PhD from Baghdad University and has been teaching at UKR for 25 years.

(P3) Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, received his PhD from Salahaddin University and has been teaching at UKR since 1988.

(P4) Assistant Professor in the Department of Law in the Faculty of Law and Politics, received his PhD from Salahaddin University and has been teaching at UKR since 1996.

(D5) Director of Quality Assurance at UKR, received his BA from Baghdad University, while having obtained his MA and PhD from the University of Sheffield in UK in 1985. He has been teaching for 17 years, but left Iraq in 1991. However, he returned in 2007 as QA Director.

(P6) Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Arts but only 6 months in this position, since previously he was Head of Department in the Faculty of Education, received his PhD from Baghdad University, has 35 years of teaching experience because he taught at Baghdad University from 1984 to 1998 and at UKR since 1998.

(P7) Assistant Professor from the Department of Chemistry in the Faculty of Education, who was once a Dean for a full 4 year term, received his PhD from Baghdad University and has been teaching at UKR for 20 years now.

(P8) Professor in the Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Arts, received his PhD from Baghdad University and has 19 years of teaching experience because he taught at Mosul University from 1986 to 2005 and at UKR since 2005.

(D9) Director of Curriculum Development and Professor from the Department of English in the Faculty of Languages, received her PhD from Baghdad University, has 15 years of teaching experience as a primary school teacher and started teaching at UKR since 1998.

The last set of data was collected from the survey sample size that was administrated to thirteen faculties from UKR (*See Table 5*):

Table 5: Sample Size from each Faculty at UKR

Faculty Name	Number of Samples Per Faculty	Number of Returned Samples
Law and Politics	19	13
Education-Scientific	30	26
Education-Humanity	16	3
Education-Basic	15	8
Physical Education	16	13
Languages	27	12
Arts	27	12
Fine Arts	6	8
Agriculture	36	10
Science	48	19
Engineering	35	9
Administration & Economics	20	12
Islamic Studies	10	7
Total: 13	305	148

6.4 Perspective of the Director of Quality Assurance on Quality Teaching

According to the Director of Quality Assurance (DQA), the policy on reforming teaching to achieve quality is based on the implementation of quality assurance procedures. The Ministry faced many challenges from faculty members who in the beginning strongly rejected the process saying that it went against their traditional way of teaching. They challenged the process with the assumption that this system cannot be applied in the Kurdistan Region, since it is constructed, managed and imposed from Western countries. The Ministry used different channels to convince the faculty members that the new quality culture is created to reform conventional teaching approaches, programs and topics. Further media advertisements, workshops and conferences were used to educate the public and university representatives about the importance of establishing a quality assurance system in the higher education sector. A few senior faculty members who had received teacher training and professional development in different universities in the US and the UK held workshops at UKR to inform their colleagues about the positive effects of quality assurance on teaching and learning. The Ministry also

allowed UNESCO to offer leadership-training seminars as well as establish connection with various universities in Britain and America.

Under the new policy, quality is the main objective and the duty of the DQA is to monitor the process of teaching quality assurance in order to ensure it is well managed and implemented, and that the required standards are achieved. Auditing is also within the job description of the DQA where reports are provided on a weekly basis. As specified by the DQA, the process of quality culture has typical assurance mechanisms that include assessment, external examiners, accreditation and audit. Under the assessment, internal or external judgments of performance are based on the following criteria: students and teachers' assessment, in which students are assessed based on their learning outcomes. However teachers are assessed based on four different evaluations: student feedback, continuous academic development, peer-review and teachers' portfolios.

The first six months of establishing quality assurance procedures were dedicated to the pilot project that tested the process before it was implemented in all public universities. It was trialed first at UKR, where faculty members and students gradually accepted the program. This experimental project, as claimed by the DQA, was based on a 'Course Book': a booklet (or syllabus) that professors give to their students at the beginning of the course, which contains all the necessary information about the course. After the implementation of the Course Book, the first assessment process developed a Student Feedback form. The Ministry faced much opposition to this idea that mainly came from the university representatives who were convinced that students are not at the right academic level to assess them. The Ministry continued to promote it even when rejection among faculty members was strong. According to the DQA, students positively embraced course evaluation, since it empowered them to voice their opinions about their professors' performance. The other three assessments, teachers' portfolios,

continuous academic development, and peer-review did not face much opposition from faculty members. Another major process of quality assurance is implementing curriculum development that focuses on learning by doing, academic debate and critical thinking.

As claimed by the DQA, the whole system of quality culture is centralized but there are programs or roadmaps to decentralize the system in the future. The DQA persisted in arguing that decentralization could not be achieved if universities do not comply with the quality requirements, potentially hindering the process of a university becoming accredited. The new quality culture according to the Ministry is concerned with economic integration, since there are many investors in the Kurdistan Region, and producing well-qualified graduates who are also proficient in English is essential in order to secure employment. The DQA stated that, “many foreign companies bring workers from countries such as India, Bangladesh, Europe, and the US since they are unable to find qualified local graduates to fill the jobs the local market demands.” In this sense, quality is viewed in terms of excellence since it is associated with achieving high academic standards. It is viewed in terms of value for money because quality is judged against monetary cost or return on investment. Lastly it is viewed as a transformation process that attempts to develop and empower students through the learning process or by institutional changes.

6.5 Interview and Survey Findings

6.5.1 Perception of University Representatives on Quality Teaching

This section will examine the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives on the new policy that aims to reform teaching to achieve quality by analyzing the interview and survey results.

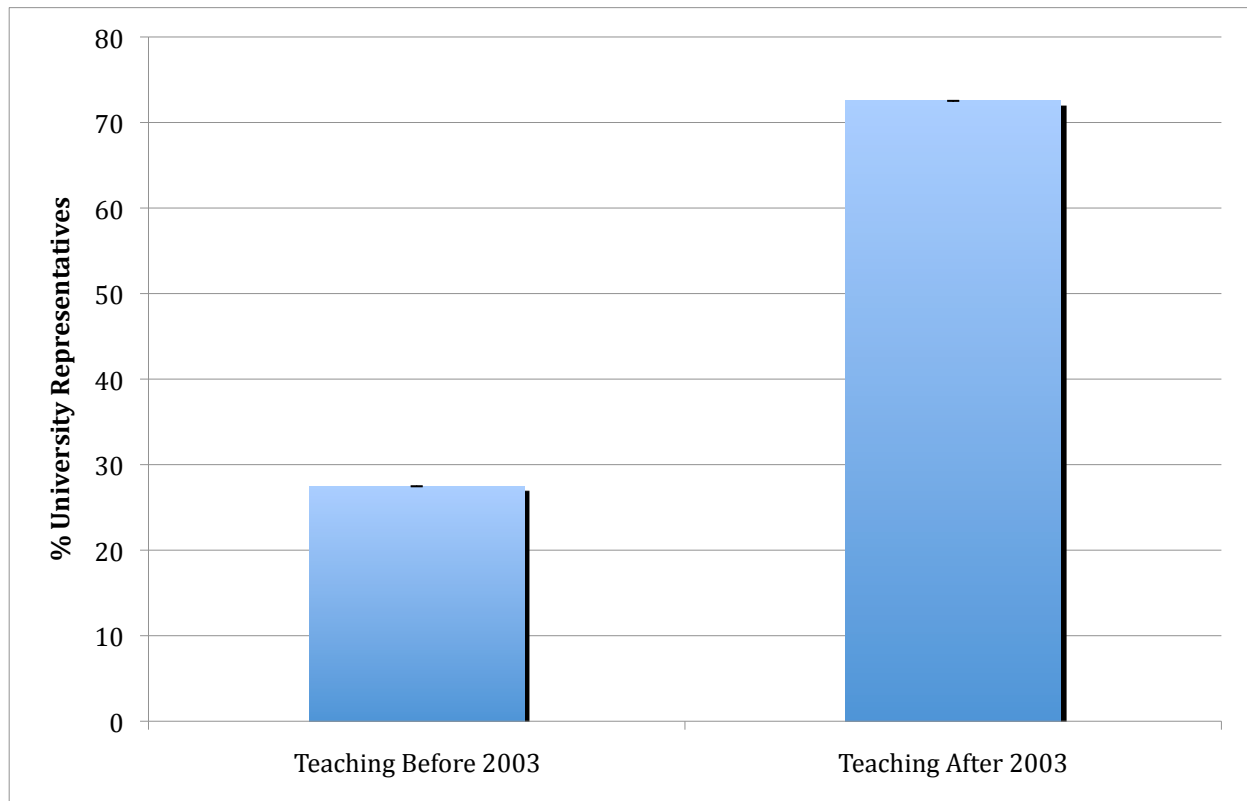
6.5.2 Quality of Education During Saddam's Regime to the Present Time: Experiences of Participants

As stated earlier, the first set of interview questions are based on the participants' academic background and how they have perceived and managed quality education from the time of Saddam's rule to the present period. All interviewed respondents stated that during Saddam's period, the quality of teaching declined during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s and further deteriorated in 2003 when major destruction occurred to the infrastructure and academic life. Although the curriculum was built on social and academic principles, and there were many graduates from the US and the UK on the teaching staff, political interference was strong and affected the quality of education heavily. Saddam used his position of dictatorship to enforce one-single curricular system and changes to curriculum and teaching were prohibited. University management was chosen from Saddam's political party and instilled fear by using external examiners as his undercover auditors. Graduate students or intellectuals were forced to work for political purposes and to also to serve the military. Professors were made to believe that students had to be trained and disciplined as future soldiers for the war. Consequently, the government forced academics to pass their students even when students attempted intentionally to fail their courses in order to delay their military obligations. P1 argued that the old regime created political individuals that became members of the Baath Party and replaced professors with political academic intellectuals that followed and believed in the ideology of this party. These professors were academically unfit to teach, but were given this position for the purpose of producing research that embodied Saddam's philosophy and leadership.

Many academics fled the country during the uprising in 1992, as many were forced to withdraw in order to weaken UKR. The decline in teaching staff during Saddam's rule is

demonstrated through the survey findings, as over 70% of participants that completed the survey began teaching after 2003, while under 30% had been teaching before that (*See Figure 2*).

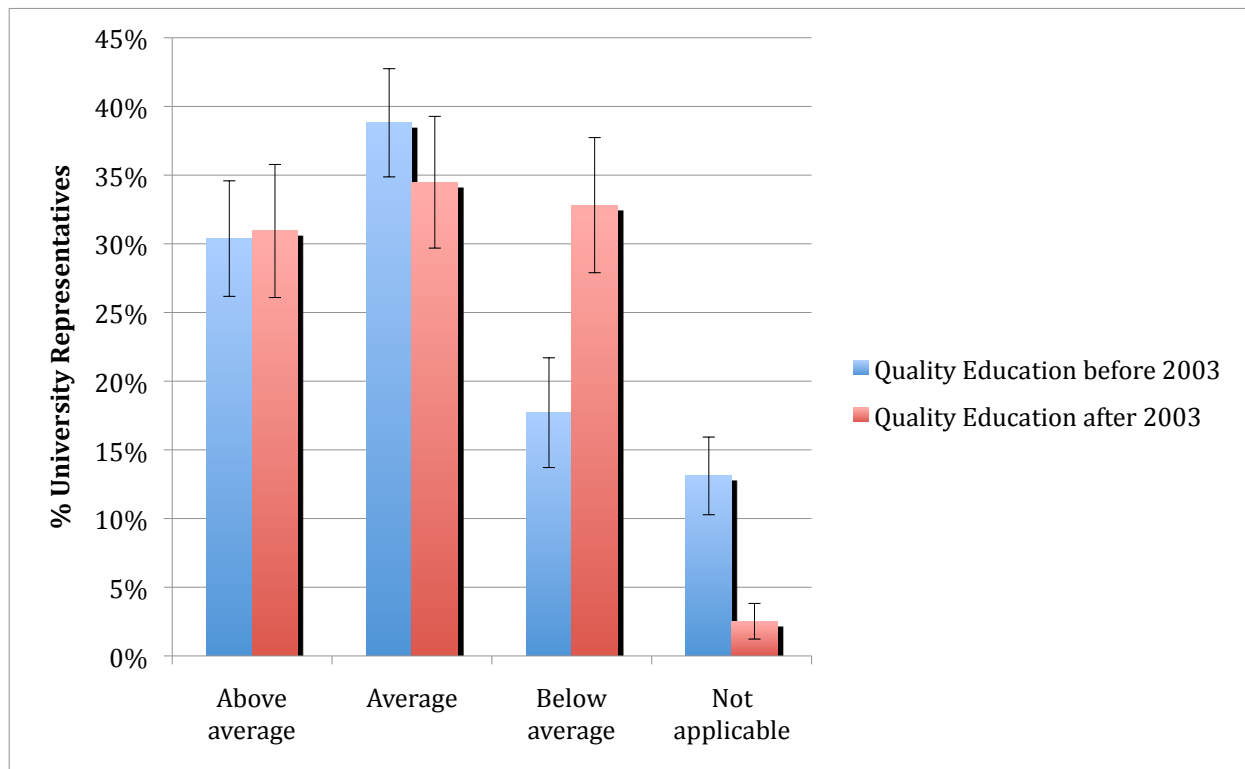
Figure 2: Teaching at UKR before the Year 2003



Saddam imposed a blockade that prevented professors from using scientific books. After 1992, there was a huge decline in faculty members, and teaching positions were given to less qualified applicants. Their lack of experience had a great impact on quality of education, since new professors were not aware of the legal system or its relevance to management and administration, nor were they familiar with scientific rules and regulations. Furthermore, the quality of education also declined in 2003 because students started to assume that participation in politics would enable them to pass. Quality assurance (QA) schemes and evaluation mechanisms had never been used in the past to monitor the student admission process, assess professors' teaching methods and knowledge, or distinguish qualified students from non-

qualified. Similarly the survey results demonstrated that 30% of participants thought the quality of education during Saddam’s period was above average and 39% said it was average. Further, similar results were achieved on the quality of education after 2003, in which 31% said it was above the average, 34% said it was average and 33% believe that it was below the average (See Figure 3). This suggests there was no clear or agreed view on quality in that period.

Figure 3: Quality of Education Before and After 2003



6.5.3 Perceptions of the Participants on the New Quality Culture After 2003

According to the majority of the interviewed respondents, in order to accommodate to the world changes in science and society, and especially to market demands, developing quality in higher education was vital. D9 argued that implementing QA initiatives were important first steps to initiate in order to produce well-qualified graduate students and adopt modern methods of teaching. This would eventually allow at UKR to meet international standards so that its students could learn to be independent thinkers, leaders and critical

learners who could compete at an international level. Additionally putting into practice QA procedures was essential for monitoring the teaching performance of faculty members to ensure that students are benefitting from their teaching methods, and learning how to construct and transfer knowledge. Although the majority of the participants supported the QA procedures for improving the quality of teaching, the management process was less supported due to the MoHESR's total control of the QA system. Surveys also illustrated similar findings, in which 54% of the respondents supported the new quality culture (See Figure 4), but only 18% said that the development and implementation of QA was above average, with 42% ranking it as average and 32% as below average (See Figure 5).

Figure 4: Supporter or Non-Supporter of Quality Culture

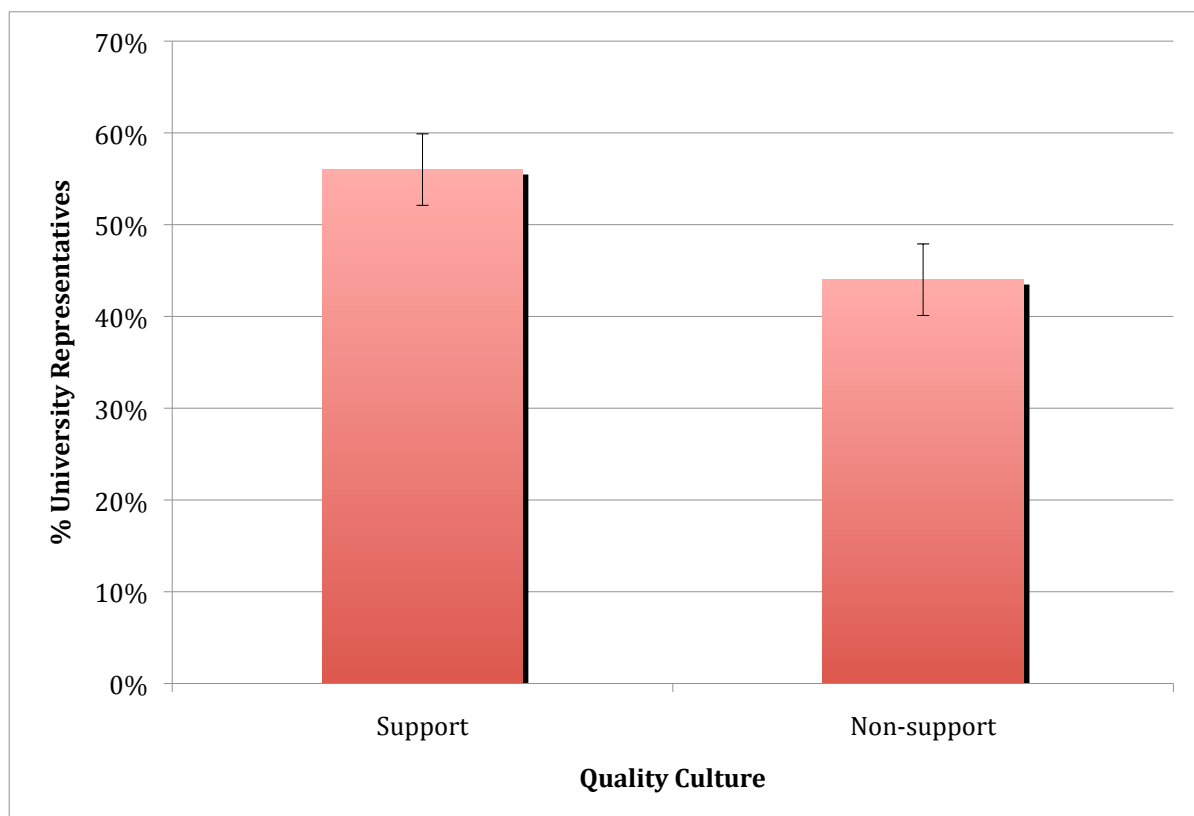
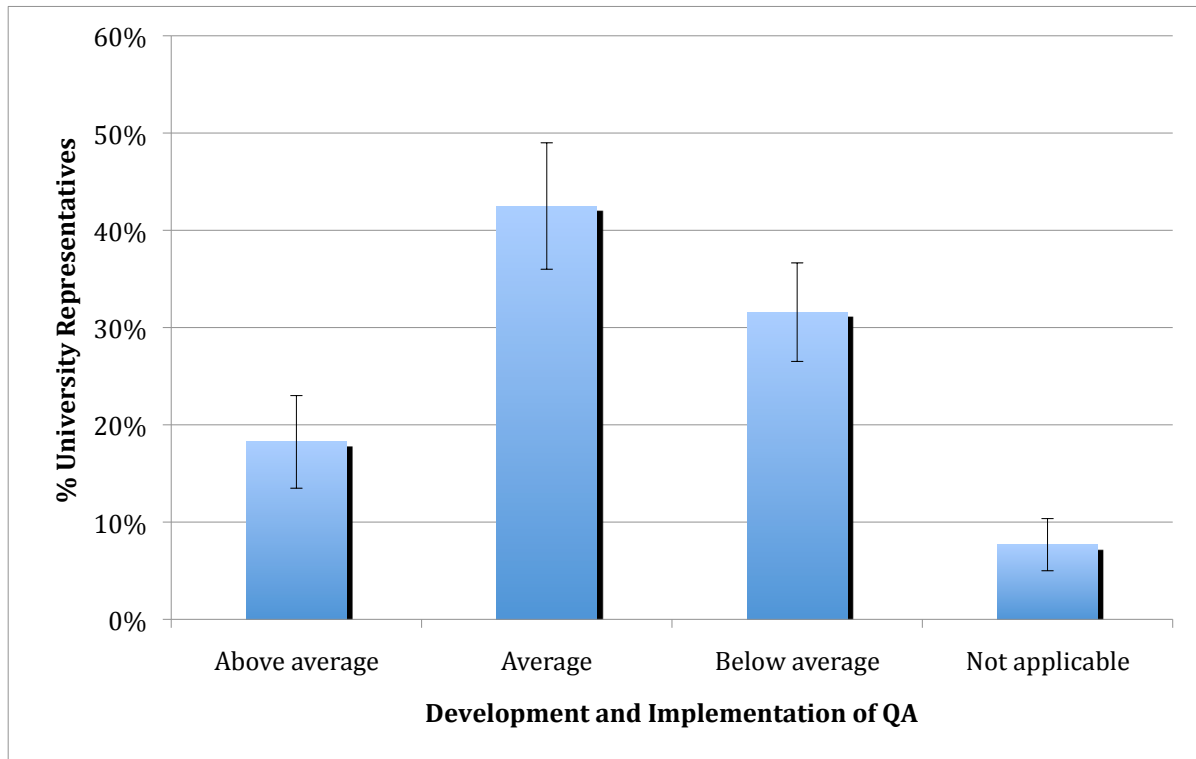


Figure 5: Development and Implementation of Quality Assurance



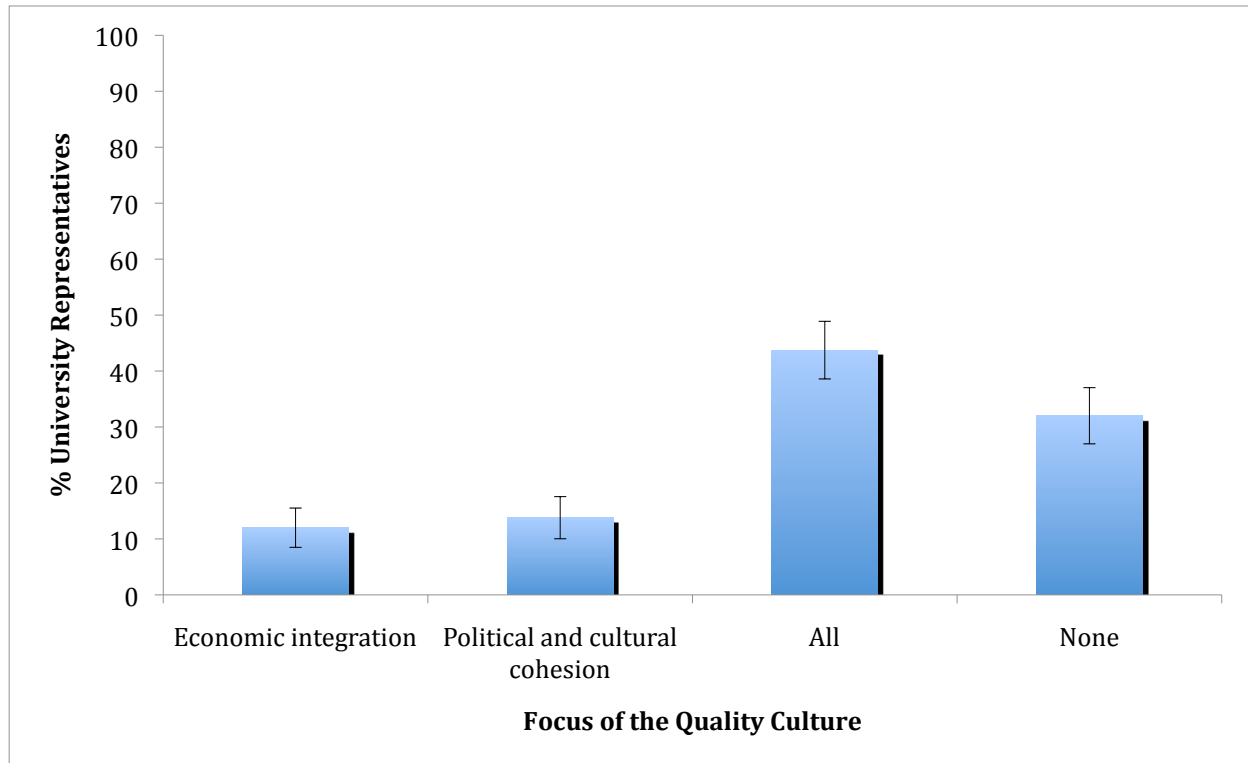
6.5.4 Quality Culture: Management Structure and Targets

P4 argued that after the invasion of 2003, which he referred to as “a positive booming period”, expansion happened with significant economic support, as there was a huge increase in oil production and greater revenue from the central government led to an income increase for academics. As a result many began returning to the Kurdistan Region. The first initiative was to create a law for the universities in this Region; this law was based on Baghdad University, which is very centralized. A renewed higher education system was created, and this was followed by improved academic privileges and a doubling of academic salaries. The return of many academics meant all the teaching positions were quickly filled. This later gave an incentive for MoHESR to open new public universities and adopt QA systems.

All interviewed participants shared this common perception that the management process for QA is centralized, and is more concerned with economic integration than political

and cultural cohesion. They believe that this process is created to serve the needs of the market-economy, for graduates to have opportunities to find jobs in the market place and to focus on specific skills and knowledge that could assist in locating employment. However there is a sense of hesitation about the possibility of achieving this level of economic prosperity since a lack of trust in the system has made some professors believe that the initiatives implemented will produce a different outcome than intended, since some of the funding is being misused. Thus there is a concern that the teaching quality reforms imposed on the basis of external demands do not complement the cultural and historical context of UKR. However, the survey results revealed that 12% agreed that the new quality culture focuses on economic integration, while 14% agreed it concentrates more on political and cultural cohesion, with 44% choosing both categories (See Figure 6).

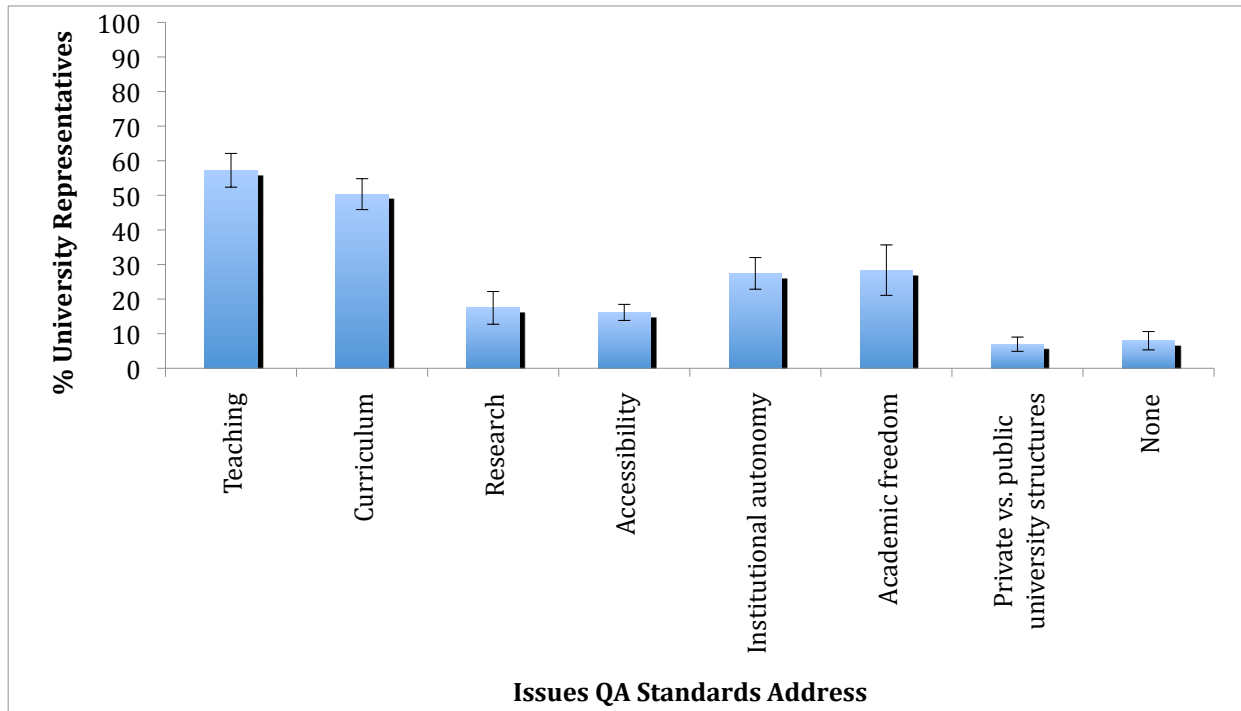
Figure 6: Focus of the New Quality Culture



6.5.5 Quality Assurance's Main Target Areas: Teaching and Curriculum

Different perceptions were expressed on the question of whether QA standards are addressing the recurring issues in higher education such as teaching, curriculum, accessibility, institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and the structures of private and public universities. A majority of the interviewed respondents argued that the QA standards are mainly concerned with restructuring teaching and curriculum. Survey participants expressed the same view, where 57% selected teaching and 50% selected curriculum as the main issues QA standards are addressing (*See Figure 7*). The interviewed respondents argued that this process might not be fully effective since the current structure and infrastructure are not suitable for teaching. This focus on teaching and curriculum has also not taken into account the reality of Kurdistan's society that this Region has not yet reached the level of modernization and progress found in European and North American countries. Thus criteria based on international standards cannot be effective when applied to the implementation of quality assurance in Kurdistan Universities. Many argued that Baghdad University, an institution that was ranked as the best in the Middle East, has had a much greater influence on Kurdistan's higher education system than any international university. As P3 asserted, "Our historical academic legacy is tied to Baghdad University and not to the experience of international universities." The teaching criteria based on international universities do not take into account the political and cultural conditions of the country. The road to quality will face obstacles when there is a lack of proper infrastructure, capacity building, professional development training, and advancement in programs and academic structures.

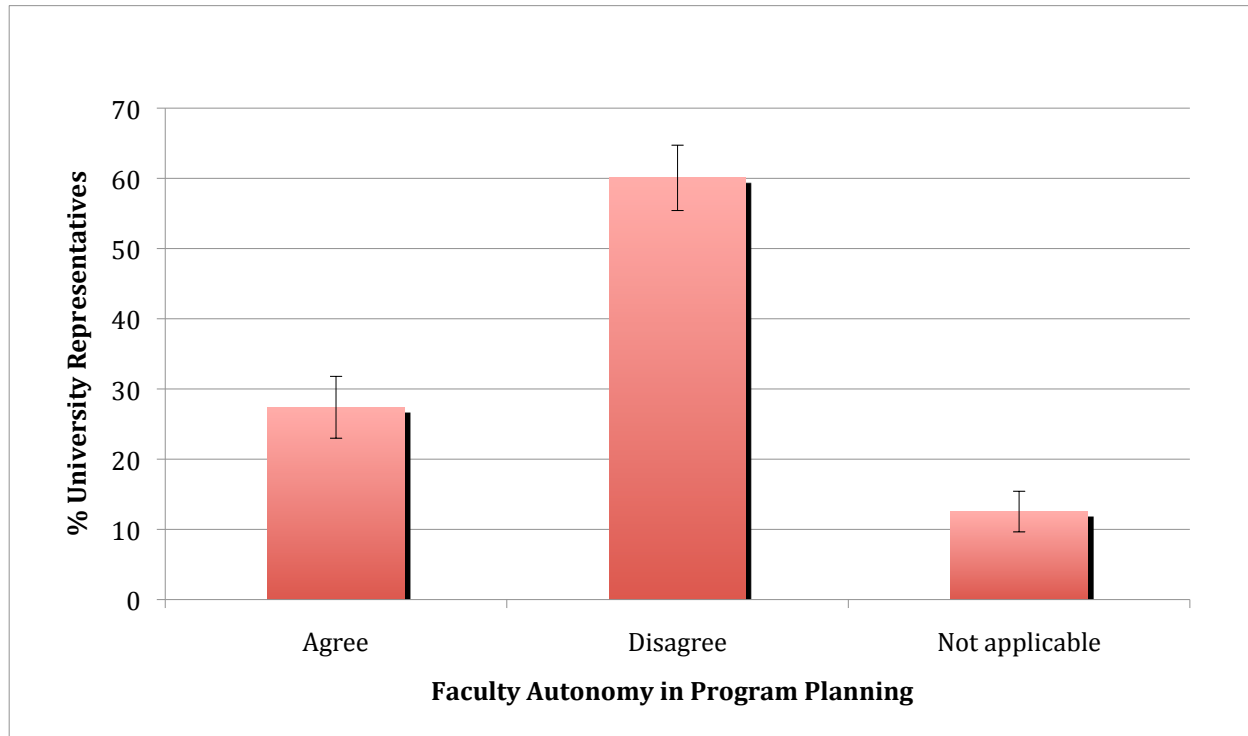
Figure 7: Issues Addressed by Quality Assurance



Although one of the strategies of the new policy is to promote institutional autonomy, the reality on the ground shows that the university has little independence in program planning, as they are under the control of the Ministry. This has a strong impact on the quality of education, as there is a delay in the process due to the Ministry taking more than six months to review the comments and suggestions submitted by faculty members. P7 argued that program planning depends on the person's years of experience or privileges at UKR. P7 now has complete program planning approval, mainly because of his previous position as a Dean and his field of specialization. Only he knows what program to initiate as well as the materials and equipment needed for his lab. This however does not mean he will receive funding nor does it mean that other professors have the same freedom. As P7 stated, "I am in the field of industrial chemistry that constantly needs to change and update itself, thus I have to be in control of program planning, but this does not mean that other professors have the same privilege." Equally the

survey results showed that 60.1% agreed that their faculty or department is not autonomous in program planning while 27.4% said it is (See Figure 8).

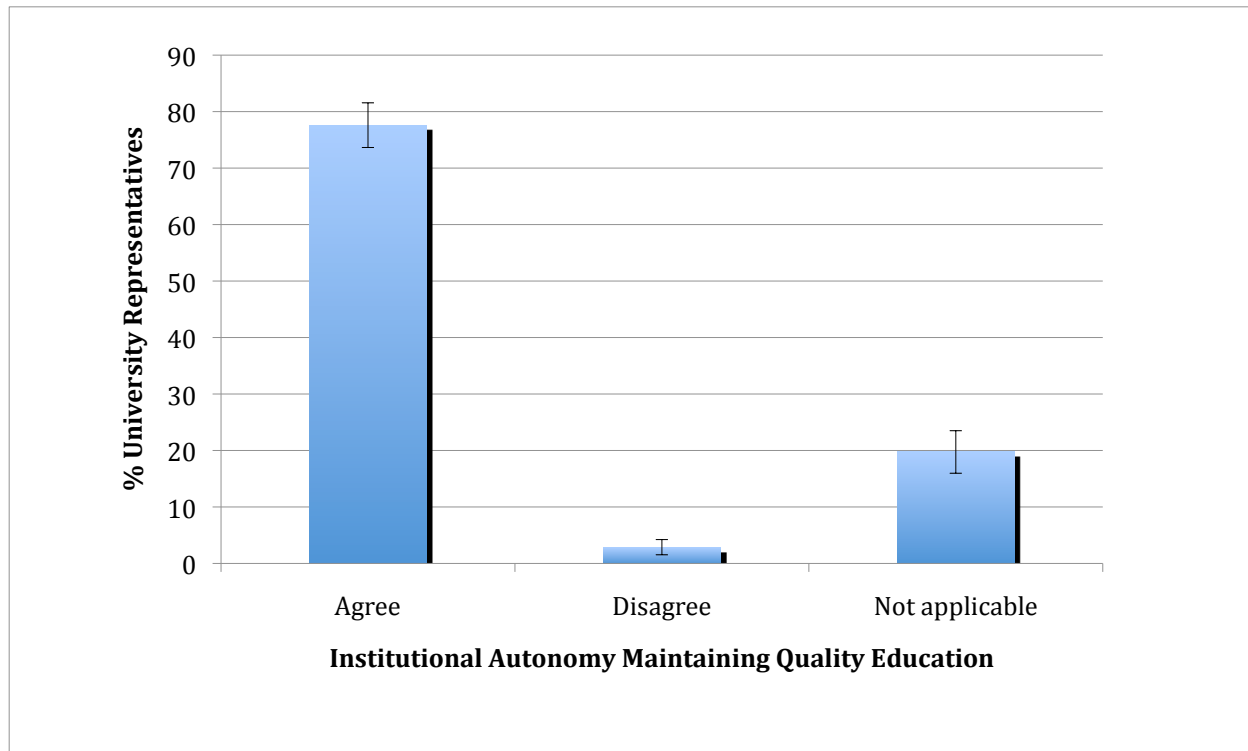
Figure 8: Faculty Autonomy in Program Planning



The majority of the interview respondents agreed that institutional autonomy is a very important issue that needs to be developed immediately. D2 called it a “needed authority” since the university president and administrators know what type of professors the institution needs, what programs to strengthen, which students should receive funding or scholarships, and what type of pedagogical methods are suitable for teaching and learning. In the past faculty members had their own budget and would spend it according to the university or the faculty’s rules and guidelines. Currently grants are provided but the spending has to be approved by the Ministry first. D5 argued that there is no decentralization process yet, but one of the objectives is to make the university fully autonomous. The legacy of many decades during which the Ministry had controlled all aspects of public universities means that years of support are required for a university to stand on its own. Only once it becomes academically, financially and managerially

dependable or meets the challenges of current capacity can it potentially become autonomous. Similar perceptions on this issue were seen through survey results where 78% of respondents agreed that institutional autonomy would maintain good quality education at UKR (See Figure 9).

Figure 9: Support for Institutional Autonomy



6.6 Reaction to the New Quality Teaching Reforms: Adopting or Resisting?

6.6.1 Issues with the Quality Assurance Evaluation Tools

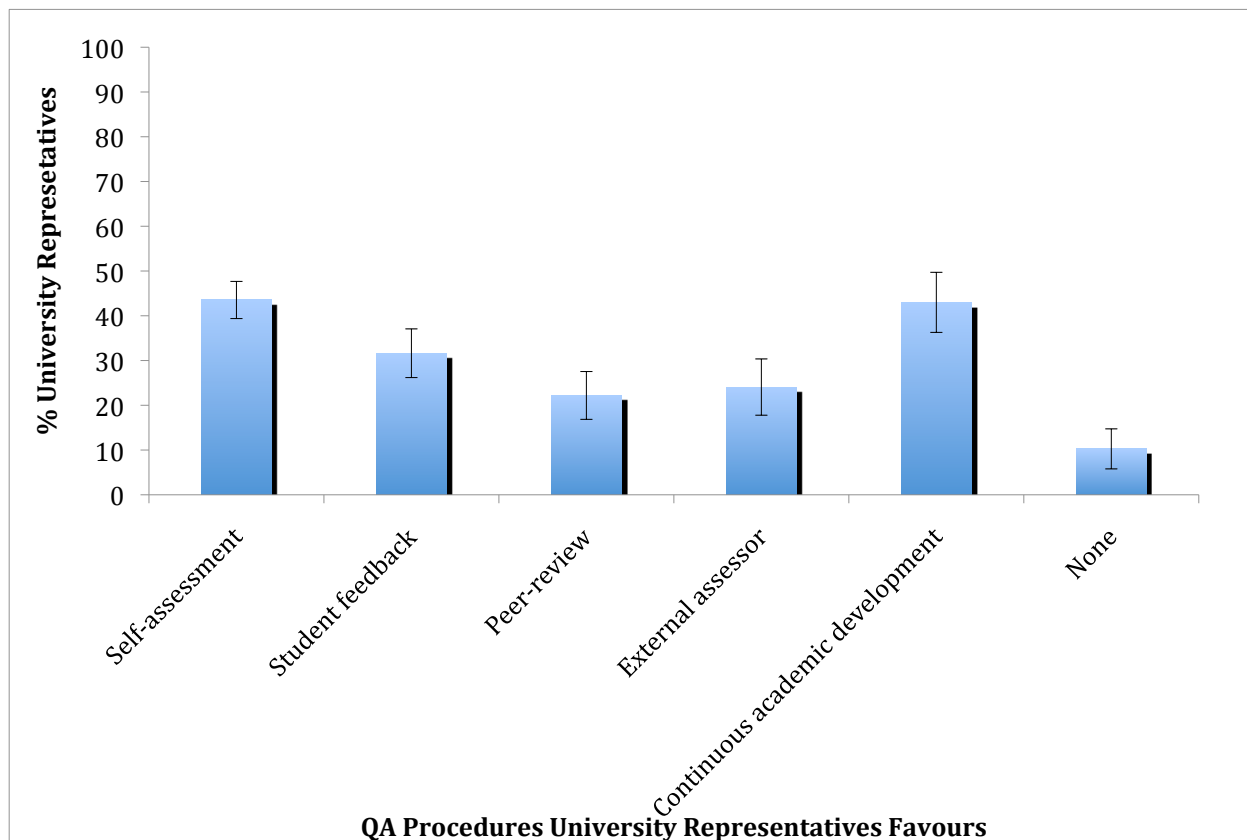
The faculty members or departments had few issues with the pillars of QA: course books, student feedback, external evaluators, continuing education, and curriculum development. On one hand, a few participants argued that methods of assessment under QA have a mixture of ideas coming from Western countries with some consideration for the cultural context of the Region. They believe that implementing ideas from advanced countries is important since they are living in a globalized world. For example, D5 contended, “we cannot

run away from globalization, when you enter our free market, you will see how it has been taken over by private local and foreign companies. It is therefore important to understand that educating and enlightening is a slow process.” P6 argued that “student feedback is a mirror to a professor’s teaching”, it is an effective tool that assists in assessing and improving one’s teaching and learning process. This evaluation method along with peer-reviews and external assessors are methods that allows faculty members to see gaps in their teaching styles. P7 stated that one has to assess oneself continuously to realize that “he or she is one drop in the sea of knowledge.”

On the other hand a majority of the respondents were dissatisfied with the QA evaluation tools and management. There was widely held opposition towards student feedback, as they believed that at the present moment, students are not at the appropriate academic level to assess their professors nor are they qualified enough to provide an objective opinion or have the knowledge to evaluate the learning process. They need more time to mature academically and have accurate knowledge about the current political and economic systems. Some form of corruption is still ongoing due to various forms of political interference, since a majority of the university representatives argued that students who are affiliated with specific political parties demand “Wastah”, which means using connections or bribery to receive a passing or a higher grade. If this demand is not fulfilled, the professor receives negative feedback, demonstrating that students use the evaluation process as a means of retribution. Although many interviewed participants agreed that student feedback is a necessary assessment tool to improve their teaching practice, the university first needs to build a good quality teaching cohort which is not subject to political control before carrying out this process. The same view was shared on external evaluators, as there are not many qualified professors with years of experience to critique their peers’ work. The essential step before applying these evaluation tools is to tackle

the process of teaching by providing enough academic resources and reference materials to update the knowledge of professors. There is also some dishonesty in the continuous academic development (CAD) process. CAD is based on attending weekly seminars that offer a variety of topics, and each time they attend, faculty members receive one academic point. However many expressed a concern about how certain professors attend for a few minutes only and then go on to the next seminar on the same day in order to collect all the required points. Surveys demonstrated parallel findings as the interview results, in which 44% agreed to self-assessment, 32% supported student feedback, 22% supported peer-review, 34% supported external assessors, and 43% favoured CAD (See Figure 10), illustrating a relatively low level of support for student feedback, peer-review and external assessors.

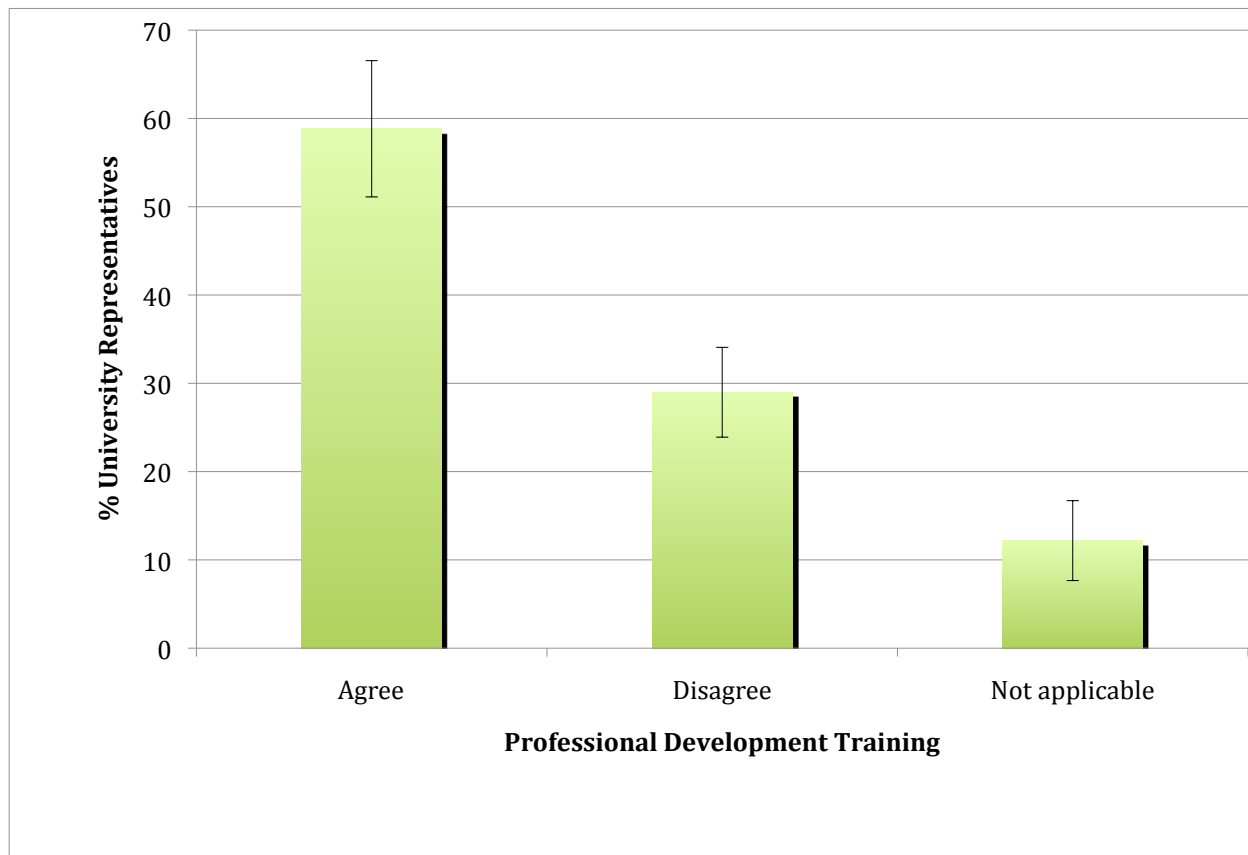
Figure 10: Quality Assurance Procedures Favoured by University Representatives



6.6.2 Curriculum Development

A majority of the respondents are for the new curriculum development that focuses on encouraging students to engage in scientific debate, creative and critical thinking, and group work in order to develop their knowledge, skills and competencies. However, this process could be more effective if professors continuously and equally received professional development training and resources. Only a few professors underwent teacher training that offered them materials on technical teaching. Only professors who specialized in curriculum and teaching were sent to the universities in the US, the UK and Germany for teacher training. However there have not been any training courses offered at UKR, and even the training courses provided by international organizations such as UNESCO were only given to administrators. Seminars run by the Ministry that included a majority of the faculty members only discussed QA regulations and forms. Since few received teacher training, traditional teaching methods had not shifted towards adapting advanced pedagogy that could potentially benefit the process of student learning. Comparable results were obtained from the surveys in which 59% received training while 29% did not, however the training received was not to develop new teaching methods but to become familiar with QA forms and regulations (*See Figure 11*).

Figure 11: Professional Development Training

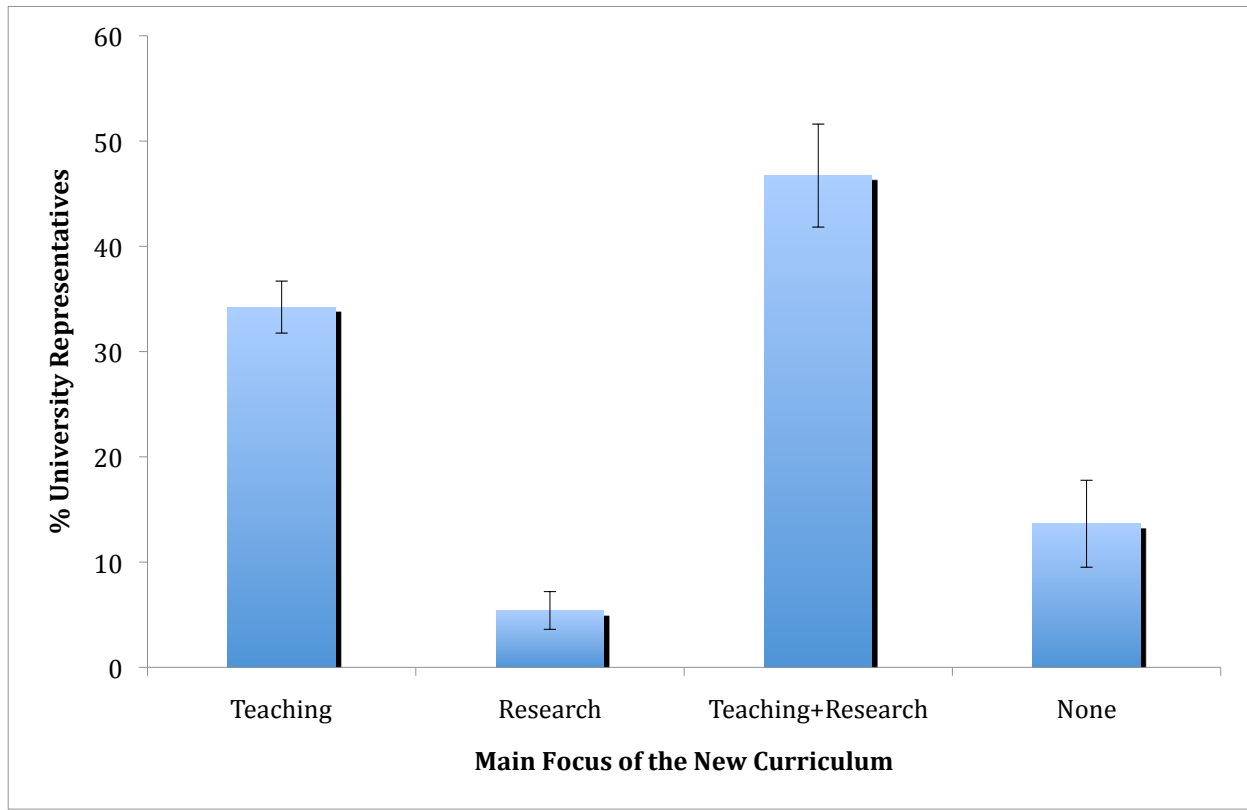


With regard to research, a majority of the participants stated that few professional development training opportunities were offered on how to carry out research and what areas to focus on. P1 argued that the Ministry discussed research matters that would the needs of the society, however, the relationship with the market was not currently strong, particularly with reference to mental health, which is still perceived negatively. According to P1, several social problems existed, and creating links between scientific research and the market, or links between university and society's needs was crucial. Creating public awareness and understanding of the social issues that were predominant could be accomplished by making MA or PhD research findings accessible to the public arena. D2 argued that in the past, professors used to think of "research as an example", in which the process entailed collecting the data, and the findings were considered to be the research. D2 has been giving many seminars to professors

and students with the idea that research starts as a problem, and knowing how to solve this problem using empirical and statistical methods would validate the data. The most important process when conducting research was to identify the population and the objective of the topic. His department currently is providing different statistical tools and encouraging a mixed-methods research approach. On the other hand, P3 argued that only scientific departments received professional development training, and currently there was a lack of new research methods or materials offered for social science departments to learn how to adopt different approaches in collecting and analyzing data.

Furthermore, a majority of the respondents also claimed that the new curriculum development was more concerned with improving teaching, with only a minor concentration on improving research methods. D5 defended this approach by adding, “the new curriculum needs to focus more on teaching because quality research cannot be created if there is no quality teaching.” He continued to argue that each university has its own mission and vision, maybe UKR will be known for producing good quality teaching rather than good quality research. In relation to the survey results, 34% agreed that teaching is the main focus of the new curriculum, while 5% said it focuses on research and 47% believed that it concentrates on both areas (*See Figure 12*).

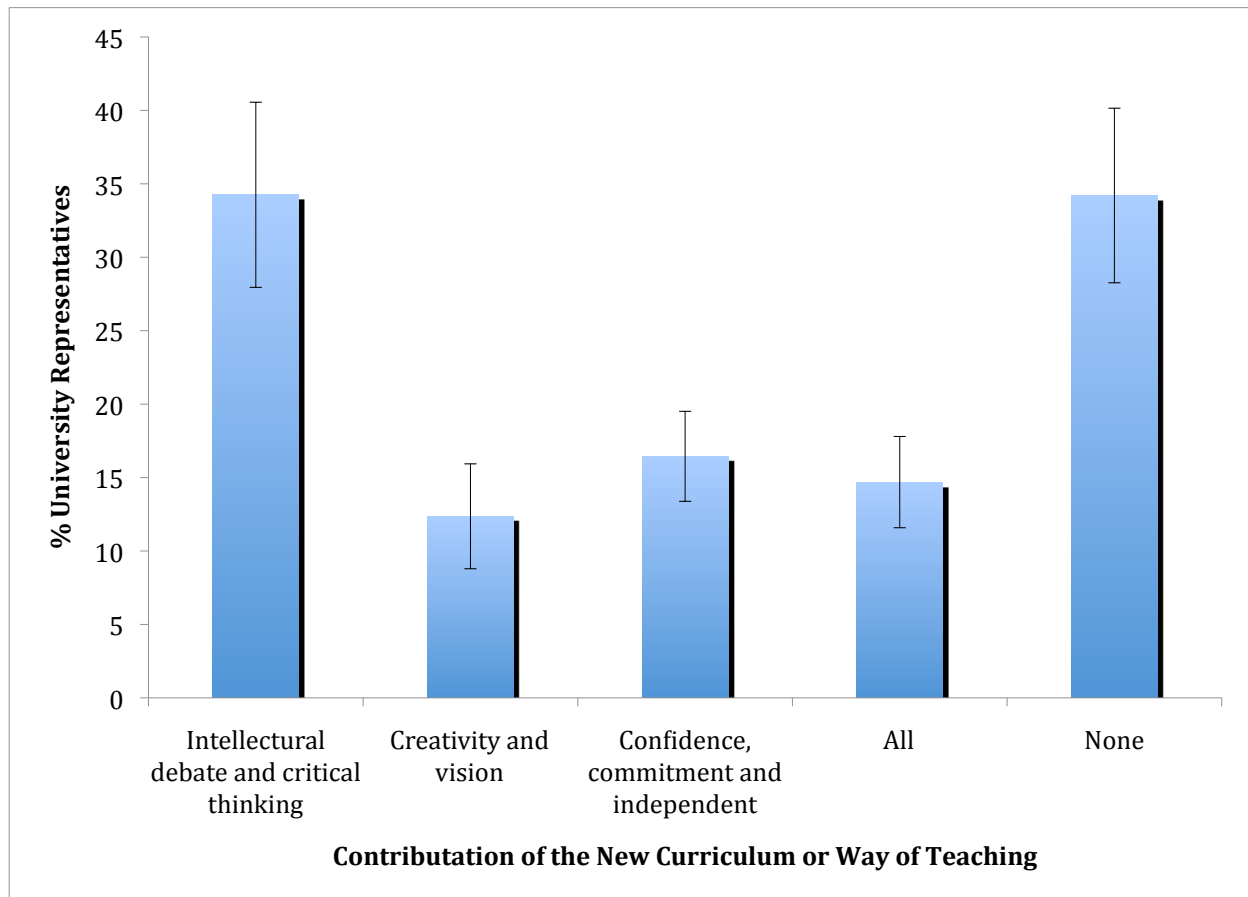
Figure 12: Main Focus of the New Curriculum



Many participants agreed with the Ministry’s initiative on adding “scientific debate” to all lectures since it has encouraged students to think logically and critically. Mostly importantly this has created a shift from memorization to critical thinking, self-learning, as well learning from others and in groups. P4 contended, “for the first time in the history of Iraq we have debates in our classes. It is giving our students the opportunity to voice their opinions on the subject-matter, to express their concerns on the methods of learning, and to critically reflect on the class materials.” A majority of the interviewed participants stated that the new curriculum has established a solid foundation in terms of stimulating intellectual debate, critical inquiry, and creativity. Survey findings also show that the new curriculum contributes to the following categories: 34% said it contributes to intellectual debate and critical thinking, 12% agreed that it adds creativity and vision, 16% argued that it encourages confidence, commitment and

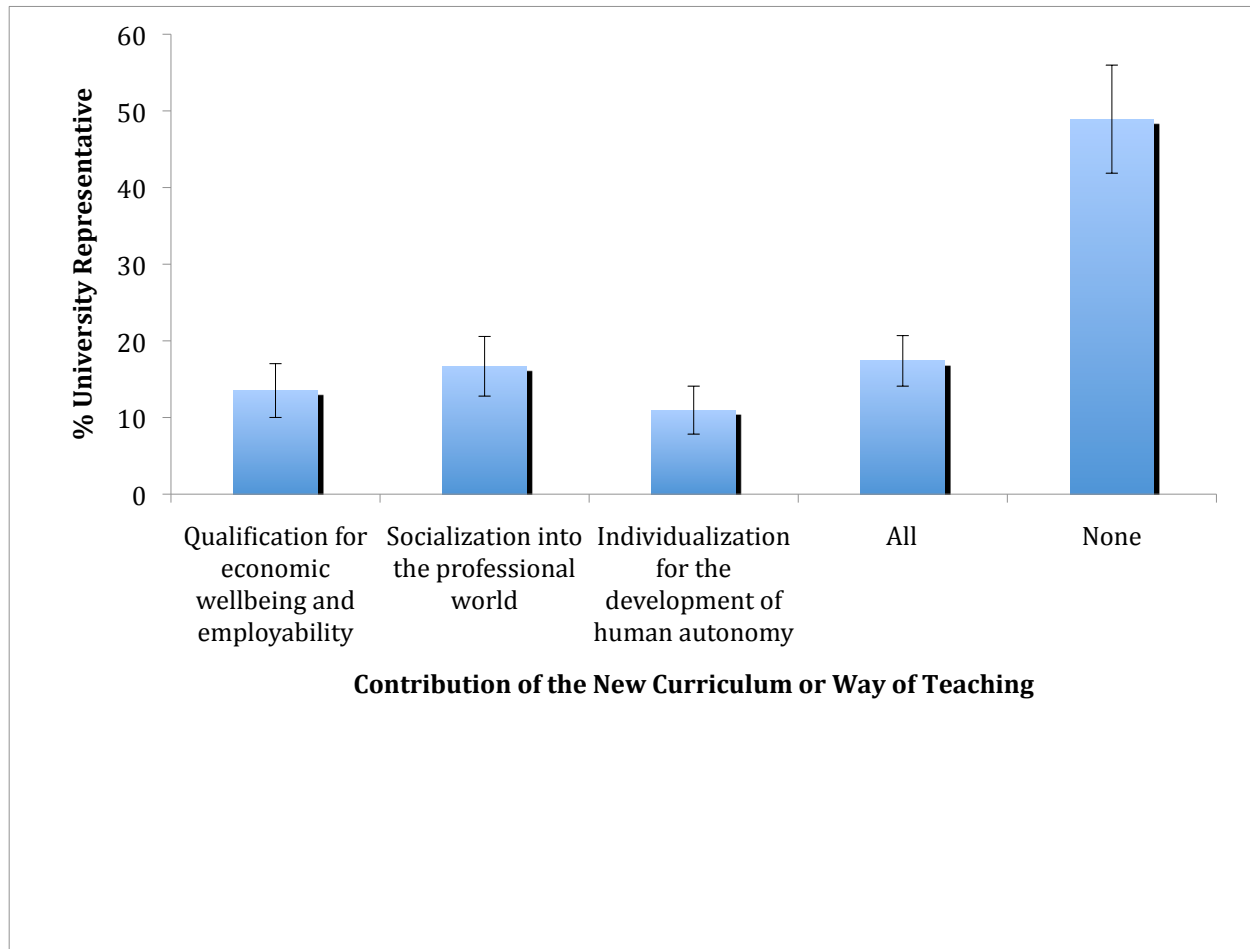
independence, and lastly 15% believed that it focuses on all the above categories (See Figure 13).

Figure 13: Contribution of New Curriculum



There is also a sense among the interviewed respondents that the new curriculum contributes to qualifying for economic wellbeing, socialization into the professional world and individualization for the development of human autonomy. Similarly, survey participants demonstrated that 14% agreed with qualification, 12% chose socialization, 16% selected individualization, and 15% agreed that the new curriculum contributes to all the above categories (See Figure 14). These positive initiatives could potentially build high academic standards and produce qualified students that have excellent knowledge and skills to succeed in their careers or personal lives.

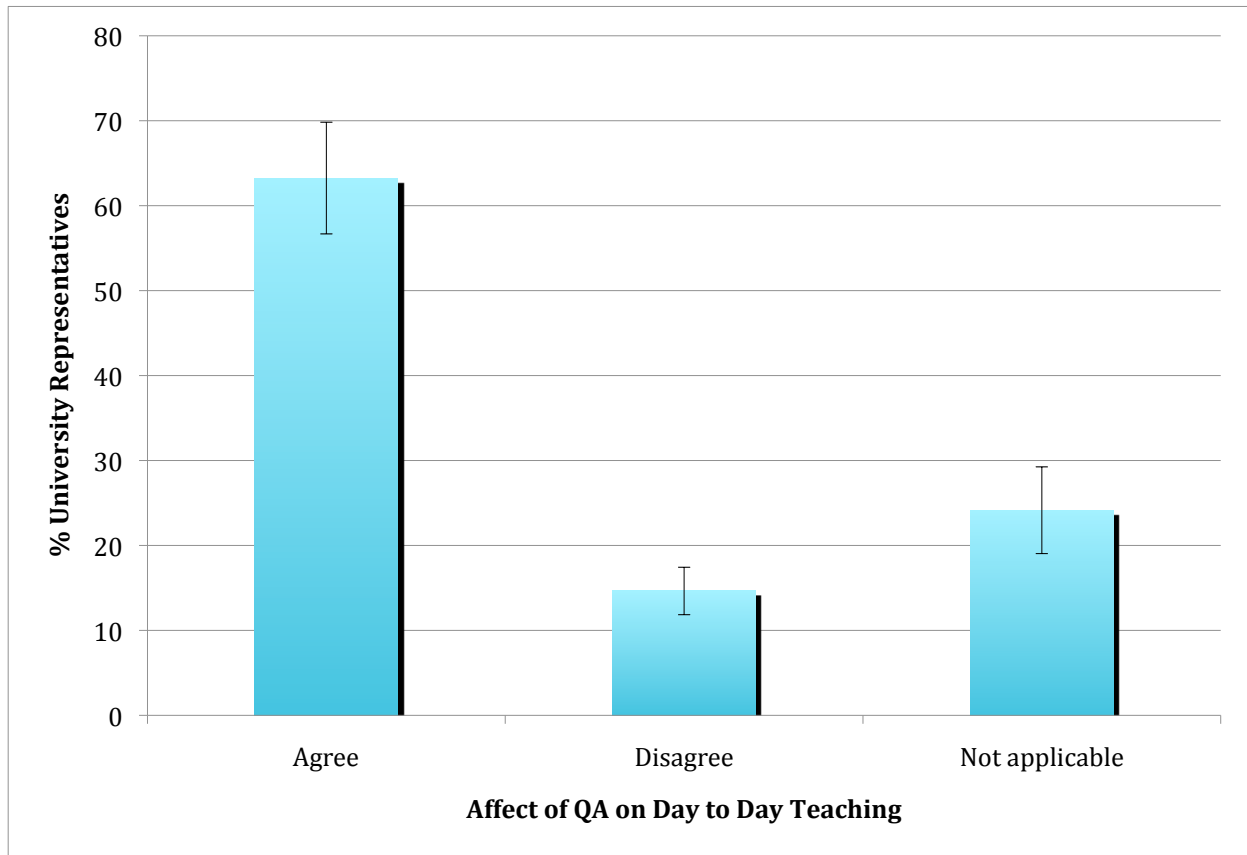
Figure 14: Contribution of the New Curriculum



6.7 Criticisms and Improvements

A majority of the participants argued that QA procedures have an effect on their day-to-day teaching at UKR. Survey findings also demonstrated that 63.2% argued that QA affects their daily teaching at the university (*See Figure 15*).

Figure 15: Affects of Quality Assurance on Day-to-Day Teaching



P7 diligently asserted while pointing to his room, “do not look at my room, not all professors have a space like my room. I have a lab in my office that I requested to store my supplies and equipments. It was given to me because of my previous position as a Dean and for maintaining a good relationship with the Ministry.” He further contested, “what should other professors do with quality assurance if they do not have proper teaching materials and labs? This is not a road to quality but a road to deterioration of everything that UKR is attempting to develop.” The idea of depending or bringing people from overseas that offer techniques and solutions that work in their own country needs to be reconsidered, he believed. These ideas are fixed and are implemented without having prior knowledge or experience about the university’s structure or the way it functions. External advisors are unfamiliar with the relationship between professors and students as well as between professors and management. Therefore, according to P7, “the

idea that the previous Minister was recruited from the UK to implement a program that is very Eurocentric and Western needs to be monitored to ensure it reflects the existing cultural and political structure of the Kurdistan Region.” Only P3 brought an issue that none of the other respondents mentioned. He shared his frustration on how the Arabic language is no longer playing an important role in academia. As a professor he has collected many books in Arabic that he cannot share with his students. He argued that Arabic is a philosophical and historical language of the Abbasi period; it is called the “Golden Period” because there is a legacy behind it. Therefore, it is necessary to teach in both languages (Kurdish and Arabic) instead of preferring one over the other. As he put it, “pushing away from the Arabic language means separating from the historical basis of knowledge and its creation.”

6.8 Discussion

The question “what does quality education mean to you?” was asked in the beginning of the interview and at the end of the survey questions. The generated answers are compared to Newton’s deconstructed quality from ‘formal meanings’ to ‘situated meanings’. Table 6 is a comparative chart between Newton’s (2007) dominant formal meanings of quality in the early 1990s to the situated perceptions of quality of front-line academics at UKR in 2012 that are gathered from interview and survey findings.

Table 6: Quality from 'Formal Meanings' to 'Situated Perceptions'

Dominant formal meanings of 'quality in the early 1990s	Situated perceptions of 'quality' of front-line academics in 2012
Quality as 'Perfection' or 'consistency' Quality as 'value for money' Quality as 'total quality' Quality as 'management commitment' Quality as 'culture change' Quality as 'peer review' Quality as 'transforming the learner' Quality as 'fitness for purpose' Quality as 'exceptional' or 'excellence' Quality as 'customer satisfaction'	Quality is better than quantity Quality as achieving academic/scientific standards and maintaining academic experts in the field Quality as providing modern methods and new information in a framework of mutual respect Quality as putting more knowledge into teaching Quality as improving the quality of delivery, research and skills Quality as focusing on student centre learning Quality as improving the ability of professors and increasing critical knowledge in accordance with present progress in education Quality as having more specialized professors that can make decisions on their own Quality as having good qualifications of teachers, good styles of teaching, a wide space for creativity of the teachers, respecting their professionalism Quality as going deep into the root of the institution to provide continuous development that leads to academic progress Quality as the way of teaching, the financial, social and academic independence that have an important value Quality as creating critical thinking and building students' creativity and independence Quality as having different factors interacting amongst each other such as teachers, students and programs. If one falls, all fail. Quality as establishing a good curriculum, a well-designed laboratory with necessary instruments and technology for teaching Quality as building the capacity of the academics and creating value for those they serve and those who serve them

The way quality is perceived by the front-line staff at UKR to a certain degree is similar to the dominant formal meanings in the early 1990s. Quality for interviewed and surveyed participants is more about the transformation process, since it is seen as a way of building the capacity of faculty members to continuously develop their knowledge, adapt new methods of teaching, encourage student-centered learning or learning by doing, offer new information in the framework of mutual respect, and promote institutional independence. These central issues can relate to the formal meanings of customer satisfaction, fitness for purpose and value for money, since the respondents believe that improving the quality of delivery in teaching and research can build the capacity of professors to become more specialized in their field of work as well as

foster better scientific debates and more critical thinking among students. Moreover, the participants identify quality also as reaching excellence by achieving high academic standards, building advanced technology, and creating value for those they serve. Looking closely at the situated perception of quality among university representatives at UKR illustrates that their quality vision in some areas relates to the vision and mission of the MoHESR. However, although their conception of quality reflects the one developed by the Ministry, their operational assumptions have made them become critical of the process of achieving quality teaching. Due to this, the new quality culture is perceived differently by university representatives than what the Ministry has anticipated.

The means I have used to understand the reality of quality culture for faculty members at UKR and at the Ministry is applying Harvey and Stensaker's (2008) Weberian ideal-types of quality culture that have been set in a grid-group typology within Douglas' (1982) cultural theory. The grid-group study explains different modes of social control. When the dimensions are put into a two-axis system, from weak to strong, four outcomes are formed which represent diverse types of social environments. The dimension an individual fits in will direct his or her interaction with the environment, and each element is identified as a worldview or way of life, which Douglas (1982) refers to as individualistic, egalitarian, hierarchical, and fatalistic. Harvey and Stensaker (2008) applied the dichotomization of the model's two dimensions: if individual behaviour is group-controlled or if it is prescribed by external rules and regulations by forming Weberian ideal-types: responsive, reactive, regenerative and reproductive (*See Table 7*) to identify the type of quality culture an organization falls under. The findings for this study are described through the regenerative and reactive modes; the former mode has a strong degree of group-control but is weak in terms of the intensity of external rules, while the latter mode has a weak degree of group-control, but is strong in terms of the intensity of external rules.

Table 7: Ideal-Types of Quality Culture

		Degree of Group Control	
		Strong	Weak
Intensity of external rules	Strong	Responsive quality culture: led by external demands, opportunistic, combining accountability and improvement, but perhaps also sometimes a lack of ownership and control	Reactive quality culture: reward or sanction led, task-oriented, doubts about the potential of improvement, compliance, reluctant (“beast to be fed”)
	Weak	Regenerative quality culture: internally oriented with strong belief in staff and existing procedures, widespread, experimental, although not always adaptive to external demands and development	Reproductive quality culture: wanting to minimize the impact of external factors, focusing on sub-units, lack of transparency throughout the institution, emphasize the expertise of the individual

* Source: Created by Harvey (2009) but adapted it from Harvey and Stensaker (2008)

According to the findings, the intention is regenerative for the Ministry, in which quality culture is internally established while being conscious of the external conditions and expectations. Although the concept of quality culture was introduced from Western nations, the Ministry still reviewed this framework and created its own internal regeneration process that has its own dominance where external opportunities are incorporated in areas where they add value, particularly for the labour market. Quality culture according to the Ministry constantly re-conceptualizes what it knows, where it is heading and which discourse to use for its future direction. Accountability is formed through the continual improvement of departments, programs and faculty members. It has initiated different learning opportunities such as providing scholarships to students to study abroad, sending top professors to get teacher training from internationally well-known universities or bringing foreign experts to train their staff to be leaders and experts. It has adapted different methods of evaluation, with the goal of benchmarking and creating space for reflective review. Quality culture for the Ministry is ideologically adjusted with the ambitions of the team, and dissidence will occur if interference happens from different management or external powers.

By contrast, the reality on the ground for quality culture is reactive for university representatives, as there is a lack of involvement with the external demands. This is true for faculty members, as many of them are hesitant to accept most forms of quality evaluation and are doubtful about improvements coming from assessment methods such as student feedback, peer-review, and external evaluators. The participants demonstrated favoritism by seeking opportunities where action is connected to reward, such as supporting student scholarships, attending professional development training in foreign universities or engaging in the continuous academic development program where academic points are gained for attending weekly seminars. The main issue for the majority of the participants of this study is how the new quality culture is externally constructed, directed and imposed, with little or no ownership. This was demonstrated in the way respondents defined quality and how it changed for them at the operational level since they have constructed it according to their way of teaching, their academic background, the current social and political system of Kurdistan, and the cultural context and organizational structure of UKR. At the present moment, the Ministry has complete ownership of the new quality policy, since the current system is very centralized. Therefore, according to university representatives, structures are not adequate to improve quality even if the concept of quality culture is implemented in the quality assurance systems. There needs to be a mutually supportive relationship between the structure of the organization and a set of values and beliefs.

6.9 Conclusion

The findings of the study demonstrate that the majority of the university representatives view the new policy on achieving quality culture as an important step to prioritize, since the quality of education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq had been hindered by past political turmoil. Most of the participants in this study support the new quality culture but are in opposition to the

way the Ministry manages the process, since it do not give adequate regard to the opinions of the faculty members or administrative bodies. The participants support reforming teaching to ensure quality through quality assurance initiatives, but rigid centralization, political interference and the admission of less qualified students are identified as central issues embedded in the management process that could impede higher education from serving as a bridge for Kurdistan to the global knowledge economy. Due to this, the university representatives expressed a sense that compliance and accountability are required even when they are reluctant to embrace some forms of quality evaluation. Their perception of different evaluation tools coming from the Ministry is critical since they believe that Kurdistan lacks advanced conditions in terms of technology, connection with the labour market and proper infrastructure for quality assurance procedures to be effective at the current time. Participants felt the quality assurance process needs to be continuously developed and evaluated, based on action with proper communication and administration structures. Its aim should be to create a transformative change that will lead to political and cultural cohesion, not just economic integration that meets the demands of the current market economy and the need for engagement in international competitiveness.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

It is evident that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has its own regional government that is market oriented with the potential of becoming a regional economic powerhouse. Prioritizing the transformation of the higher education system through a new policy under the direction of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) reveals the commitment to improving the standards and quality of universities in order to meet the demands of the current market economy and engage in international competitiveness. As part of the *Roadmap to Quality*, MoHESR initiated Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA), in which many university representatives have challenged the principles and ideas behind this reform and its implications for the teaching and learning process.

There is no empirical research that clearly examines the principles and ideas behind Kurdistan's educational policies, however the conclusions offered here are based on an analysis made from the perspectives and experiences of university representatives. The MoHESR has adopted a new type of quality culture to face the challenges of economic globalization, which views knowledge as a driver of growth. Advice from international agencies has encouraged MoHESR to believe that adequate development of a quality culture is necessary to produce a high quality of teaching that will enhance the role and image of universities in the eyes of important stakeholders and respond to market demands. The reality on the ground, as studied through the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives, demonstrates that the management process in implementing quality assurance procedures has proven ineffective in bringing about a quality culture, since it is not guided by the universities' organizational culture.

The main research questions and sub-questions were answered by looking at the theory and concept of quality offered by Newton (2007). His distinction between 'formal meanings'

and ‘situated meanings’ was applied to disentangle the way faculty members at UKR define quality. Many university representatives perceive quality in education as a transformative change that involves all stakeholders who have shared values, beliefs and visions. This demonstrates that defining quality from an international perspective does not reflect the conception of quality held by administrators and faculty members within the institution. Therefore it is essential to allow a university to build its foundation on local knowledge before it attempts to follow international standards or engage in competition on a global stage. This was the reason why majority of the respondents supported reforming teaching to achieve quality, but were against the management and implementation process of the quality assurance scheme that was being introduced. This was further seen through Harvey and Stensaker (2008) Weberian ideal-type set of quality cultures, in which the reality of the quality culture for faculty members was found to be reactive, though the MoHESR viewed it as regenerative. It was reactive since the type of quality culture brought to UKR was constructed, directed and imposed from outside, under circumstances of rigid centralization and some political meddling.

7.1 Policy Framework: State-Centric or Neoliberal Model?

The governance system for higher education in Kurdistan is a mixture of both the state-centric and the neoliberal models. The main changes occurring in the higher education system are state driven, with the goal of using higher education to create a kind of free market competition that will produce the most efficient use of educational resources. Although most of the reforms are state-driven, the ideology and its rules and regulations stem from neoliberalism. In view of *the Roadmap to Quality*, it is obvious that the reforms initiated under this plan do not have a theoretical justification or a contextual or situational basis, which can justify why the reform on quality teaching is being promoted. The main element discussed in the MoHESR-KRG (2010) report is that economic prosperity is an important focus for achieving educational

goals. The report describes the former higher education system as “outdated”, inherited from “old Iraq” and suited for a “closed-market” (p.10-11). The current goal is to build the infrastructure and strengthen the foundation of governance. These accomplishments are connected to democracy and economic investments, in which the term democracy here is used as a way for the government to open its marketplace to foreign investment and international markets. This is clear when the MoHESR-KRG (2010) report outlines the necessity of building highly skilled professionals by attaining excellence in the fields of science, technology and management.

The gap in the *Roadmap to Quality* is the lack of a clear definition of “quality.” Its basic conception is confined to market-based conditions or requirements. There is a combination of the market and democracy that is reinforced through a pyramid-style management structure. This contradictory approach illustrates a combination of neo-liberal and neo-conservative discourses, in which traditional practices are infused with new market impulses (Apple, 2004, Hill, 2006, and Wendy, 2006). The neoliberal ideology is seen through the reform plan that is based on the vision of the MoHESR and politicians. It is clear that the basis of this new policy is not from any empirical study but from a government whose aim is to produce individuals that have entrepreneurial skills and can be competitive in the market place. However it is neo-conservative in the sense that the MoHESR has a total ownership and management control over the new policy, through its centralized process of quality assurance, curriculum content and development, accountability, continuous academic development, and a centralized student admission system. An area that needs future attention is examining the impact of such a system on the construction of knowledge and the learning process.

Since the process and management of the new policy has a mixture of neoliberal and neoconservative principles, it is clear that both state-centric and neoliberal models are present.

For example, the MoHESR is in charge of funding, appointing teachers, deciding on curriculum, awarding degrees and enrolment, yet the Ministry has implemented performance indicators as a management tool, and created extra-state bodies to supervise particular issues. In terms of curriculum and teaching, the state has a high level of influence on curriculum, where changes need higher levels of approval and control of entrance examinations, but at the same time, the new curriculum developed encourages interactive teaching and problem solving that allows competition in class. Lastly, any research programmes in areas such as marketing and innovation are state directed but there is state provision for competitive funding to facilitate linkages between industry and tertiary institutions. It is therefore clear that the current system is a mixture between state-centric and neoliberal models, though this could potentially change over the coming years. Future research could examine whether the higher education system in Kurdistan will function under both models or become more state-centric or more neoliberal.

7.2 Reconceptualizing the Meaning of 'Quality'

As stated earlier, the new policy plan does not offer a clear definition of “quality.” It is essential to define it in terms of the historical, contextual and situational background of the higher education system in the Kurdistan Region. Quality cannot just be defined in terms of economic and market needs or international standards or values since this reflects a top-down management structure that controls the education process without considering other factors. This could potentially be one of the reasons why faculty members have a negative perception of the new evaluation methods. They have shown that the methods used to develop, assess and assure quality do not consider the university’s organizational background, structures and values as well as the traditional teaching methods. The new methods are centralized and have not been adjusted to complement the existing political, historical and social aspects of the Region.

It is important to realize that quality is perceived differently depending on how it is defined. Since there are few historical studies of the Kurdistan Region and its earlier experiences with quality of education, the next possible step is to look at the pre-existing structures, values and mission of the higher education institutions as well as the opinions of the faculty members and administrators in order to connect the formal meaning of quality with the situational perception of quality. Another important suggestion for the MoHESR is to see culture as the fundamental concept for the improvement of organizational performance rather than focusing on structures, accreditation, rules and regulations. This form of total quality approach creates a management and bureaucratic structures that are not flexible enough to allow an institution to transform itself. It is essential to be aware that

Bureaucracy will always prioritise the past over the future because the future may not fit into any convenient slot. It dictates procedure when, perhaps, circumstances require that procedures are changed. Most important, though, an inability to respond creatively leads eventually to institutional atrophy and decline as a university fails to keep up with the pace of change (Newby, 1999, p. 267).

It is essential to implement quality management and procedures that are compatible with the responsibility at the operational level. Concepts such as quality assurance, control and management are now seen as top-down methods that are often unsuccessful in higher education. Quality can be obtained through individuals' ambitions and motivations. It should not be perceived as standard but instead as a process because "in the long run, static concepts, "such as 'fitness for purpose' are recipes for 'dumbing down' and the very antithesis of quality' (Newby, 1999, p. 265). Thus if academic institutions are dedicated to achieving quality, then the management must set it as a belief at the operational level. Further it is also essential to approach quality holistically and connect cultural components, structural dimensions and

competencies into one holistic framework that allows stakeholders to develop shared visions, values, and beliefs.

These steps could potentially create a unique quality culture that fits the needs of an institution. Such an organizational culture can be strengthened through six of Deming's 14 principles: a) adapting a new philosophy with management learning what their responsibilities are and assuming leadership for change, b) ceasing dependence on inspection by building quality into the service, c) aiming for continuous improvement of the service to improve quality and decrease costs, d) instituting leadership with the aim of supervising people to help them do a better job, e) driving out fear so everyone can work effectively together for the organization, and f) breaking down barriers between departments and encouraging departments to work together.

7.3 Other Areas to Improve

The new quality culture that is based on the development of a quality assurance system has not yet reached the appropriate academic maturity at UKR. In order to reach this level, it must create a proper infrastructure that is based on continuous development of scientific laboratories and materials, transforming the roots of the curriculum, improving facilities and resource centers, recruiting highly qualified academics from different universities, evaluating research topics in order to ensure that there are no outdated research projects, selecting administrators based on qualifications, skills and knowledge, and offering continuous academic development and training to all faculty members. Besides these improvements, most fundamental issues that need vigilant attention will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

7.3.1 Changing the Roots of Central Admission System

The central admission system needs updating because it offers 100% admission to all students who apply to post-secondary schools, even students with an average of 50-60%. Politics is the reason behind the open access to students, since in 2005 entrance to postsecondary institutions was offered to students who met the admission requirements. However, a student protest occurred in front of the parliament building that resulted in the political party in control reversing the admission rule, offering entrance to all students regardless of their qualifications, either in public or private universities, in order to ensure that students will continue to affiliate themselves with the Region's dominant political party. This demonstrates that quantity was more important than quality with the acceptance of such a large number of students into the university. This has lowered the standards of the university given that students with poor academic backgrounds are mingled with students who have higher academic averages. The university infrastructure is not developed to accommodate these larger numbers; for example, in the past each class had 30 students in comparison to the 70 students that are currently in one class. A well-established infrastructure can lead to good quality teaching, but much effort is needed to update the teaching resources from the 1970s and 1980s.

7.3.2 Reviewing and Changing Academic Programs

Reviewing and changing academic program is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed. The current academic programs are from the 1960s and the 1970s. These outdated programs are responsible for the poor quality of graduates, unproductive interaction between higher education and society and inadequate academic performance. Although the process of gathering and updating books or creating new research methods and findings is complex, it is not unachievable. There are many different types of research that can be promoted, such as studying highly regarded scholarly materials accessible via the Internet and carrying out field research in their communities that could increase knowledge for communities and for students.

7.3.3 Building Institutional Autonomy to Maintain Good Quality Education

Having good quality education is linked to having good governance, a principle that is also accepted at the international level. Relating this issue to institutional autonomy, at the present moment UKR is not financially, academically or managerially independent. According to Ali (2012), “the role of centralization will affect the clarity of objectives, leveling priorities, service quality, and the whole value of the sector nationally and internationally” (p. 670). A process of decentralization needs to be gradually built into the university structure in order to maintain quality education, since it would allow responsive internal decision-making. Only the university knows what programs need improvement, which academic skills should be developed, how to foster students’ critical thinking and nourish their academic knowledge, as well as how to build strong teacher-student relationship and connections with the community.

7.3.4 Critical Pedagogy; A Practice Needed for Overcoming Long Held Epistemological Beliefs and Teaching Practices

Under the old regime, the absence of democratic traditions and intellectual struggles between fundamentalist and secular forces in the education sector had conditioned academics to be authoritarian and obedient to their government. In turn the academics used authoritarian pedagogy that suppressed their students’ freedom of expression, autonomy and critical thinking. This sense of fear has been internalized from past experiences, where neither teachers nor students ever challenged dogma or expressed critical views nor actively participated in the struggles against the old government. Thus, the road to achieving quality in teaching should focus on reforming traditional teaching methods through Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy, a political and moral practice that offers the knowledge, skills, and social relations that would enable academics and students to discover ways of being critical citizens and participants in a substantive democracy. It will help develop an ability to resist the influence of oppressive

institutions and ideology and learn essential components of how social change can take place. University representatives in the Kurdistan Region need to connect critical pedagogy with the process of democratization and “question what is it they have become within existing institutional and social formations, and give thought to what it means to transform existing relations of subordination and oppression” (Giroux, 2004, p. 35). They need to understand how power functions through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within certain institutional situations. The process of critical pedagogy will enable them to bridge the gap between learning and everyday life, understanding the relationship between power and knowledge, between theory and practice, and building connections between learning and social change. This could make possible a self-reflective understanding of the economic, political, and psychological dimensions of their Region and enable them to construct their own reality through dispositions, issues of freedom and critiquing the questions of why, to what end and in whose interest. This process will help them realize that education is a form of political intervention, and their duty is to take a position against dogmatic ideologies and corrupt government.

To conclude, in order to end conventionalism, internalized suppression, authoritarian pedagogy, and rigid centralization processes, a process of dialogue is needed among all stakeholders as an essential method of helping all members of higher education institutions to coordinate their thoughts and actions through agreement and integration of all ideas. A mutual dialogue starts in the search for programmatic content, such as generative topics and the related methodology (Dheimann, 2003). Saddam’s government suppressed this dialogue as he used “antidialogicity in a variety of ways to maintain the status quo. He conquered the oppressed with an invariably unilateral dialogue, converting the communication process into an act of necrophilia” (Dheimann, 2003, p. 6). Further, the government forced the members of higher education institutions to adapt to the existing conditions without attending to the historical

demands or constructing new and appropriate conditions required by critical thought. Academics, students and other stakeholders were also prevented from uniting through dialogue, a tactic used to ensure conformity to one political ideology without any possibility of resistance. These oppressive conditions were perpetuated through the behaviour of academics towards the teaching and learning process. Therefore, collaboration with mutual understanding and dialogical action among the current government, politicians, the MoHESR, society, academics, administrators, and students is essential for achieving an effective quality teaching. Further, formulating new policies and liberatory educational practices would be best facilitated through Freire's (1993) problem-posing method, where "subjectivity and objectivity thus join in a dialectical unity producing knowledge in solidarity with action, and vice versa" (p. 22). According to Freire (1993), "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 73). In the absence of this kind of dialogue, the current reforms around TQA are not liberating the faculty members from their previous authoritarian approaches to teaching and learning, since all initiatives are imposed on them from above, and have prioritized the notions of competition, choice, and the marketization of the education system for economic gains. This type of central control and management structure tends to treat academics as 'technicians' rather than as 'autonomous professionals' (Fletcher and Qualter, 2009). It is vital to establish ethics based methods and practices of teaching that will be conscious of the social and political context of education. Additionally, there is still a need to encourage new methods of learning, teaching and research that have interactive approaches to education. Changing students and professors' mentality against old hierarchies is necessary in order to foster a sense of learning between them. They need to realize that the process of learning is based on an exchange of knowledge that learners and teachers transfer to each other.

This could be accomplished by promoting student-centered teaching methods and a critical research process. Initiating these steps could lead to scholarly criticism and dedicated action by using the ideas that are formed from this process to develop pioneering new policies that reflect the visions and beliefs of all the stakeholders involved.

Further since the new political system has undergone a democratization process, the members of society and of higher education need to collaborate through a dialogue to end the old power structures that have ruled their lives and formed their consciousness. It is important to understand that Iraq is a bureaucratic country where the government system and administration is classified as a hierarchical one based on complex patterns of law and order. Therefore understanding how the Kurdistan Region receives the idea of change and to what degree they apply it to their systems is imperative, since centralized governments do not approve the idea of change quickly, as they may potentially face problems with meeting the demands of the global market (Ali, 2012). The process of change must start within the government structure and administration moving towards minimizing bureaucracy and hierarchy, such that other areas become decentralized and make progress (Newy, 2012). This area of research could investigate the extent to which the government in Kurdistan has restructured its management bodies and infrastructure to accommodate to the needs of the new reforms such as quality assurance. Further, for the Region to cope with globalization tendencies, it should first build its own national quality assurance before introducing international quality assurance processes.

The last most important step is to develop a way of thinking that is not just based on the present or past experiences, but instead enters into a critical dialogue with history and imagines a future that will do more than recreate the present.

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Appendices: Documents from Ethics Review Protocol

Appendix A: Sample Questions for Open-Ended Interviews

For Officials in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

1. What position do you currently hold with the Ministry? What was your occupational history prior to this?
2. Can you give me any historical comment on Kurdistan's Higher Education system during Saddam's regime? How different is the new system from the previous one?
3. How have the international organizations assisted in formulating the new policy?
4. The first priority of the new policy focuses on bridging the gap between quality and quantity of higher education. How are you promoting a culture of quality within institutions of higher education? What are the main elements of such a culture?
5. How can different institutions deal with these elements? Do they need a different type of leadership, and a more decentralized, dialogic and democratic style of management?
6. The third priority of the new policy focuses on making universities completely autonomous. In what ways do you think university independence will impact the quality of higher education?
7. Would you agree that the new policy's goals are more concerned with economic integration than political and cultural cohesion?
8. What tools are used for self-assessment? Who will supervise the processes of assuring quality control efforts?
9. How are the academics encouraged to question their long held epistemological beliefs and teaching practices? What type of resources and training have they received to help them develop new sets of values, knowledge, and pedagogical methods?
10. Are quality teaching initiatives taken by the institution collectively (i.e. top-down approach) or by the academics (i.e. bottom-up approach)?
11. Who will take ownership of the process enhancing quality mechanisms and procedures? How will a sense of ownership among the staff be created to motivate them to side with institutional goals

For University Representatives involved in the Implementation of the new Policy

A) Background

- 1) What is your education background? Where did you receive your degree?
- 2) How long have you been working in this university?

B) Change: looking at how the new culture of quality is implemented in curriculum and pedagogy

- 1) How do you feel about the quality of education at your institution during Saddam's period?
How different is it now?
- 2) The first priority of the new policy focuses on bridging the gap between quality and quantity of higher education:

- A) Have you implemented the quality assurance criteria? Do you think it is more decentralized and democratic in its management? Is it more concerned with economic integration than political and cultural cohesion?
- B) Does your faculty or department meet challenge of external audit, assessment, or accreditation?
- C) Are the quality assurance standards addressing the recurring issues in higher education such as teaching, curriculum, equity, accessibility, institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and private vs. public university structures?
- D) What level of autonomy does your university have in program planning? How do you see this process going in operational terms?

C) Tools: looking at the type of methods adapted into teaching, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

- 1) What approach do you take to ensure and measure quality education? What are the key outcome indicators?
 - A) What methods do you use for self-assessment?
 - B) Who supervises the process of assuring quality control efforts?
- 2) What type of professional development training and resources have you received to help you develop new sets of values, knowledge, and pedagogical methods that will contribute to the culture of quality within your faculty?
 - A) Has this training or resource questioned your long held epistemological beliefs and teaching practices? Has it shifted you away from the traditional methods of instruction?

B) Are you encouraged to establish specific research goals as well as to improve research quality to achieve a long-term growth in your program?

3) Is the new curriculum more focused on research vs. teaching?

A) Does it believe in 1. **qualification** contributing to economic wellbeing and employability, 2. **Socialization** into the professional world, and 3. **Individualization** contributing to the development of human autonomy?

B) Does it stimulate intellectual debate and critical enquiry; encourages creativity and vision; and engenders confidence and commitment?

D) Impact: Looking at the reaction of academics to quality assurance and monitoring regimes, if they adopt, resist, make or shape policy on quality.

1) What does “quality” education means to you?

2) What is your perception and operational assumptions on the development of quality culture at your institution? Is it targeting important areas for improvement?

3) How do you see quality assurance? How is it affecting your day to day at the university?

4) Do you think institutional autonomy should be granted to your university in order to maintain good quality education? Why or why not?

Appendix B: Sample Questions for Survey

The Development and Implementation of the new Quality Culture in Teaching & Curriculum

Survey Questions Designed by Namam Palander, an MA student from the University of Toronto

تطوير وتنفيذ ثقافة نوعية جديدة في التدريس والمناهج الدراسية
أسئلة الاستطلاع تصميم نامام بلندر: طالبة ماجستير

1. Were you a professor at the UKR before the year 2003?
a) Yes
b) No

قبل عام 2003 هل كنت أستاذًا أو أستاذ مساعد في UKR?
أ) نعم
ب) لا

2. How would you rate the quality of education **before** the year 2003?
a) Outstanding
b) Above Average
c) Average
d) Below Average
e) Poor
f) Unable to rate

كيف تقيم نوعية التعليم قبل عام 2003؟
أ) ممتاز
ب) جيد جدا
ج) جيد
د) متوسط
هـ) مقبول
و) ضعيف

3. How would you rate the quality of education **after** the year 2003?
a) Outstanding
b) Above Average
c) Average
d) Below Average
e) Poor
f) Unable to rate

كيف تقيم نوعية التعليم بعد عام 2003؟
أ) ممتاز
ب) جيد جدا
ج) جيد
د) متوسط
هـ) مقبول
و) ضعيف

4. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has made changes to their policy. Do you support the first priority, which focuses on bridging the gap between quality and quantity of higher education?
a) Yes
b) No

- c) Not familiar with this change
- d) Unable to answer

4. حققت وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي تغييرات على منهجها. هل تؤيد الأولوية الأولى، والتي تركز على سد الفجوة بين النوعية والكمية في التعليم العالي؟

أ) نعم

ب) لا

ج) لم تكن مألوفة مع هذا التغيير

د) غير قادر على الرد

5. What is the main focus of the new quality culture in your university?

- a) Economic integration
- b) Political and cultural cohesion
- c) All the above
- d) None of the above
- e) Unable to answer

5. ما هو التركيز الأساسي لضمان الجودة في جامعتك؟

أ) التكامل الاقتصادي

ب) التماسك السياسي والثقافي

ج) جميع ما ذكر أعلاه

د) لا شيء مما سبق

هـ) غير قادر على الرد

6. Have you implemented quality assurance criteria into your teaching, such as course objectives, evaluation, and course book?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not familiar with the new criteria
- d) Unable to answer

6. هل نفذت معايير لضمان الجودة في التعليم الخاص، مثل أهداف الدورة، والتقييم، و الكتاب الدورة؟

أ) نعم

ب) لا

ج) لم تكن مألوفة مع المعايير الجديدة

د) غير قادر على الرد

7. Are the new quality assurance criteria more decentralized and democratic in its management?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unable to answer

7. هل ضمان جودة المعايير لجديدة أكثر الديمقراطية في ادارته؟

أ) نعم

ب) لا

ج) غير قادر على الرد

8. Which of the following quality assurance procedures do you agree with (please select one or select multiple):

- a) Self-assessment

- c) Peer-review
- d) External assessor
- e) Continuous Academic Development
- f) None of the above

يهما تفضل

أ) التقييم الذاتي

ب) تقييم طالب للاستاذ

ج) تقييم الاستاذ للاستاذ

د) تقييم الزوار

ه) تقييم الخارجى للجامعهومناهجها

و) لا شيء مما سبق

9. Which of the following recurring issues have the quality assurance standards been addressing?
(Please select one or select multiple)

- a) Teaching
- b) Curriculum
- c) Research
- d) Accessibility
- e) Institutional autonomy
- f) Academic freedom
- g) Private vs. public university structures
- h) None of the above

يرجى اختيار واي امور تركز عليها اكثر ضمان الجودة؟ 9.

أ) التدريس

ب) المنهج

ج) الإنصاف والصحة

د) سهولة الوصول

ه) استقلال المؤسسة

و) الحرية الأكاديمية

ز) هيبهمقابل الاهليه

ح) لا شيء مما سبق

10. Is your faculty or department autonomous in its program planning?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unable to answer

هل كلية أو قسم مستقل فى تخطيط برنامجها؟ 10.

أ) نعم

ب) لا

ج) غير قادر على الرد

11. Please state the type of professional development training and resources you have received to help you develop new sets of values, knowledge, and pedagogical methods that will contribute to the new quality culture within your faculty.

11. ماهى نوع التدريب المقيم على التنمية المهنية والموارد التي حصلت عليها لمساعدتك على تطوير مجموعة جديدة من القيم والمعارف والأساليب التربوية التي من شأنها أن تسهم في نوعية جديدة في قسمك.

12. Have these trainings and resources challenged your traditional teaching methods?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unable to answer

12. هل المناهج الجديدة حاثرت على التدريبات وطرق التدريس التقليدية الخاصة بك؟

أ) نعم

ب) لا

ج) غير قادر على الرد

13. What is the main focus of the new curriculum?

- a) Teaching
- b) Research
- c) All the above
- d) None of the above

13. ما هو المحور الرئيسي في المناهج الدراسية الجديدة؟

أ) تدريس

ب) البحوث

ج) جميع ما ذكر أعلاه

د) لا شيء مما سبق

14. Which of the following category(ies) does the new curriculum or teaching contribute to (*please select one or select multiple*):

- a) Qualification for economic wellbeing and employability
- b) Socialization into the professional world
- c) Individualization for the development of human autonomy
- d) All the above
- e) None of the above

14. هل السلطات او المنهج الجديد وطرق التدريس ساهم فى (.)

أ) التأهيل للرفاهية الاقتصادية وفرص العمل

ب) التنشئة الاجتماعية في العالم المهني

ج) تفريد لتطوير الاستقلال الإنسان

د) كل ما سبق

ه) لا شيء مما سبق

15. Does the new curriculum or way of teaching contribute to any of following category(ies)
(please select one or select multiple):

- a) Intellectual debate and critical thinking
- b) Creativity and vision
- c) Confidence, commitment and independent
- d) All the above
- e) None of the above

15. هل المنهج الجديد أو طريقة التدريس المساهمة في أي من الفئات التالية.

أ) مناقشة الفكرية والتفكير النقدي

ب) الإبداع والرؤية

ج) والثقة والالتزام ومستقلة

د) كل ما سبق

هـ) لا شيء مما سبق

16. How would you rate the overall development and implementation of quality assurance procedures?

- a) Outstanding
- b) Above Average
- c) Average
- d) Below Average
- e) Poor
- f) Unable to rate

16. ماهو تقييمك للتمهية الشامله وتنفيذها لضمان الجودة ,وييار مايلي.

أ) ممتاز

ب) جيد جدا

ج) جيد

د) متوسط

هـ) مقبول

و) ضعيف

17. What does “quality” education means to you?

17. ماذا يعنى نوعيه تعليم بنسبه لك؟

18. What is your perception and operational assumptions on the development of quality culture at your institution? Is it targeting important areas for improvement?
ما هو تصورك الخاص والافتراضات التشغيلية تطوير ثقافتها الجوده فى مؤسستك؟ هل يستهدف المناطق المهمه لتحسين؟

19. How do you see quality assurance? How is it affecting your day to day at the university?
يف هى نصرتك لضمان الجوده؟ وما تأثيرها عليك يوم بعده يوم فى الجامعه؟

20. Do you think institutional autonomy should be granted to your university in order to maintain good quality education? Why or why not?
هل استقلال الجامعه تاتر على نوعيه تعليم؟ او تحفضها على نوعيه تعليم جيد؟

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dear <Name of Official>,

My name is Namam Palander, and I am a Master of Arts student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to ask your consent to participate in an interview for my research study on Kurdistan's new Higher Education policy. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ruth Hayhoe.

Kurdistan's new Higher Education policy is one of the many positive developments that are taking place in this region. My study will look at one of the primary goals of the policy that is geared towards improving the standards and quality of universities in order to meet the demands of the current market economy and engage in international competitiveness. I am very interested in finding out more about it, to fill a gap in the scholarly literature and help the international academic community gain a better understanding of Kurdistan's new Higher Education goals and initiatives.

Your expertise is of interest to my study since the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research initiated this policy, and your office administers it. It would be very helpful to my study if I could interview you in person for thirty minutes to an hour during <suggested time>, to understand more about the history and the current policy of Kurdistan's Higher Education. Your voluntary participation would be greatly appreciated.

Please see the attached consent form with information about the types of questions I will ask, how I will keep your participation confidential and private, and opportunities for debriefing the results of the study.

If you agree to an interview, please sign the consent form and a copy will also be provided for your records.

Thank you for your consideration,

Namam Palander
Master of Arts Candidate
Humanities, Social Sciences & Social Justice Education
Comparative, International and Development Education Program
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
519-722-6863
namampalander@gmail.com

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dear <Name of Official>,

My name is Namam Palander, and I am a Master of Education student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to ask your consent to participate in an interview for my research study on Kurdistan's new Higher Education policy. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ruth Hayhoe.

The study will look at the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives with regard to the new higher education policy-making in Kurdistan. It will explore the development and implementation of the policy's first priority, the aim to bridge the gap between quality and quantity in higher education.

To better understand how this policy works, I would like to interview you to understand better the policy rationale and the policy-building process. This interview will last between thirty minutes to an hour, and taken place in your office or a location of your choice. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may request to withdraw from the interview or decline to answer at any time. At no time will you be judged or evaluated, and be at risk of harm. It is the intention that each interview will be audio-taped and later transcribed to paper. You may request the transcript of the interview or the copy of the study.

The data collected from the interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored in encrypted files on my computer. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data. Any information gathered will be used for the purpose of a Master's thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. All raw data, such as transcripts and field notes, will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. Your name will not be disclosed in any publication, but quotes may be attributed to "an official in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research".

Participation in this study can benefit your organization in the opportunity it provides to reflect on the new policy. The data collected will fill a gap in the scholarly literature and assist the international academic community in understanding Kurdistan's new Higher Education policy. This could create pathways for collaboration with universities and research centers in other parts of the world. After the completion of the study, I will make the final thesis available to you electronically. If you consent to an interview, please sign the consent form provided below. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Ruth Hayhoe. Her contact information is as follows:

Professor Ruth Hayhoe,
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 6th Floor
University of Toronto
252 Bloor St. West
Toronto, ON M5S 1V6
Tel: 561-265-0886
ruth-hayhoe@sympatico.ca

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you can contact the Ethics Review Office at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

My contact information is below. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Namam Palander
Masters of Arts Candidate
Humanities, Social Sciences & Social Justice Education
Comparative, International and Development Education Program
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
519-722-6863
namampalander@gmail.com

By signing below, <official> consents to the researcher conducting an interview. <Official> has received a copy of this letter, and it is fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: _____
Position: _____
Signed: _____ Date: _____

I consent to this interview being recorded: []
Please send me a summary of the findings upon completion of the study: []
Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dear <Name of president/vice-president>,

My name is Namam Palander, and I am a Master of Arts student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to ask your consent to let your staff participate in an interview for my research study on Kurdistan's new Higher Education policy. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ruth Hayhoe.

My study will look at one of the primary goals of the new Higher Education policy that is geared towards improving the standards and quality of universities. I am very interested to find out what the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives are with regard to this new policy-making. Sharing their views will help reflect on how the policy is playing out at your institution as well as identify potential gaps that exist in the policy and ways these could be addressed.

This letter is to request your consent to collect data by interviewing staff and faculty members at your university. I am interested in interviewing five people who are administrators and faculty members to provide institutional perspectives on the new policy. The interviews will take place in the individuals' office or at a location of their choice. The interviews will last between thirty minutes and an hour. I welcome any assistance you may give me in identifying suitable interviewees.

Please see the attached consent form with information about the types of questions I will ask, how I will keep your participation confidential and private, and opportunities for debriefing the results of the study.

If you agree to let your staff participate in this research, please sign the consent form and a copy will also be provided for your records.

Thank you for your consideration,

Namam Palander
Master of Arts Candidate
Humanities, Social Sciences & Social Justice Education
Comparative, International and Development Education Program
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
519-722-6863
namampalander@gmail.com

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dear <Name of president/vice-president>,

My name is Namam Palander, and I am a Master of Arts student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to ask your consent for members of your university to participate in some interviews for my research study on Kurdistan's new Higher Education policy. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ruth Hayhoe.

The study will look at the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives with regard to the new higher education policy-making in Kurdistan. It will explore the development and implementation of the policy's first priority, the aim to bridge the gap between quality and quantity in higher education. For your information, institutional consent form is already obtained from the president or vice-president of the university. It is completely your own choice whether you would like to participate or not, and I will not inform the president or vice-president of the university who has signed the informed consent or anybody else about your decision.

This letter is to request your consent to collect data by interviewing staff and faculty members at your university. I am interested in interviewing five people who are administrators and faculty members to provide institutional perspectives on the new policy. The interviews will take place in the individuals' office or at a location of their choice. The interviews will last between thirty minutes and an hour.

Participation in this study will give the university representatives an opportunity to share their perceptions and operational assumptions regarding the new Higher Education policy-making in Kurdistan region. Sharing their views will help reflect on how the policy is playing out at your institution as well as identify potential gaps that exist in the policy and ways these could be addressed. The research will also offer participants the opportunity to articulate their role in the university and provide feedback on how to develop new modes of thinking appropriate to the current global environment. The data collected will also fill a gap in the scholarly literature and assist the international academic community in understanding Kurdistan's new higher Education policy. This should create pathways for collaboration with universities and research centers in other parts of the world.

The identities of the interview participants will be kept anonymous, and the university itself will not be identified. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the transcripts of the interviews. The participants will be notified that no value judgments will be placed on their responses. Participation is completely voluntary, and they can request to withdraw from the interview or decline to answer at any time.

The information collected from the interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored

in an encrypted file on my computer. All data gathered will be used for the purpose of a Master's thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. All raw data such as transcripts and field notes will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

If your organization consents to allow me to carry on these interviews, please sign the consent form provided below. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Ruth Hayhoe. Her contact information is as follows:

Professor Ruth Hayhoe,
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 6th Floor
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252 Bloor St. West
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Tel: 561-265-0886
ruth-hayhoe@sympatico.ca

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you can contact the Ethics Review Office at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

My contact information is below. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Namam Palander
Master of Arts Candidate
Humanities, Social Sciences & Social Justice Education
Comparative, International and Development Education Program
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
519-722-6863
namampalander@gmail.com

By signing below, <University president or vice-president> is willing to allow the researcher to conduct interviews with faculty and staff of <university> during <dates>. <University president or vice-president> has received a copy of this letter, and is fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: _____
Position: _____
Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.

Please send me a summary of the findings upon completion of the study: []

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dear <Name of Administrator>,

My name is Namam Palander, and I am a Master of Arts student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to ask your consent to participate in an interview for my research study on Kurdistan's new Higher Education policy. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ruth Hayhoe.

My study will look at one of the primary goals of the new Higher Education policy that aims to improve the standards and quality of universities. I am very interested to find out what your perceptions and operational assumptions are with regard to this new policy-making. Sharing your views will help reflect on how the policy is playing out at your institution as well as identify potential gaps that exist in the policy and ways these could be addressed.

This letter is to request your consent to participate in this study. The interview will take place in your office or at a location of your choice. The interview will last between thirty minutes and an hour. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may request to withdraw from the interview or decline to answer at any time.

Please see the attached consent form with information about the types of questions I will ask, how I will keep your participation confidential and private, and opportunities for debriefing the results of the study.

If you agree to an interview, please sign the consent form and a copy will also be provided for your records.

Thank you for your consideration,

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To better understand how this policy works, I would like to interview you about the institution's involvement with the implementation of the new policy. I am interested to see what your perceptions and operational assumptions are on the new Higher Education policy-making in your region. This interview will last between thirty minutes to an hour, and take place in your office or a location of your choice. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may request to withdraw from the interview or decline to answer at any time. At no time will you be judged or evaluated, or be at risk of any harm. It is the intention that each interview will be audio-taped and later transcribed to paper. You may request a transcript of the interview or a copy of the study.

The data collected from the interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored in encrypted files on my computer. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data. Any information gathered will be used for the purpose of a Master's thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. All raw data such as transcripts and field notes will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. I will not be identifying you or your university in any of my publications. I will only describe few features of the university, and refer to you by letter such as "administrator A from university 1 said...".

Participation in this study will give the university representatives an opportunity to share their perceptions and operational assumptions regarding the new Higher Education policy-making in Kurdistan region. Sharing their views will help reflect on how the policy is playing out at their institution as well as identify potential gaps that exist in the policy and ways these could be

addressed. The research will also offer participants the opportunity to articulate their role in the university and provide feedback on how to develop new modes of thinking appropriate to the current global environment. The data collected will also fill a gap in the scholarly literature and assist the international academic community in understanding Kurdistan's new higher Education policy. This should create pathways for collaboration with universities and research centers in other parts of the world. After the completion of the study, I will make the final research paper available to you electronically.

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Name: _____
Position: _____
Signed: _____ Date: _____

I consent to this interview being recorded: []
Please send me a summary of the findings upon completion of the study: []
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OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dear <Name of Professor>,

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Master of Arts Candidate
Humanities, Social Sciences & Social Justice Education
Comparative, International and Development Education Program
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
519-722-6863
namampalander@gmail.com

By signing below, <professor> consents to the researcher conducting an interview.
<professor> has received a copy of this letter, and it is fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: _____
Position: _____
Signed: _____ Date: _____

I consent to this interview being recorded: []
Please send me a summary of the findings upon completion of the study: []
Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dear

My name is Namam Palander, and I am a Master of Arts student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to ask your consent to participate in a survey for my research study on Kurdistan's new Higher Education policy. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ruth Hayhoe.

The study will look at the perceptions and operational assumptions of university representatives with regard to the new higher education policy-making in Kurdistan. It will explore the development and implementation of the policy's first priority, the aim to bridge the gap between quality and quantity in higher education. For your information, institutional consent form is already obtained from the president or vice-president of the university. It is completely your own choice whether you would like to participate or not, and I will not inform the president or vice-president of the university who has signed the informed consent or anybody else about your decision.

To better understand how this policy works, this survey will look at your institution's involvement with the implementation of the new policy. I am interested to look at your perception and operational assumptions in regard to what type of quality culture in higher education is encouraged. This survey will last between fifteen to thirty minutes, and can take place in your office or a location of your choice. Participation is completely voluntary, and at anytime you may request to withdraw from the survey or decline to answer. As well, at no time will you be judged or evaluated, and be at risk of harm. It is the intention that the data gathered from survey will be analyzed in my thesis and a copy of the study can be requested.

The data collected from the survey will be kept in strict confidence and stored in encrypted files on my computer. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data. Any information gathered will be used for the purpose of a Master's thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. All raw data such as transcripts and field notes will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. I will not be identifying you or your university in any of my publications. I will only describe few features of the university, and refer to you by letter such as "professor A from university 1 said...".

Participation in this study will give you an opportunity to share your perception and operational assumptions regarding the new Higher Education policy-making in Kurdistan region. Sharing your views will help understand if your institution's quality culture is serving as a bridge for Kurdistan to the global knowledge economy. It will also identify potential gaps that exist in the policy and ways these could be addressed. The research will also offer you the opportunity to articulate your role in the university and provide feedback on how to develop new modes of thinking appropriate to the current global environment. The data collected will also fill a gap in the scholarly literature and assist the international academic community in understanding Kurdistan's new Higher Education policy. This should create pathways for collaboration with

universities and research centers in other parts of the world. After the completion of the study, I will make the final research paper available to you electronically. If you consent to the survey, please sign the consent form provided below. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Ruth Hayhoe. Her contact information is as follows:

Professor Ruth Hayhoe,
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 6th Floor
University of Toronto
252 Bloor St. West
Toronto, ON M5S 1V6
Tel: 561-265-0886
ruth-hayhoe@sympatico.ca

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you can contact the Ethics Review Office at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

My contact information is below. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,
Namam Palander
Master of Arts Candidate
Humanities, Social Sciences & Social Justice Education
Comparative, International and Development Education Program
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
519-722-6863
namampalander@gmail.com

Please sign below if you consent to the researcher conducting a survey as well as you have received a copy of this letter and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please send me a summary of the findings upon completion of the study: []

Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.

Appendix L: Ethics Approval



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, RESEARCH

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 27476

March 28, 2012

Dr. Ruth Hayhoe
OISE/UT: DEPT. OF THEORY & POLICY
STUDIES IN EDUC.
OISE/UT

Ms. Namam Palander
OISE/UT: DEPT. OF THEORY & POLICY
STUDIES IN EDUC.
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Hayhoe and Ms. Namam Palander,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Higher education policy-building in Kurdistan: Perceptions of university representatives"

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: March 28, 2012

Expiry Date: March 27, 2013

Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB's delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of **one year** and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Schneider, Ph.D.,
C.Psych
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe, Ph.D.
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS

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