

**Exploring Challenges and Opportunities for High-Level Integration of  
TQM into Saudi Arabian Public Universities  
: A Qualitative Exploratory Study**

*By*  
*Mubarak A M Alhamami*

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## **Abstract**

This qualitative exploratory study seeks to explore and identify the challenges and opportunities for the high-level integration of critical success factors (CSFs) derived from total quality management (TQM) to promote quality practices for improvement in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities. In this qualitative study, multiple universities were employed as the source of the primary data to investigate the topic. Specifically, three public universities in the Saudi Arabian higher education sector were chosen for this qualitative exploratory research study, which involved fieldwork. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with study participants across the three universities were the main instrument for the collection of relevant data. In total, 29 in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with quality developers, including both male and female quality deanship personnel, across the three universities. The data collected were then analysed thematically, using both deductive and inductive approaches underpinned by Yin's five-phase approach for analysing research study data. The tools available in NVivo 12 software package were used to assist the analysis, which included organising, coding and navigating through the study data. The findings of the current study highlight both the external and internal drivers contributing to the initiation of quality development strategies and plans in these three universities, to enable the greater integration of quality values for quality improvement and excellence. The findings also uncover barriers to quality development, including both managerial and people-related challenges, that have hindered the achievement of the high-level integration of TQM CSFs, which has made the adoption and practices of quality values and tools such a challenging task in these public universities. The implications of the current study findings will be valuable for leadership and quality developers in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities to assist them to capitalise on the opportunities available and optimise their approaches to overcoming barriers

to promote the high-level integration of TQM values and practices to create a quality culture in these educational institutions. Furthermore, suggestions are provided for future research studies focusing on the application of the TQM philosophy in universities.

## **Doctor of Philosophy Declaration**

“I, Mubarak Alhamami, declare that the PhD thesis entitled “Exploring Challenges and Opportunities for the High-Level Integration of TQM into Saudi Arabian Public Universities: A Qualitative Exploratory Study” is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”.

I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University’s Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

### **Ethical Declaration**

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC) (Application number HRE19-174).

Signature

29 December 2023

  
Mubarak A M Alhamami

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## List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full term
ABEF	Australian Business Excellence Framework
AQC	Australian Quality Council
CSF	Critical Success Factors
DQAA	Deanship of Quality and Academic Accreditation
DQSD	Deanship of Quality and Skills Development
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
IABF	Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal
KASP	King Abdullah Scholarship Program
KFU	King Faisal University
KPIs	Key performance indicators
MBNQA	The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
NCAAA	National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment
NUL	New Universities Law
QA	Quality assurance
TQM	Total Quality Management
VUHREC	Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the reader to the research topic by detailing the study background and explaining the main issues and aspects concerning the development of a quality-oriented culture in higher education institution (HEI) sector in Saudi Arabia. Section 1.1 discusses how new paradigms of thinking are vital for managing a quality culture, involving high-level implementation of the total quality management (TQM) philosophy for universities. Section 1.2 addresses the reasons which motivated this qualitative exploratory study. In Section 1.3, the overarching research question is introduced, followed by the sub-questions. In Section 1.4, the research aims and objectives are detailed, followed by a brief outline of the methodology and data collection strategy in Section 1.5. The significance, contribution, originality, and scope of the current study are presented in Section 1.6. The definitions of the TQM philosophy are introduced in section 1.7, and the assumptions made in the current study are provided in Section 1.8. An explanation of the thesis structure is given in Section 1.9 and finally the critical points introduced in this chapter are summarised in Section 1.10.

## **1.1 Background**

The Saudi Arabian Government has invested heavily in the education sector, which has resulted in the rapid growth of universities since the mid-2000s. In the last 16 years, the number of HEIs has more than trebled, with 29 public and 10 private universities currently operating in the country. Despite the regional political and economic instability and fluctuating oil prices, the Saudi Government continues to fund the education sector, including public universities, which receive one of the largest shares of annual budget expenditure. For some years, education and training in Saudi Arabia have received a third of the national budget: US\$53.9 billion in 2014, US\$55.5 billion in 2015 and US\$57.3 billion in 2016. This spending on education as a percentage of the total budget, according to Ghulam and Mousa (2019), is higher than in other

countries, such as the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, France and Japan, which spend around 10–15% of their total government budget on education. A recent study by Alam, Singh and Singh (2022) found that the Saudi Arabian Government's spending on education and other service sectors increased significantly from 16.7% to 30.7% in the last three decades.

Universities in the country are viewed as key contributors to the economic development and prosperity of the nation (Smith & Abouammoh 2013; Ministry of Education 2020; Pavan 2017) and enhancing the quality of universities is crucial if they are to meet the new demands made of them for the good of the nation. Moreover, the role of contemporary universities extends beyond teaching-related tasks to include the creation of social awareness, advanced research, greater business and entrepreneurial awareness and innovations (Mousa & Ghulam 2019). Nowadays, the HEI sector in Saudi Arabia plays a vital role in not only increasing the employability and skills of the country's citizens but also in closing the gap between skills and productivity, and most importantly, fulfilling the requirements of the government's transformational Vision 2030 (Ministry of Education 2020; Vision 2030).

Vision 2030 is the country's economic strategy that was launched a few years ago as the basis for far-reaching economic and social reforms, creating new markets and industries that did not exist previously, placing the country on a new economic and social footing, and weaning it from its decades-long dependence on oil (Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 2016; Ministry of Education 2020; Pavan 2017; Mousa & Ghulam 2019). Therefore, universities are expected to play significant roles in achieving the goals of Vision 2030, and their ability to do so largely depends on improving the quality of their management systems. To ensure quality improvement in HEIs in Saudi Arabia, the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) was established to guide and assist universities in improving their



quality (Alsaleh 2016; Jamal Al-Lail & Mohamed 2019; Sitalakshmi 2007; Ministry of Education 2020). According to Al-Lail and Mohamed (2019), the NCAAA was established with quality standards that touch on significant quality aspects and ensure that universities throughout the country continue improving their quality by adhering to predetermined standards. However, ensuring quality and developing a quality-oriented culture in public universities is still a relatively new concept. Nonetheless, it remains a central issue of discussion in the country's higher education (HE) sector (Alsaleh 2016; Pavan 2017; Jamal Al-Lail & Mohamed 2019; Mousa & Ghulam 2019).

Although concerted attempts have led to what we are witnessing today in the growth of the sector and the increasing number of universities, Pavan (2017 p. 12) stated that 'the time has come for Saudi Arabia to shift from quantity to quality in its approaches to education'. In alignment with this, a systematic review study conducted by Prakash (2018) to understand the meaning of quality in HEIs identified Saudi Arabia as a developing country that is lacking research studies on quality in the HE sector. Alsaleh (2016) also argued that, despite the national quality model for quality improvements and the focus of the NCAAA on addressing quality standards, there is still a lack of focus on other areas such as leadership, strategic planning, partnership and a quality culture, which are requirements of Saudi universities. Several researchers such as Bendermacher et al. (2017), Bouranta et al. (2019), Carnerud and Bäckström (2021), Dahlgaard et al. (2019), Fredriksson and Isaksson (2016), Psomas and Antony (2017), van Kemenade and Hardjono (2019) and Wu (2015) stated that in the pursuit of quality development and excellence, the focus should be on the values needed to build a quality culture.

TQM as a philosophy has been adopted by universities to develop a quality culture that can cater for long-term requirements (Aly & Akpovi 2001; Khan, Malik & Janjua 2019; Zabadi

2013). According to Jamal Al-Lail and Mohamed (2019) and Prakash (2018), the philosophy of TQM has been accepted by several universities to improve their operations because it encompasses the processes needed to make this happen. In the HE sector, the philosophy of TQM now includes values that universities develop to ensure meaningful cultural change for quality development (Bendermacher et al. 2019; Bendermacher et al. 2017; Bouranta et al. 2019; Carnerud & Bäckström 2021; Lycke & Tano 2017; 2019; Jamal Al-Lail & Mohamed 2019; Sattler & Sonntag 2018; Zwain, Lim & Othman 2017). Nonetheless, the application of TQM can encounter challenges associated with pre-existing cultures and/or routines that have become habitual for organisations and lead to some resistance against the concept (Bouranta et al. 2019; Markowitsch 2018; Rodriguez, Valenzuela & Ayuyao 2018; van Kemenade & Hardjono 2019; Wu 2015; Zabadi 2013). Although TQM has its own set of values that are adopted for driving changes and improving quality in organisations (Markowitsch 2018), its application, according to Zabadi (2013), has its own set of challenges because pre-existing ‘ways of doing things’ in these institutions influence or prevent the implementation of this philosophy. Therefore, as the introduction of the TQM philosophy implies a sweeping cultural change, universities that intend to adopt or are already implementing it need to develop a well-grounded understanding of TQM as a philosophy, identifying the challenges that may hinder its acceptance and explore the forces promoting its values. An advanced understanding of the TQM philosophical aspects seems essential to make the necessary adjustments in an organisation to accommodate its values to nurture quality development and promote better quality improvements in that organisational setting.

Therefore, by examining the lived experiences of quality developers who work on quality improvement, this study explores the challenges and opportunities for the high-level integration of the critical success factors (CSFs) derived from the TQM philosophy in Saudi public universities. The valuable recommendations made by the current research will enable quality

developers in these public educational institutions to understand the inherent challenges preventing the achievement of the high-level integration of these TQM CSFs. Furthermore, the study explores the drivers that present opportunities to promote quality initiatives engaging TQM values and practices in the setting of Saudi Arabian public universities. Hence, the insights derived from this research study will support university leadership and quality developers in implementing practical measures to address the challenges, promote widespread acceptance of quality improvement initiatives and facilitate the integration of TQM values, thereby fostering a quality culture within these public universities. Theoretically, the study attempts to make up for the lack of research on the topic of quality improvement in HEIs in Saudi Arabia and address the research gap to enhance the level of understanding of the TQM philosophy beyond perceiving it solely as a set of controlling tools.

In the past, much of the emphasis on TQM was on how to master this theory as an instrument for quality control, assurance and measurement, especially in manufacturing industries. However, now it is time for public universities in Saudi Arabia to take advantage and progress by embracing TQM as a philosophy beyond the meaning of it as tools for quality control or measurement. Instead, they must strategically drive cultural change through the high-level integration of this philosophy, its values and practices. Thus, this study will carefully and thoroughly review the literature to explore the CSFs that institute the TQM philosophy core values and investigate the barriers preventing the high-level integration of these TQM CSFs in Saudi Arabian public universities. Furthermore, forces that may have already triggered initiatives promoting adoption or pushed for TQM CSFs normalisation in these public universities will be explored.

For this thesis, a conceptual framework was devised to establish parameters to explore the challenges and opportunities available for promoting the high-level integration of TQM CSFs

in public universities in Saudi Arabia. Zabadi (2013) argued that TQM does not easily resonate in the HE sector, in which excellence and quality development is achieved only when a high-level implementation strategy for TQM is in place. Therefore, on the basis of these insights, a new framework was formulated for the current study, in which the sum of values that stem from the literature on TQM, called CSFs, have been thoroughly identified and incorporated to formulate the conceptual framework for the current study (see Section 3.3). The existing challenges and prompting drivers related to these selected CSFs will be explored and presented to promote the high-level integration of these CSFs in the context of public universities to achieve quality culture improvement and excellence. Although previous attempts have been made to raise the standards of the country's universities, to the best of the author's knowledge, no specific attempt has been made to explore the contemporary challenges faced by Saudi Arabian public universities when attempting to adopt TQM CSFs, nor the forces that hold significance for promoting high-level integration of values and practices derived from the TQM philosophy with the aim of fostering quality improvements in the context of the country's public universities.

For the first time, this study brings the views of quality deanship personnel to the fore, namely the quality deans, vice-deans, quality consultants and managers (both men and women) and how they view the TQM philosophy and its place in the country's public universities. To conclude, in addition to identifying the drivers that promote the initiation of strategies and plans for quality development, the current study explores the challenges faced in achieving the high-level integration of the TQM philosophy to create a quality-oriented culture in public universities. Thus, this thesis seeks to enhance orientations towards continuous quality improvement in Saudi Arabian public universities by better understanding TQM as a philosophy to drive change and development.

## **1.2 Motivation**

The main motivation for the current study is the unprecedented pressure placed on universities, particularly the public institutions, after the promulgation of Vision 2030 in April 2016 and the newly announced New Universities Law (NUL) in 2019. New expectations and demands have been placed on universities—public ones in particular—to adopt a new paradigm of thinking to reshape an effective strategy that focuses on quality development (Pavan 2017). Quality development in organisations entails large-scale change, for which quality control and quality assurance measurements alone cannot make the transformation development required in the HE sector. Universities throughout the country cannot continue operating under the existing traditional system and simultaneously live up to the ambitious roadmap of Vision 2030, which invokes the Saudi Government’s long-term goals for economic diversification and social reform (Pavan 2017; Jamal Al-Lail & Mohamed 2019; Ministry of Education 2020). The universities and, again, the public ones in the HE sector particularly, need to navigate between specific contexts, industries and services to develop new approaches to meet the new demands and cope with the challenges introduced to ensure their survival, sustainable growth and the continuous improvement of quality. For this reason, the researcher was motivated to explore the philosophy of TQM beyond its means as an instrument of quality control and measurement in the country’s public universities (Glaveli, Vouzas & Roumeliotou 2021; Oluwafemi & Laseinde 2020). This research aims to examine this philosophy to effect change in the way quality in these public educational institutions is managed and thereby improve the level of understanding of TQM. This study proposes using the TQM philosophy to change how universities operate and continuously improve quality to maintain their growth and development.

Another motivation was discovering a lack of research studies on the topic of TQM and quality improvement in the HE sector. TQM as a philosophy for quality improvement is still

undeveloped in the country's public university context. Therefore, it will be interesting to explore TQM as a philosophy beyond its means as an instrument for quality control and measurement. The current study seeks to tackle the limited understanding of this philosophy in the sector and enable public universities to comprehend better what it means and what it stands for as a philosophy that encompasses certain values and practices to drive change and convey a new orientation towards quality culture (Sabra, Abd El Zaher & Mohamed 2020; Glaveli, Vouzas & Roumeliotou 2021; Oluwafemi & Laseinde 2020) By so doing, this study will advance the knowledge on TQM as a philosophy, enabling leadership and quality developers in quality deanship roles in public universities to incorporate certain core values of this philosophy, referred to as CSFs, to make real changes that permeate the institutions and bring about transformational changes to develop and sustain a quality culture.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The overarching research question driving this study is:

*How can Saudi Arabian public universities foster and sustain a quality-oriented culture through the high-level integration of the TQM CSFs?*

This research question can be broken down into three sub-questions:

1. How has the TQM philosophy been perceived and what factors have promoted its adoption in public universities?
2. What are the current challenges for the high-level integration of TQM philosophy in the country's universities?
3. How can quality deanship departments strategically improve the quality culture through the high-level integration of TQM CSFs in these public universities?

## **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

This section explains the study's overall aim and the formulated research objectives.

### **1.4.1 Research Aim**

The study investigates the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing TQM CSFs to promote meaningful change and quality improvement in the context of public universities. This research aims to create a well-established understanding of quality development that involves the high-level integration of specific TQM CSFs in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities. The findings and conclusions derived from this study will be of great importance to individuals engaged in quality management, such as leaders and quality developers, to actively play a role in contributing to the development of a new understanding that prioritises quality within their respective institutions.

### **1.4.2 Research Objectives**

To achieve these aims, five objectives must be met:

1. To explore the present status and reasons for adopting the TQM philosophy in Saudi Arabian public universities.
2. To evaluate the CSFs that originate from the TQM philosophy that have been currently implemented in Saudi Arabian universities
3. To determine the challenges encountered in integrating these CSFs of TQM.
4. To explore the factors that promote the high-level integration of the TQM philosophy and to identify which are essential for developing quality.
5. To determine the implications of the findings (in 1, 2, 3 and 4) and make well-established recommendations to support the leaders in quality development to make

meaningful change and drive developments for quality through the higher-level integration of TQM CSFs.

## **1.5 Research Design**

An exploratory qualitative methodology was selected over other qualitative designs because the researcher focused on categorising and interpreting certain themes. The qualitative methodology allowed the author to gather insights from participants using in-depth semi-structured interviews which is one of the most well-known qualitative methods for data collection to answer questions according to people's experiences and understand their personal perspectives. The study is exploratory in nature and emphasises the discovery of insights that can lead to the development of the high-level integration of the CSFs derived from the philosophy of TQM to promote good practice and quality improvements. Therefore, a qualitative research methodology was deemed to meet the needs of this study. According to Yin (2014), a qualitative study is a type of research associated with exploratory studies to uncover information hidden in the responses from participants to questions.

The current study was confined to three public universities in Saudi Arabia and the sample comprised 29 participants working in these institutions' quality deanship departments. Using a qualitative methodology, the researcher was able to utilise data collection sources that yielded robust and in-depth data (Braun & Clarke 2006). Data analysis involved the adoption Yin's five-phase framework. Data analysis involved transcribing the recorded interviews, coding the data, and categorising and generating themes after the patterns had been identified across the coded data. The researcher adopted the thematic approach for analysing the views and lived experiences of the study participants. NVivo 12 software was used to aid the process of data organisation and coding. Further details about the research design and the methodology adopted for the current study are presented in detail in Chapter 4. In the remainder of this



chapter, the reader are introduced to the significance of the current study, including details on how this study contributes theoretically and practically to existing knowledge. Originality, as well as the scope of the current study are covered, followed by the assumptions made. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief explanation of how the thesis is organised.

## **1.6 Significance, Contribution, Originality and Scope of the Study**

This section explains the significance, contribution, originality and scope of the current study. More details about assumption elements linked to the current research are provided in Section 1.8.

### **1.6.1 Significance of the Study**

Since the introduction of Vision 2030 in 2016 and the NUL, announced in 2019, there has been significant pressure exerted on the university sector to improve quality. The Saudi Arabian Government has recognised that the reform of universities has become essential because their levels of efficiency and quality need to be improved as prerequisites for fulfilling Vision 2030 (Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 2016; Pavan 2017; Ministry of Education 2019). As the Minister of Education asserted, it is essential to improve how the sector is functioning (Ministry of Education 2020). The existing framework developed by the NCAAA provided general guidelines for improving the quality of universities by establishing relevant standards. However, success in meeting these quality standards depends entirely on the university approach and how this should be undertaken. According to Alsaleh (2016), developing a quality culture is what the universities need, which requires universities to move behind the predetermined quality standards. In other words, improving the workplace culture to promote quality is a pressing issue in the sector because public universities in Saudi Arabia are now required to function very effectively and at a high-quality level to cope with the changes introduced by the NUL and meet the expectations set by Vision 2030.

Notably, making meaningful change and establishing a quality culture necessitates cultural shifts in the context of HEIs. However, these changes have always been a difficult process because they necessitate precise and lengthy periods of effort, policy development and the assurance that changes are understood. Jamal Al-Lail and Mohamed (2019) emphasised that universities, as the embodiment of tradition, history and core principles, should also be open to change to evolve and make meaningful contributions to society. The study further suggested that the most successful universities are those that strike a balance between embracing growth and change while staying true to their foundational traditions and values. Hence, universities should embrace change while actively minimising any potential friction that may arise.

Thus, this study's research questions direct efforts to explore TQM as a philosophy that could set the foundation for driving the necessary meaningful change and assist in the successful adoption of quality values for continuous improvement. This study explores the challenges and opportunities for the high-level integration of TQM values and practices to enable public universities in the country to develop a quality-oriented culture for improvement. Valuable insights, therefore, will be gained from this study to help leaders and quality developers to strategically manage quality development in universities through the successful high-level integration of TQM values and practices. Therefore, with the insights provided, stakeholders (including quality deans, vice-deans, quality consultants and managers for development) will be able to play a pivotal and effective role in facilitating the integrating of TQM core values to instigate the necessary change towards transformation with a focus on improving quality and excellence in these public educational institutions with respect to the country's longstanding Islamic traditions, culture and beliefs.

The values and concepts of TQM are conventionally applied to the industrial sector, but modern approaches now incorporated them into other sectors, such as HE (Bendermacher et al. 2017;

Moreno-Luzon, Gil-Marques & Valls-Pasola 2013; Sattler & Sonntag 2018). It is also true that it is crucially important to overcome the lack of awareness in universities about the implementation of the TQM philosophy (Allmnakrah & Evers 2020; Ashraf 2019; Bendermacher et al. 2017; Bouranta et al. 2019; Manatos, Sarrico & Rosa 2017; Mosadeghrad 2014; Tarí & Dick 2016; Tenji & Foley 2019; Zwain, Lim & Othman 2017). As observed by Bouranta et al. (2019) and Bendermacher et al. (2017), when an organisation intends to adopt TQM, it should ensure that it fits the organisation for which it is designated. In other words, it is crucial to consider the context, including traditions and values, when implementing TQM CSFs in organisations.

Bouranta et al. (2017) found that the successful implementation of TQM in a service setting presupposes the identification and prioritisation of its key factors. It is subsequently essential for this qualitative exploratory study to first approach the topic with an integrated framework that incorporates the core values of TQM theory (CSFs). This is to explore the complexity involved in implementing TQM CSFs to create a quality culture in public universities. Therefore, on the basis of the outcome of Zwain et al. (2017 2011), which is in line with other research such as Bayraktar, Tatoglu and Zaim (2008), Kanji, Malek and Tambi (1999), Karia and Asaari (2006) and Zwain, Teong and Othman (2011), nine CSFs were identified and subsequently conceptualised into the study's framework because there is overwhelmingly agreement in the literature that these nine factors shape the TQM philosophy. Zabadi (2013) suggested that achieving a quality culture in organisations by integrating the TQM philosophy relies heavily on successfully adopting and implementing its CSFs. To this end, the researcher developed a conceptual framework encompassing the nine CSFs that form the basis for the high-level integration of TQM. Incorporating CSFs within the conceptual framework provides direction, narrowing the research focus, and practical guidance for exploring the integration of

TQM and the development of quality in public universities. Further details on these core values of TQM (nine CSFs) are provided in Section 3.8.

### **1.6.2 Contribution of the Study**

The present study emphasises two kinds of contributions. First, it contributes theoretically to the knowledge concerning TQM as a philosophy that can be utilised in public universities to drive change and move these educational institutions towards growth and continuous quality improvement. Second, the study offers practical insights to support quality management in Saudi Arabian public universities, with a specific focus on assisting leaders and quality developers. By effectively integrating the values and practices derived from the TQM philosophy, the study provides guidance for managing quality developments and successfully making meaningful change within these universities. This practical insight will enhance the management practices and strategies related to quality in the specific context of Saudi Arabian public universities.

#### *1.6.2.1 Theoretical Contribution*

This study is designed to contribute to the existing body of TQM literature by enabling the development of knowledge concerning the philosophy's values to nurture sustainable quality development through the high-level integration of those values. Although TQM philosophy has existed for decades and is understood as an instrument for quality control, quality assurance and a tool of measurement in HEIs, in the context of developing countries, there is still a lack of understanding of TQM as a philosophy which has its foundation in cultural transformation, nor is it considered a viable strategic choice for altering the university's entire culture and creating a new one oriented towards quality (Nasim, Sikander & Tian 2020; Papanthymou & Darra 2017). Therefore, in light of the research studies on TQM, the current study is a response to calls to develop the level of understanding concerning the values derived from TQM

philosophical elements and their adoptions for quality development in the context of public universities. The study seeks to improve the theoretical knowledge through which TQM as a philosophy can be adopted and its values integrated into systems to pave the way for quality culture development in Saudi Arabian public universities (Pavan 2017; Jamal Al-Lail & Mohamed 2019; Alsale 2016; Prakash 2018). Developing such knowledge about TQM values will inform how quality deanship departments manage, plan and design processes for quality improvement. Quality leadership in universities will be better positioned to mitigate the risk of failure in integrating values from the TQM philosophy into the universities' systems for quality culture enhancement.

#### *1.6.2.2 Practical Contribution*

On the basis of the empirical findings of this study, the researcher will strive to provide leadership and quality developers in quality deanship departments (including quality deans, managers, and staff responsible for quality developments at strategic levels) with specific insights to guide the effective integration and management of TQM core values and practice for quality improvement. The knowledge provided by this study will enable quality developers in deanship departments in public universities to be in a better position to play an effective role in developing and disseminating quality-oriented culture through the high-level integration of TQM core values. Therefore, the insights of this study are anticipated to provide quality leaders with a deeper understanding of the difficulties that could occur while implementing TQM in public universities. Thus, quality leaders and managers in quality deanship departments will be able to predict the challenges and work on overcoming them to achieve the high-level integration of TQM CSFs to develop a quality-oriented culture.

Therefore, the study aims to close the gap between practice and theory, empowering quality leaders and managers to effect meaningful change in the direction of building a quality-oriented

culture in the context of public universities. The primary audience for this study is quality development leaders and managers who work at a strategic level for quality improvements (quality deanship departments) in Saudi Arabian public universities. Hence, those responsible for planning and designing strategies for quality development in public universities will benefit from the findings of this study because they will be able to make informed decisions that will result in cultural change and quality development becoming a reality.

The current study will deliver insights that align with the current pressing need to effectively manage quality development and strategically seek to create a quality-oriented culture in public universities that is in alignment with the Vision 2030 and the NUL introduced in 2019. This study will have the greatest impact on universities; it is relevant, particularly in the current era and environment, given that public universities are witnessing unprecedented changes involving new expectations, ways of doing things and wider economic and social reforms. The current study could also be of significant interest to other associated stakeholders in the HEI context, including government policymakers, people in the wider society, private sector business interests and other universities in regional countries who may be interested in learning about TQM as a philosophy and the changes occurring in Saudi institutions.

### **1.6.3 Originality of the Study**

This study will present for the first time the views and perspectives of male and female quality developers in public universities on the wider debate about the TQM philosophy in the literature and will bring their views on the challenges facing the adoption of the TQM philosophy in the context of public universities to the fore. In this study, the views expressed by quality developers from three public universities, namely deans, vice-deans, quality consultants, managers and other relevant staff, on how they perceive the challenges to and the opportunities for the integration of values and practices from the TQM philosophy in

developing quality and retaining excellence, make this study unique in the context of the country HEIs. Therefore, the challenges and opportunities for promoting a quality-oriented culture involving the high-level integration of these TQM CSFs will be explored in the context of Saudi public universities. To the author's best knowledge, these issues have not yet been explored in other studies which investigate the CSFs of the TQM philosophy, especially in the context of public universities in Saudi Arabia with a greater focus on the views of those involved at the strategic levels, including both male and female quality developers working in quality deanship departments. Therefore, the findings of this study will be unique and shed light on a crucial area, namely inspiring meaningful change and sustainable improvement in public universities. The outcomes of the current research will contribute to the improvement of the level of understanding of the TQM as a philosophy for driving change and the creation of a new culture which is quality oriented. It is on these unique aspects that the originality of this thesis is established.

#### **1.6.4 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is limited to the exploration of opportunities and drivers and the identification of the challenges associated with the adoption of the TQM philosophy in the context of public universities in Saudi Arabia. The current qualitative exploratory study involves three public universities as sources for the primary data and does not include private universities or any other educational institutions in the sector. The main method of data collection was in-depth semi-structured interviews with key personnel from quality deanship divisions in three public universities, namely quality deans, vice-deans, managers and staff. Further details on the methodology adopted for this research study are given in Chapter 4. Section. 1.7 introduces the definition of TQM and highlights the definition adopted by the current research.

## 1.7 TQM Definitions

Although TQM is one of the most frequently quoted concepts in operations management, academics have yet to agree on a clear definition. Some attempts to define TQM include those by Dale (1999), who defined TQM as both a philosophy and a set of guiding principles for managing an organisation to the benefit of all stakeholders. Conversely, Dahlgard et al. (2019) defined TQM as a comprehensive management theory with multiple layers and elements or components such as process management, human resource management and strategic management. Variations in its definition even existed among the first generation of ‘quality gurus’, namely Deming, Juran, Crosby, Feigenbaum and Ishikawa (Neyestani 2017). For instance, according to Soltani et al. (2005), Deming defined TQM using 14 key principles of management that he believed were essential for a business organisation to run effectively. According to Kumar et al. (2018), Deming characterised TQM as a philosophy of management that demands a fundamental cultural transformation between traditional management and an organisation that continues to enhance its management practices.

Alternatively, Juran considered TQM as ‘fitness for use’ or ‘fitness for the customer’. According to the Juran Trilogy, TQM is built on the three key principles: quality planning, quality control and quality improvement. Crosby, according to Dale et al. (2016), defined quality as conformance to requirements. According to Liliana (2016), Ishikawa framed his definition on a cause-and-effect diagram. Conversely, Feigenbaum defined TQM as an effective system for integrating the quality development, maintenance, and improvement efforts of workers to achieve production at the most economical level with the highest customer satisfaction (Ngambi & Nkemkiafu 2015; Zairi 2013).

Recent literature studies have further provided varied TQM definitions. For example, Markowitsch (2018) stated that TQM can be thought of as a system that incorporates quality,



underlying values, a standard set of practices, and compliance requirements. Manatos et al. (2017) referred to TQM as a combination of general guiding principles and core concepts of quality. Bouranta et al. (2019) defined TQM as a holistic management philosophy built on principles and practices leading to business excellence and customer satisfaction. This definition by Bouranta et al. (2019) is consistent with others, such as those of Tenji and Foley (2019) and Dahlgaard-Park et al. (2018). According to Tenji and Foley (2019), TQM is a holistic management approach that sets the groundwork for good business activities and practices and gains the trust of stakeholders. Dahlgaard-Park et al. (2018) defined it as a holistic management philosophy built on principles and practices that lead to business excellence. In their research study, Zwain et al. (2014) characterized TQM as a framework designed to direct and facilitate knowledge management processes within the educational sphere.

**Table 1: Recent Definitions of TQM in the Literature**

Author (s)	Year	TQM Definition
Markowitsch	2018	A system that incorporates quality, underlying values, a standard set of practices, and compliance requirements
Manatos et al.	2017	A combination of general guiding principles and core concepts of quality
Bouranta et al.	2019	A management philosophy built on principles and practices leading to business excellence and customer satisfaction
Tenji and Foley	2019	A holistic management approach that sets the groundwork for good business activities and practices and gains the trust of stakeholders
Dahlgaard-Park et al.	2018	A holistic management philosophy built on principles and practices that lead to business excellence
Zwain et al.	2014	A framework designed to direct and facilitate knowledge management processes

Hence, as the aim is to explore TQM as a philosophy for driving change and creating a quality-oriented culture, the current study adheres closely to the definitions in the literature in which TQM is viewed as a holistic management philosophy that is built on principles and practices that lead to organisational excellence. Section 1.8 highlights the assumptions made in this study.

## **1.8 Assumptions**

Assumptions include the researcher's bias and subjectivity; limitations in the participants' ability and willingness to share or describe their experiences; or factors that might limit the rigorous accuracy of data collection or analysis. Thus, as a qualitative researcher, Korstjens and Moser (2018) pointed out that it is essential to acknowledge any pre-existing assumptions that may influence the research process. A study's assumptions, according to Yin (2014), are elements that are beyond the researcher's control, but if eliminated, the study might be irrelevant. A researcher relies on assumptions to develop the relevance of findings and formulate a credible conclusion, hence, assumptions are necessary for developing evidence and drawing conclusions. Thus, by explicitly stating these assumptions, researchers are able to critically examine how they may influence the outcomes of their research, thus improving the study's rigor and trustworthiness. This study makes specific assumptions, which are outlined in the following in the context of this exploratory qualitative research.

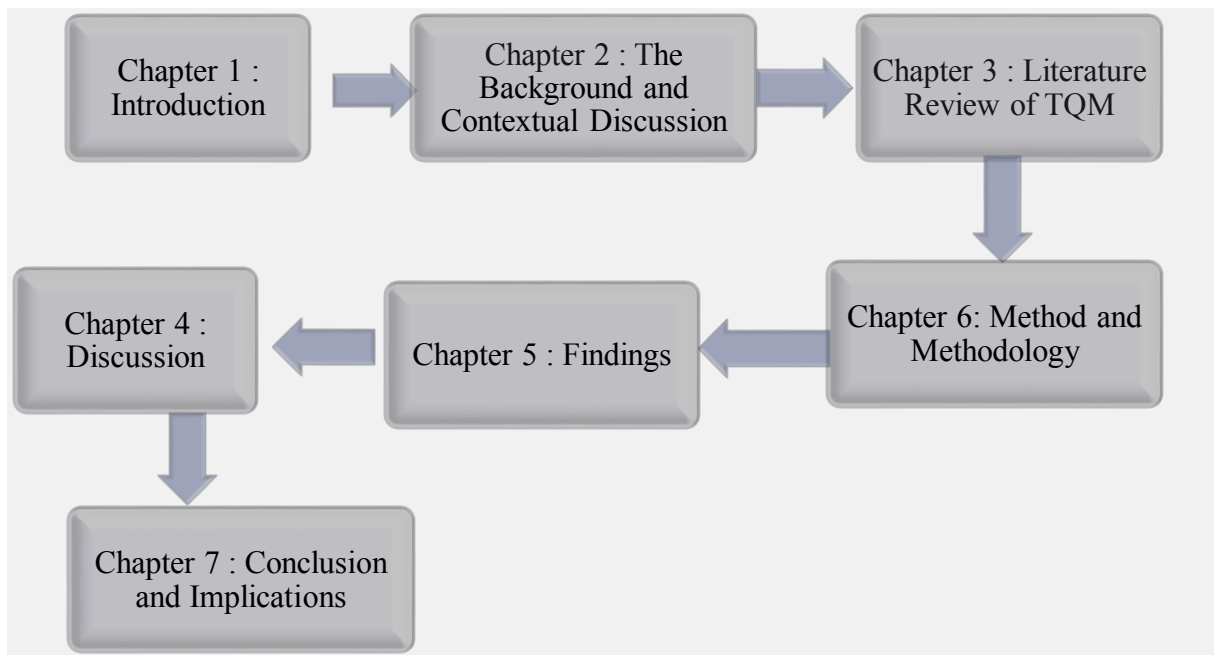
First, the challenges and opportunities for the high-level adoption of the TQM philosophy were explored, especially for their contribution to new knowledge on what is happening in public universities. Second, data produced by this study could benefit quality deanship practitioners (quality developers) and scholars who are interested in exploring the TQM philosophy and how or if it works in public universities to drive change and improve quality. Third, an exploratory qualitative study which utilises public universities as sources of data and undertakes

qualitative analysis is the best alternative for exploring this research topic because it prioritises the context and draws upon lived experiences. Fourth, rich data can be obtained through the adoption of qualitative methods, such as in-depth semi-structured interviews with reference to three public universities. Other assumptions are that all the participants answered the interview questions honestly and candidly; the sample's inclusion criteria are appropriate; and all participants work on quality-related issues in public universities and are invited to volunteer their time and thoughts freely. Furthermore, a study's credibility encompasses trustworthiness, authenticity and rigour when collecting data. Successful completion of the research project depends on a researcher's skill and efficiency in completing the interview process in a qualitative research study (Tracy 2010). Although the researcher had not previously conducted interviews, many constructive discussions were held with supervisors to remove obstacles and refine the credibility of the questions. More details about the procedures adopted to eliminate difficulties and improve efficiency in conducting the field study are provided in Chapter 4.

## **1.9 Thesis Structure**

In this thesis, there are seven chapters. The first is the introduction to this topic, which has been presented above. The second chapter introduces the background and provides contextual discussion about the Saudi Arabian universities sector, with a particular focus on the management of quality improvement within the sector. The third chapter focuses on a narrative analysis of TQM philosophy and its concepts and theories in the wider literature across developed and developing countries. This chapter provides a synopsis of the current literature with respect to the topic of the present study in exploring the TQM' CSFs. In Chapter four, the methodology adopted is discussed in detail, as well as the justification of the adopted research design, including the methods, techniques and procedures for conducting the current study. It also presents details concerning the procedures adopted and the tools used in analysing the collected data. Chapter five presents the findings of this study. This chapter includes a

presentation of the main themes and subthemes found by analysing the study data and contains information about the study participants. Chapter six, the discussion chapter, thoroughly explores the similarities and differences between the inferences drawn from previous research studies in the literature and the current study's findings. In Chapter seven, the key findings are summarised and draws the conclusion. Finally, in the light of the study outcomes, the limitation and suggestions for future research and the implications of the current study are presented.



**Figure 1. 1 Thesis structure**

Author's creation.

## **1.10 Summary**

This chapter briefly introduced the context of HEIs in Saudi Arabia with reference to the quality concept. Implementing TQM has been proposed, but awareness of its core values and practices, which shape its philosophical basis, remains unpopular among public institutions in the sector. The main aim of this study is to explore the challenges and identify the drivers for promoting quality-oriented culture in public universities through the high-level integration of the values and practice derived from the TQM philosophy in relation to the public university context in

Saudi Arabia. Steps have been taken to tackle the gap in the knowledge concerning TQM philosophy adoption in the context of public universities. The significance of this study is evident; it strives to explore meaningful change through which the adoption of the TQM philosophy can result in the successful adoption of quality values and practice in the context of the Saudi Arabia's public universities. This study provides quality deanship leaders and managers with a well-developed understanding of TQM as a philosophy to strategically manage the integration of its values to deliver and, in essence, drive changes to create more sustainable and successful improvements.

## **Chapter 2: The Background and Contextual Overview of the Saudi Arabian Education System**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter covers the historical developments, defining events, and transformative changes that have occurred in the nation's education system. It further discusses the characteristics of the country's higher education (HE) system, the managerial approaches employed in the university governance sector, the unique contextual traits, and the key phases of reform that have resulted in significant changes in the sector. Additionally, in this chapter Saudi Arabia's National Vision 2030 and the National Universities Law (NUL) are discussed, highlighting their impact on the educational sector with a particular emphasis on the emergence of contemporary forces driving the demand for quality advancement in the country's public universities. Finally, the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) — the nation's primary body for quality supervision and accreditation — and the role played by quality deanship divisions in managing quality improvement to cope with the pressing need for quality developments in the context of the country public universities will be addressed.

### **2.2 A Historical and Structural Overview**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 with very limited resources and a modest education program consisting of 12 schools and 700 students (Alamri 2011). However, when vast quantities of oil were discovered in Saudi Arabia in 1938, the situation changed dramatically. This desert kingdom became one of the world's wealthiest countries because of its vast oil reserves. According to Al Ohali and Al Aqili (2009), Saudi Arabia controls over 25% of the world's known oil reserves and spans a vast geographical area equivalent to 2.250.000 km<sup>2</sup>, nearly a quarter of Europe's size and four times the size of a developed country

such as France. It is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula and has one of the fastest-growing populations globally, with a population growth rate of 2.5%. It has a population of 34 million people (Hamdan Alghamdi, Alotaibi, and Ibrahim 2020), the majority being youth. The Ministry of Education was established in 1954, initially offering education exclusively to men, with no schools for women (Alamri 2011). It was not until 1960 that the country's first girls' school opened in Riyadh (Al Rawaf & Simmons, 1991). Since then, gender segregation has been implemented across all levels of education, including post-secondary institutions. However, there is an exception for students enrolled in medical schools, in which students of mixed gender share campuses and laboratories.

Saudi Arabia's education system is organised into three stages: elementary school (six years), intermediate school (three years), and secondary school (three years). Post-secondary education options include public and private sector universities (Alsaleh 2019) where students can pursue bachelor-level degrees in a wide range of academic fields in the humanities and sciences. Students who have completed three years of secondary school can continue their education through Technical and Vocational Training Corporations (TVTCs). These institutions offer both males and females two-year and four-year technical colleges and vocational institutions. The TVTCs provide an alternative pathway for technical and vocational education students.

### **2.2.1 HE Sector in Saudi Arabia**

Post-secondary education in Saudi Arabia is primarily provided by public and private universities and colleges. The country currently has 39 universities affiliated with the Ministry of Education, 29 public and 10 private universities, working to meet the nation's social and economic advancement needs (Ghulam & Mousa 2019; Ministry of Education 2021a 2021b). Additionally, there are 71 technical colleges spread across the country's 13 administrative

provinces, offering a diverse range of technical courses to students seeking skills development in various professional fields outside the university setting (Alsaleh 2019).

Previously, the education affairs in Saudi Arabia were overseen by two separate entities: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of HE. The former was responsible for formulating policies, supervising developments, and overseeing education levels up to post-secondary, including primary, intermediate and secondary schools nationwide. The latter was established in 1975 to oversee the HE sector, both public and private universities (Ministry of Education 2021b; Sack et al. 2016). However, in 2015, a royal decree was issued to merge the Ministry of HE into the Ministry of Education, forming a single entity known as the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education 2021). This merger aimed to bridge bureaucratic gaps, enhance efficiency, and improve the quality of HE (Alqahtani & Ayentimi 2021). Consequently, the universities in the sector now report to the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for overseeing the HE sector, enforcing policies, and regulating university operations (Ministry of Education 2021b).

In Saudi Arabia, the system of HE is characterised as centralised and top-down, with the Ministry of Education playing a critical role in managing and regulating universities. The Ministry of Education provides national cadres to support the country's academic and administrative development, and its policies have a significant impact on the management of the sector's universities. In the country, the Ministry of Education establishes laws, regulations, standards, and procedures that govern the operations of educational institutions, as highlighted by Almusallam (2009), Hamdan (2013), and Hilal (2013). Both public and private universities are heavily regulated and controlled by the government, with the state providing financial support to all public universities. This gives the government substantial influence over the sector as a whole and greater control over public sector universities in particular. Private sector



universities are also subject to regulations governing their formation, operation, and licensure, overseen by the Ministry of Education, as noted by Al-Eisa and Smith (2013).

In terms of management and decision-making within the sector, a hierarchical structure is observed. For instance, the department responsible for supervising the country’s universities, known as the Deputy Minister for Universities, Research, Development and Innovation, reports directly to the Minister of Education, as depicted in Figure 2.1. This hierarchy reflects the order and authority in sector management. Saudi universities typically adhere to this hierarchical structure, with the Ministry of Education at the top, ensuring compliance with laws, policies and plans aimed at promoting quality development in all institutions. Overall, the Ministry of Education plays a crucial role in shaping and governing the HE sector in Saudi Arabia, with its centralised approach and regulatory control influencing the operations of both public and private universities.

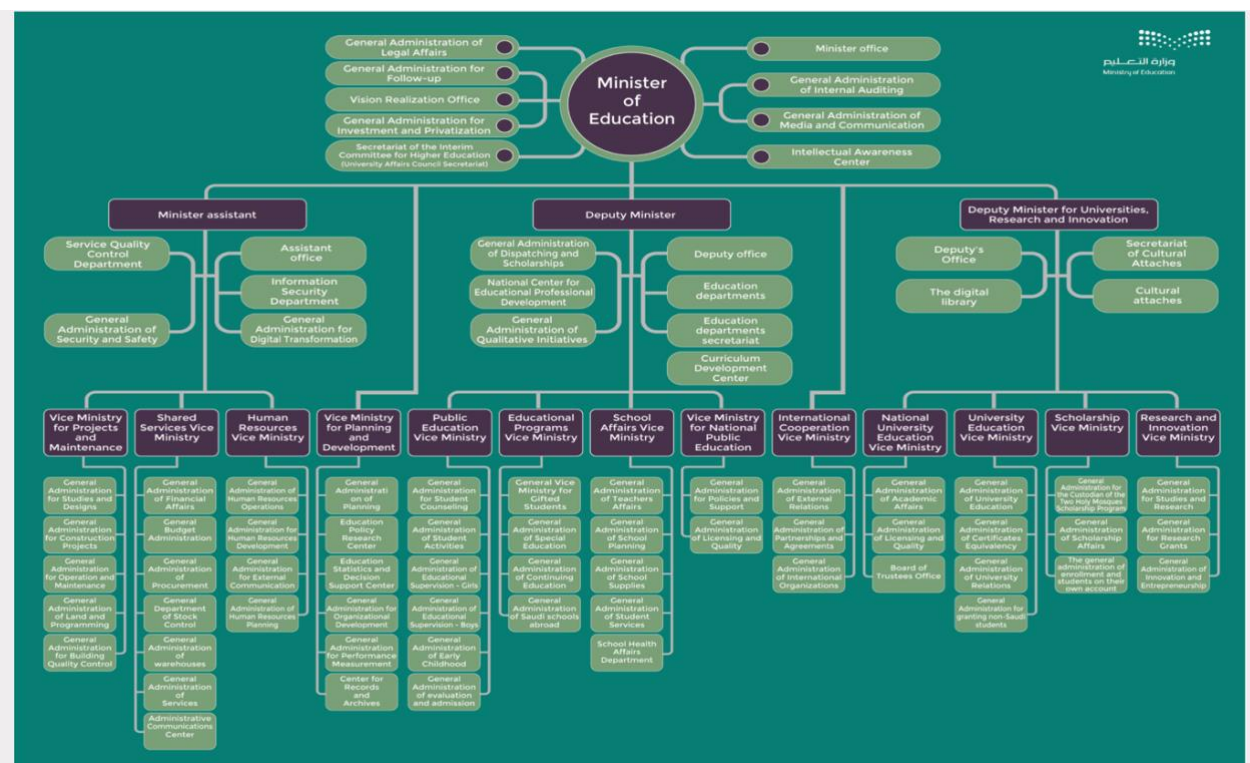


Figure 2. 1 Ministry of Education

Source: Ministry of Education (2022).

### **2.2.2 Key Traits of the Saudi Arabian HE Sector**

Unlike other nations, universities in the HE sector in Saudi Arabia possess a unique characteristic where religion and culture are intricately intertwined to influence the formulations of statements and missions, as well as the implementation of policies that prioritise the preservation and promotion of religion, traditions, and customs in the university sector (Alghamdi & Ernest 2019; Smith & Abouammoh 2013b). Consequently, the HE sector in Saudi Arabia exhibits four notable characteristics: the emphasis on Islamic education, a centralised system with a top-down controlling approach, tuition-free education at all educational levels including universities, and the existence of general policies for gender segregation in education, including universities (Smith & Abouammoh 2013b). According to Abu-Alghayth (2020), the Saudi education system draws its values from Islam, the country's official religion. Since its establishment in 1932, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made substantial efforts to reform and invest in education, considering it to be a crucial factor in social and economic growth. Education has been prioritised in many development plans (Hamdan, Allam et al. 2020), with a significant allocation of funds towards educational institutions aimed at fostering Islamic values, moral development, and a sense of loyalty to family, society and the nation, reflecting the aspiration to uphold and preserve national achievements (Smith & Abouammoh 2013b).

The Saudi Arabian education system places a distinct emphasis on religion and culture, which sets it apart from other education systems worldwide. Siddique, Khan, and Zia (2016) point out that Islamic studies are mandatory for students at all levels of education, from elementary school to university. When comparing primary and secondary school systems, religious instruction makes up 31% of the primary curriculum, whereas mathematics and science courses only account for 20% in the secondary system (Rugh 2002; Allmnakrah & Evers 2020). According to Smith and Abouammoh (2013a), one example of adherence to Islamic principles

is gender segregation which is prevalent throughout university campuses. Elyas and Picard (2013) argue that the HE sector in Saudi Arabia is deeply influenced by an ethical code derived from Islam, resulting in strict gender segregation across all campuses. Research conducted by Mitchell and Alfuraih (2018) emphasises the significant attention given to aligning national education goals with economic development objectives while ensuring compatibility with Islamic principles. Smith and Abouammoh (2013b) and Elyas and Picard (2013) share similar views that, although changes in the country's HE sector are necessary, the traditional practices and management style, which emphasise strict control and adherence to established norms, create difficulties in influencing the extent of these changes. Even minor reforms within this context, as noted by Elyas and Picard (2013), may face resistance as people seek to preserve their Islamic identity.

### **2.2.3 Reforms in Saudi Arabian HE Sector**

The HE sector is undergoing a continuous process of modernisation, supported by various programs to promote wider acceptance of reforms. Recent years have witnessed the introduction of several initiatives, notably the government's Vision 2030 and the NUL. These initiatives have presented unprecedented challenges for universities, leading to a necessary shift in management focus towards enhancing quality development with more focus now updating a university curriculum by incorporating globally recognised subjects. Moreover, educating Saudi nationals abroad in large numbers exemplifying the commitment made to transforming the HE sectors and modernise it to meet the contemporary and future needs. This section provides an overview of the sector's transformative journey, followed by the government's Vision 2030 and the NUL and their related impacts on quality developments in the sector will also be explored.

### *2.2.3.1 First Phase: Early Establishment of the Saudi Arabian Higher Education Sector*

The establishment of Saudi Arabia's HE system began under the reign of King Abdul Aziz, who sent 14 students to Egypt in 1927 to pursue various subjects (Pavan 2016; Taylor & Albasri 2014). This marked the early efforts in sponsoring students to study abroad, initially focusing on Arabic and Islamic studies in Egypt and Lebanon, later expanding to include the US. King Abdul Aziz recognised the importance of scholarships to develop HE (Pavan 2016). In 1957, King Saud University (KSU) was founded in Riyadh, becoming the first university in Saudi Arabia (Smith & Abouammoh 2013b; Elyas & Picard 2013). The first college of Islamic Law (Shari'a) was established in Makkah in 1949 followed by the establishment of the College of Shari'a and the College of Arabic Language in Riyadh in 1954. The discovery of oil in the country brought rapid economic development, which in turn, triggered significant change. As result, this led to the emergence of new universities, primarily fuelled by the economic advancements and the growing demand for a skilled workforce in Saudi Arabia (Elyas & Picard 2013; Siddique, Khan & Zia 2016).

This period witnessed the establishment of numerous colleges specialising in arts, sciences, administration, and pharmacy. HEIs expanded as the country's economy developed, and several public universities were founded across various provinces. Following the establishment of KSU, the Islamic University in Medina was founded in 1961, followed by King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah in 1967. In 1974, the Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University was established in Riyadh, along with King Fahad for Petroleum and Minerals University and King Faisal University in the eastern region. Umm, Al-Qura University was founded in Makkah in 1980. Additionally, several universities established campuses in different cities to meet the increasing demand for HE driven by economic development and population growth. However, with population increases, only eight public universities served as first-generation institutions in Saudi Arabia until 2003. According to Krieger (2007), the kingdom has embarked on an

audacious effort to expand and reform HE, nearly tripling the budget of the HE ministry to \$15 billion since 2004, much of it is being spent on creating more than 100 new colleges and establishing more new universities. Additionally, the government lifted a decades-old prohibition on private sector institutions, providing free land and more than \$10 million in scholarship funds (Krieger 2007). The ongoing efforts to develop the HE sector have persisted, with continuous upgrades and advancements through various initiatives and plans. The second phase provides detailed insights into the reforms undertaken in the universities sector, encompassing recent initiatives for developments in the sector.

#### *2.2.3.2 Second Phase: Expansion of the Saudi Arabian Higher Education Sector*

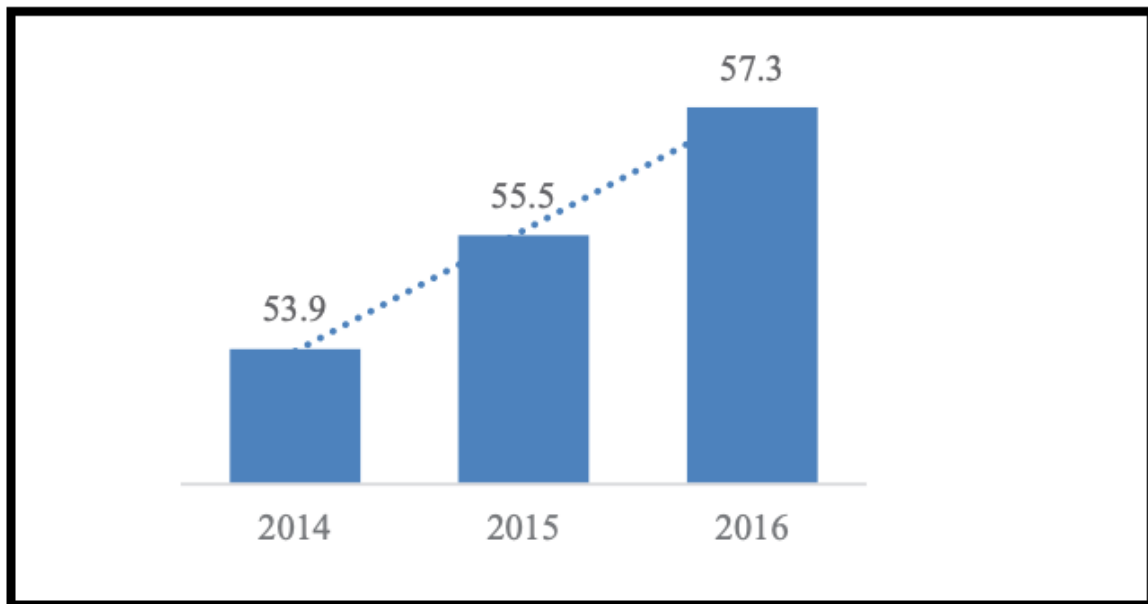
The second phase of expansion in Saudi Arabia's HE sector has occurred over the last two decades. During this period, the government made significant efforts to expand the country's education infrastructure by establishing new universities, colleges and vocational institutions. The number of universities increased from 8 in 2003 to 39 in 2021, including 29 public and 10 private universities. Several colleges and vocational institutions have also been established to meet the growing demand for a skilled workforce. However, the rapid increase in HEIs has raised concerns about ensuring sustained quality development in the sector (Khayati & Selim 2019; Pavan 2016; 2017; Ghulam & Mousa 2019).

Recent years have witnessed a significant rise in HE investments and the establishment of new universities and colleges (Ghulam & Mousa 2019; Pavan 2013). Existing universities have also experienced substantial growth in terms of infrastructure, student enrolment, and faculty recruitment (Khayati & Selim 2019; Pavan 2016). Since King Abdullah's ascension to the throne in 2005, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of universities, accompanied by substantial financial support for HE reforms (Pavan 2016). Presently, university education is accessible to Saudi students across 75 cities and towns, with a total

enrolment of 1.7 million students out of a population of 34 million, encompassing both public and private sector universities (Abouammoh 2018; Hamdan Alghamdi, Alotaibi, & Ibrahim 2020). King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz played a crucial role in initiating an education revolution in Saudi Arabia, focusing on expanding private and public universities and colleges (Arab New 2013). His reign witnessed the implementation of various plans and initiatives, such as the Overseas Scholarship Program (2005), Strategic Plan for Reforms (2009), and Observatory on Higher Education (2010), aimed at strengthening the HE infrastructure and improving the capability of the workforce. After King Abdullah's passing, King Salman continued to expand the network of HEIs and enhance their quality to align with top global institutions (Quamar 2021).

#### *2.2.3.3 Expenditure on Education and the Government's Scholarship Program*

A third of the national budget has been spent exclusively on education for several years (Ghulam & Mousa 2019; Khayati & Selim 2019), with government allocations increasing several-fold in recent years. According to Aldiab et al. (2017), education is a high priority in Saudi Arabia, accounting for between a quarter and a third of the government budget each year. For example, the government spent approximately \$53.9 billion (SR202 billion) in 2014, followed by approximately \$55.5 billion (SR208 billion) in 2015 and \$57.3 billion (SR215 billion) in 2016 (see Figure 2.2) (Aldiab et al. 2017).



**Figure 2. 2 Saudi Government expenditure on education 2014–2016**

Source: Aldiab et al. (2017).

This spending on education in terms of the percentage of the total budget, according to Ghulam and Mousa (2019), is higher than in many industrialised countries such as the UK, the US, Germany, France and Japan, which spend around 10–15% of their total budget outlays. However, the quality issues in public universities and the concept of competition still needs to be addressed (Mousa & Ghulam 2019; Aburizaizah 2022, Quamar 2021). Another remarkable change occurred in 2005 when the government launched the largest student overseas program worldwide: the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), under Royal Order Number 5387/MB of 25 May 2005. The total number of Saudi students studying abroad under government sponsorship was over 207,000, including dependents who accompany them in 2016–2017 (Pavan 2016).

Statistically, Saudi Arabia accounts for 4% of international students and is numbered fifth after China, India, South Korea and Germany for sending students abroad (Education, MoH 2014 as cited in Pavan 2016). According to Taylor and Albasri (2014), in the USA alone, there were over 100,000 Saudi students enrolled in colleges and universities in 2013–14. The aim of the

KASP, according to MoH (2014), was to prepare and effectively qualify Saudi people so that they can work and compete on an international level in different areas of scientific research. Locally, Saudi Arabia has encouraged overseas students to come and study in the country's universities. According to Khayati and Selim (2019), a report published by the Saudi Ministry of Education in 2019 shows that the number of non-Saudi male and female students in the country amounted to 34,124 students.

All these efforts made thus far have set out to improve education and equip the next Saudi generation with relevant skills and qualifications. According to Quamar (2021), what is notable is that political and economic considerations drove the plan for HE reforms. Demographic pressures were evident in the labour market along with rising public demands which necessitated reforms. The Ministry of Education currently is attempting to simultaneously expand the HE infrastructure to make it accessible to all and help universities and institutions improve their quality. However, the problem of quality in HEIs remains a major concern (Pavan 2016; Quamar 2021; Smith & Abouammoh 2013a). Section 2.1.4.4 discusses the government's Vision 2030 and the NUL and how they resulted in the need for further change, focusing more on quality development in the HE sector.

#### **2.2.4 Vision 2030 and NUL in HEIs**

The National Vision 2030 and the introduction of the NUL have been significant milestones for many changes in Saudi Arabia's HE sector. These two landmarked events have prompted a need for major shifts and the improvement of quality standards to foster continuous quality improvement and ensure sustainable development to enable universities in the sector to thrive. The following sections cover how these two events, the National Vision 2030 and the NUL, have driven priorities for quality improvement in educational institutions in the sector,



emphasising the importance of ongoing quality enhancement and fostering a movement with a greater focus on meeting quality development requirements.

#### *2.2.4.1 The National Vision 2030*

This vision outlines the kingdom's macro-economic long-term objectives and how it sees itself positioned domestically, regionally, internationally, and at the centre of the Arab and Islamic worlds (Vision 2030). As previously discussed, Saudi rulers have expressed a strong determination to retain traditional culture, beliefs, and values (Pavan 2017), but at the same time, they are fully aware of the need to look ahead and open up to the globalised world. Thus, Saudi Arabia launched Vision 2030 in April 2016 (Almoaibed 2021) as a reform strategy that marked a watershed moment in economic and structural changes, extending a long history of policy interventions and development strategies. Vision 2030, according to Yusuf (2017), includes the aim to create more connections between Saudi Arabia and other countries in the education, economic and medical fields. Among the major objectives of Saudi Arabia's National Vision 2030, according to Allmnakrah and Evers (2020), is to link education with economic growth; therefore, for the launched Vision 2030 to succeed, there is currently an urgent need for educational reform in Saudi Arabia. Since the proclamation of Vision 2030, rapid social, economic and educational changes have occurred. For example, Vision 2030 emphasises changes in the educational system in an effort to embrace the best possible practices as the scale of acceptance among HE staff has increased (Makhlouf 2021).

For the HE sector, and since Vision 2030 was introduced, there has been a push to build stronger links between education and the economy. The purpose of Vision 2030 (2019) is to prepare the citizens of Saudi Arabia to participate in and contribute to a more sustainable, differently structured, adaptable, and stable economy. There is now significant pressure on universities to improve their quality and enhance their ranking internationally. Quality

development in universities has been one of the key objectives of Vision 2030, emphasising that it should remain a high priority. Some of the strategic goals of Vision 2030 in education include promoting values and national belonging, improving learning outcomes and the education system's global positioning, meeting workplace and labour market demands, developing people's skills, increasing participation in teaching and learning, and ensuring education for all (Ministry of Education 2019, 2021).

Therefore, universities are seeking to develop quality management systems where purpose, values, methodologies, and tools are used effectively to meet the current needs and expectations set by the National Vision for the country's public universities. According to Alharbi (2016) and Sohail and Hasan (2021), the introduction of Vision 2030 by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud placed the focus on economic and educational development. Implementing change and developing quality, however, are still challenging tasks in the context of Saudi Arabian's universities, particularly public ones. Universities in the country have started to look for ways to improve their quality and seek national and international accreditations to prove their quality performance and meet the requirements set out by Vision 2030. The aim stated by Vision 2030 is to see no less than five Saudi universities make it to the league of the very top universities in international rankings (Saudi Vision 2030), 'In the year 2030, we aim to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 universities in international rankings' (Allmnakrah 2020, p. 12).

While there have been ongoing debates within academic institutions regarding the adoption of changes and the embrace of innovative approaches, it is important to acknowledge that universities also serve as custodians of traditions rooted in history, values, principles, and customs (Jamal Al-Lail and Mohamed 2019). However, this gives rise to a paradoxical scenario as embracing change can be viewed as a potential threat to the established values and traditions

of these universities. Thus, to navigate this paradox, thriving universities successfully reduce the friction between the inevitability of growth and change and adherence to the traditional and value-laden boundaries within which they operate. In a strong and conservative culture such as that in Saudi Arabia, change needs to be accompanied by balance and adjustment. Therefore, developing strategic plans for paving the way for incorporating TQM's values seems essential in the context of these universities. The next section highlights the NUL as the second event that occurred in the HE sector and resulted in a greater emphasis on quality improvements in the sector.

#### *2.2.4.2 The NUL*

Another change in education was marked by the NUL to modernise and improve competition in HEIs. In October 2019, the education Minister Dr Hamad Al-Sheik announced a major overhaul of the country's universities (Ministry of Education 2019). According to Quamar (2021), the NUL provides institutions in the HE sector with increased administrative, financial and academic autonomy. The main purpose was consistent with the vision discussed in the previous subsection, namely, to improve quality and excellence in the sector and raise the standards of Saudi universities regionally and internationally (Ministry of Education 2020). The NUL was established to reinforce new values from the market industry into the HE sector, and thus reflects increasing confidence among Saudi Government officials regarding the integration of market principles as the most effective means of managing an economy, society and also education. Although education experts and benefactors, such as members of society, including families and students, businesses and other government agencies, have applauded this move, some remain sceptical owing to concerns about the ability and readiness of public institutions in the sector to cope with such change. Among the NUL's goals according to Ministry of Education (2019) are:

- Reduce costs and enable universities to generate incomes for themselves.
- The government will only provide 50% of each university's annual budget.
- Encourage privatisation of the university's operations.
- Apply specific performance indicators in assessing each university annually.
- Link each university with a business environment in its local territory.
- Increase the level of participation by establishing advisory boards in which students and faculty staff can share discussions.
- Universities must obtain institutional and academic accreditation by prestigious accreditation bodies.
- Allow foreign universities to open branch campuses and operate in Saudi Arabia.
- Create a sense of competition among universities.
- Improve the quality excellence of universities and raise their standards.

Individually, each university must also rethink their own vision and mission, bearing in mind the importance of quality excellence parameters. In summary, it is clear that the Saudi Government considers it necessary to make changes to HEIs to improve quality in the sector and move towards a knowledge-based economy, thereby creating a strong link between the economy and education. As a result, both Vision 2030 and the NUL intend to bring about change and improve the performance of universities to meet the country's present and future needs. For quality improvement, public universities have established quality departments (quality deanships) for managing quality. Section 2.14.5 elaborates on the role played by established quality deanships within public universities in managing and promoting quality development, supported by relevant examples.

### **2.2.5 The National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment (NCAAA)**

In Saudi Arabia, to improve the quality of HE and the international reputation of Saudi graduates, the National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment (NCAAA) was established as the country's national agency for quality supervision and accreditation. The NCAAA was founded in 2004 under the supervision of the Higher Council of Education in response to a significant increase in the number of educational institutions established in the country. According to Al Kuwaiti et al. (2020) and Alsaleh (2016), the NCAAA was given the task of accrediting post-secondary institutions and programs in the country. The NCAAA, as Alsaleh (2016) notes, is structured based on renowned organizational excellence models, such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Performance Excellence (MBNQA) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). The NCAAA provides accreditation certification to universities that have met the standards that the commission has set. It offers two types of accreditations: the first is institutional accreditation, which reviews the organizational structures of a university as a whole; the second is programmatic accreditation, which conducts an in-depth assessment of the academic programs within a college (NCAAA 2015, Alqahtani, Makki & Abdulaal 2023). There are 11 standards that have been established by the NCAAA for the universities to follow for institutional and program accreditations.

The standards allocated for institutional accreditation can be seen as broader, applying to the institution as a whole, whereas the program standards are more detailed and pertain to individual academic programs within an educational institution. Currently, the NCAAA requires all HE institutions in Saudi Arabia to be accredited (NCAAA, 2015, 2021), however, according to a recent study by Alqahtani, Makki & Abdulaal (2023), only 55% of Saudi Arabian HEIs were granted full accreditation by the NCAAA in 2019, highlighting the need for new approaches addressing certain deficiencies in the way quality improvement is being

managed. As the quality improvement standards set by the NCAAA have been the most significant for universities in the country's HE sector (Al-Lail and Mohamed 2019), the framework of the NCAAA according to Alsaleh (2016) falls short in practical implementation in areas such as leadership, strategic planning, and partnerships. Universities across the country are expected to adhere to the NCAAA's quality standards by implementing a planning and review cycle that aids in achieving their objectives and complying with NCAAA requirements.

**Table 2 : The NCAAA Established 11 Standards**

Standards Number	Area of focus	Discription
Standard 1	Mission, Goals, and Objectives	This standard pertains to the clarity and appropriateness of the program's mission, goals, and objectives, ensuring they are well-defined and guide the program's direction.
Standard 2	Program Administration	Focuses on the effectiveness of the program's administrative structures and processes, including leadership and decision-making capabilities.
Standard 3	Management of Program Quality Assurance	Addresses the procedures and policies in place to continuously monitor and improve the quality of the program, ensuring it meets its stated objectives.
Standard 4	Learning and Teaching	Concerns the pedagogical approach, including curriculum design, delivery

		methods, and assessment strategies to facilitate effective learning.
Standard 5	Student Administration	Involves policies and procedures related to student selection, support, assessment, and progression, ensuring that student needs are met.
Standard 6	Learning Resources	Covers the availability and accessibility of learning materials and resources, including libraries, labs, and online resources.
Standard 7	Facilities and Equipment	Relates to the physical and virtual learning environments, ensuring they are conducive to learning and appropriately equipped.
Standard 8	Financial Planning and Management	Pertains to the fiscal health of the program, including budgeting, financial planning, and management to support its sustainability.
Standard 9	Employment Processes	Concerns the recruitment, development, and retention of faculty and staff, ensuring that the program is supported by qualified personnel.
Standard 10	Research	Involves the integration of research into the program, promoting scholarly inquiry

		and the enhancement of the field of study.
Standard 11	Relationships with the Community	Addresses the program's engagement with external communities, including partnerships, service, and collaboration that enrich the educational experience.

Adopted from NCAAA (2015)

The NCAAA standards for academic programs concentrate on particular facets of educational delivery. For instance, 'Academic Programs' (Standard 3) aim to ensure the effectiveness of academic programs, 'Teaching and Learning' (Standard 4) seeks to guarantee the quality of teaching and learning methodologies, and 'Student Assessment' (Standard 5) strives to ensure the fairness and reliability of assessments (Aburizaizah 2022; Bougherira & Elasmr 2023). These standards serve as guidelines for universities to align their strategic planning and operations. Nevertheless, there is evidence of a persistent struggle to meet these stringent improvement standards set by the NCAAA. On the other hand, for institutional accreditation, the standards are designed to direct more focuses on the overall strategic direction and operational effectiveness of universities. Alaskar et al. (2019) view institutional accreditation as a pivotal process aiming at enhancing overall institutional effectiveness.

For instance, 'Mission and Goals' (Standard 1) and 'Governance and Leadership' (Standard 2) mandate a clear institutional vision aligned with national objectives, like Vision 2030 and the National Qualifications Framework. They also require governance structures that support quality and integrity. Other standards, such as 'Research' (Standard 9), 'Relationships with the



Community' (Standard 10), and 'Transparency and Accountability' (Standard 11), expand the institution's remit to include broader community contributions and the imperative for transparent operations (NCAAA, 2015, 2009 Education & Training Evaluation Commission, 2021). Some standards however, like 'Faculty and Staff' (Standard 6) and 'Quality Assurance and Improvement' (Standard 8), are applicable to both programmatic and institutional accreditation. They stress the need for the link between an institution's educational environment and its individual academic programs. The NCAAA's framework provides a structured approach for educational institutions to enhance overall quality, yet it falls short of addressing the unique contexts differentiating private from public non-profit universities, suggesting a potential area for further refinement.

#### **2.2.6 Quality Deanships at Public Universities**

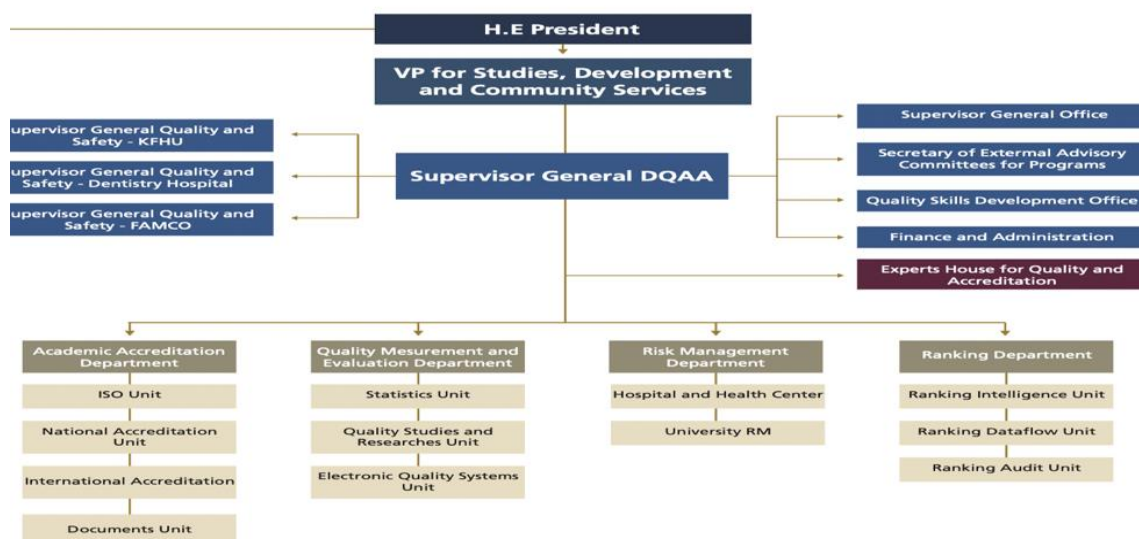
As the HE sector in Saudi Arabia is evolving rapidly, the Ministry of Higher Education is requiring all HE institutions to be accredited by the NCAAA (Onsman 2010). Thus, as noted by Assidmi (2016), universities have established quality units with a workforce dedicated to accreditation and coordinating this process at the applicant level. According to Assiri (2019) and Mohammed, Alotibie and Abdulaziz (2016), most universities have established a vice-presidency to oversee issues concerning quality as universities have been pushed to incorporate modern management approaches to achieve continuous improvement. As a result, HE universities and institutions must be committed to maintaining and increasing quality, which according to Al-Shafei et al. (2015), mandates the establishment of a quality deanship/unit inside the university.

Quality deanship departments are units that plan, train people, and supervise all the activities associated with quality issues in a university. According to the NCAAA (2021), these quality deanships/units are considered a crucial step for the creation of a quality culture, as they should

be supported by adequate staff and financial, administrative, and technical resources to work effectively if quality is to be meaningful. In Saudi universities, faculty, staff and administrators require training in the area of quality management so that quality is realised (Abouelenein 2016; Al-Shafei et al. 2015). These quality deanships are entirely devoted to developing faculty members' teaching abilities and hence to enhancing the overall quality of teaching and learning within the academic community (Alnassar & Dow 2013). Examples of quality deanship activities and structures from public universities are presented in this section by way of further exploring the roles played by those quality units.

In Al Qassim University, for example, Mohammed, Alotibie and Abdulaziz (2016) assert that an agency for quality development and planning was founded to promote TQM in university faculties, to increase staff members' efficiency, and to ensure the quality of the university's scientific endeavours. The university's quality development and planning agency has launched quality development strategies to create competition in quality application, enabling the university to achieve quality improvements and quality accreditation from an international quality agency. As noted by Mohammed, Alotibie and Abdulaziz (2016), the Rector Quality Award was launched by the quality development department, which resulted in the greater adoption of quality values and leadership commitments. It resulted in the faculty of science in the university being granted academic international accreditation from the German agency, ASIIN. According to Alqahtani and Ayentimi (2021), the Deanship of Faculty and Personnel Affairs is the primary unit responsible for managing human resources and ensuring the well-being of university personnel in the Saudi Arabian public university system (similar to the head of HR departments in Western nations' universities). Conversely, quality deanship departments in these education institutions function as complementary units and play an important role in enhancing human resources capabilities.

At Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (IABF) (previously known as the University of Dammam), the units play a vital role in supervising quality improvement. The Deanship of Quality and Academic Accreditation (DQAA) prioritised the training and development of academic and non-academic employees' skills. The DQAA established and implemented a series of training programs to enhance the abilities of academic and non-academic employees to advance continuous quality and institutional enhancement, motivating widespread involvement (University IABF 2021). The organisational structure of DQAA has several managerial levels, as shown in Figure 2.3. There are three main levels. At the top is the president, followed by the supervisor general DQAA. There are seven units under the supervisor general DQAA, among them the quality skills development and the expert's for quality and accreditation (see Figure 2.3). At the bottom of the structure, there are the academic accreditation, quality measurement and evaluation, risk management and the ranking departments. These quality departments are committed to various functions for improving quality in the university under the umbrella of DQAA (University IABF 2021).

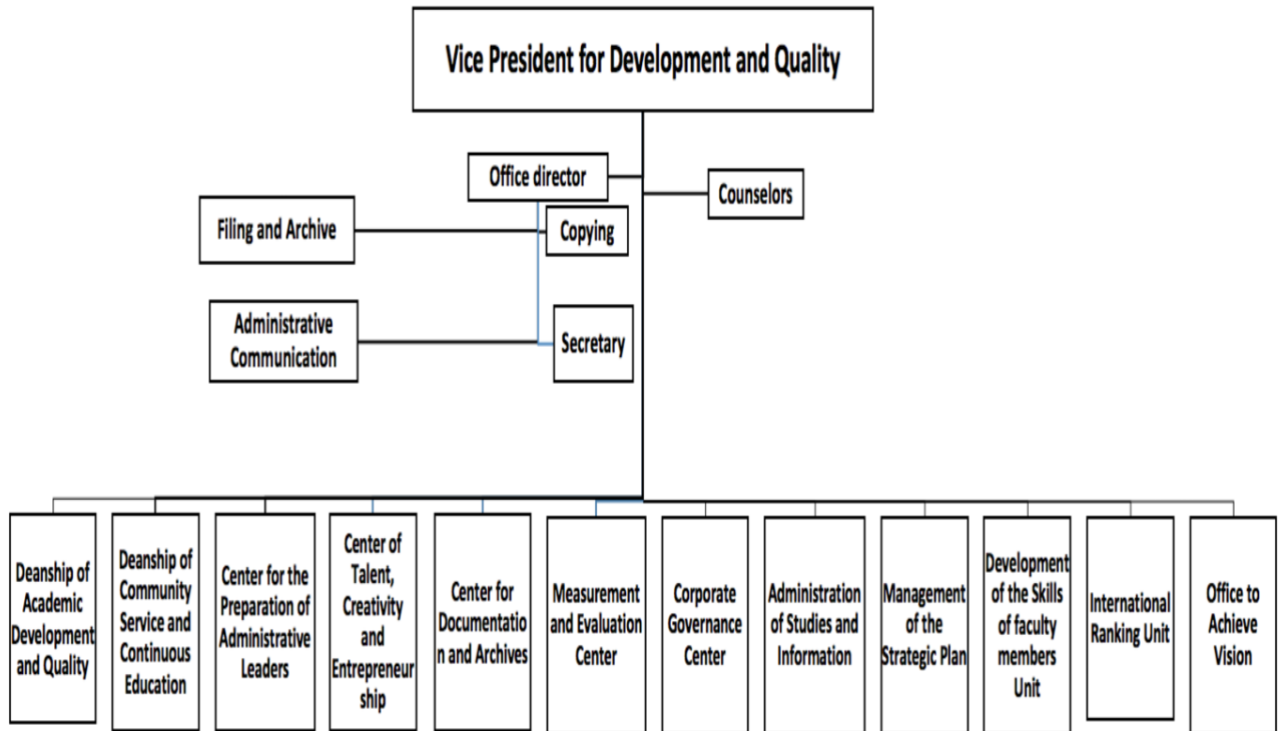


**Figure 2. 3 Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University DQAA**

Source: (University IABF 2021)

As another example, we consider King Khalid University. The Vice-Presidency for Academic Development and Quality (VPADQ) is the second vice-presidency in the university hierarchy. VPADQ was established to develop quality according to worldwide quality standards to accomplish the university's objectives (University, KK 2021). According to Naim and Alahmari (2020), the quality department at King Khalid University was established at the end of 2010 with the primary objective of building and increasing awareness of quality and promoting the implementation of quality standards necessary for accreditation. Hence, VPADQ's strategic objectives include promoting an effective quality culture among university workers and units and guaranteeing effective community engagement in all quality-related activities.

The organisational structure of VPADQ is divided into three managerial levels (see Figure 2.4). As illustrated in Figure 2.4, the Vice President for Development and Quality is at the top, followed by the Quality Counsellors and Office Director. Finally, at the third level, many affiliated administration units carry out their duties to ensure and improve its quality requirements. Of these affiliated departments in the administration are strategic planning, administrative leaders' preparation centre, measurement and evaluation centre and the centre of documents and archives.

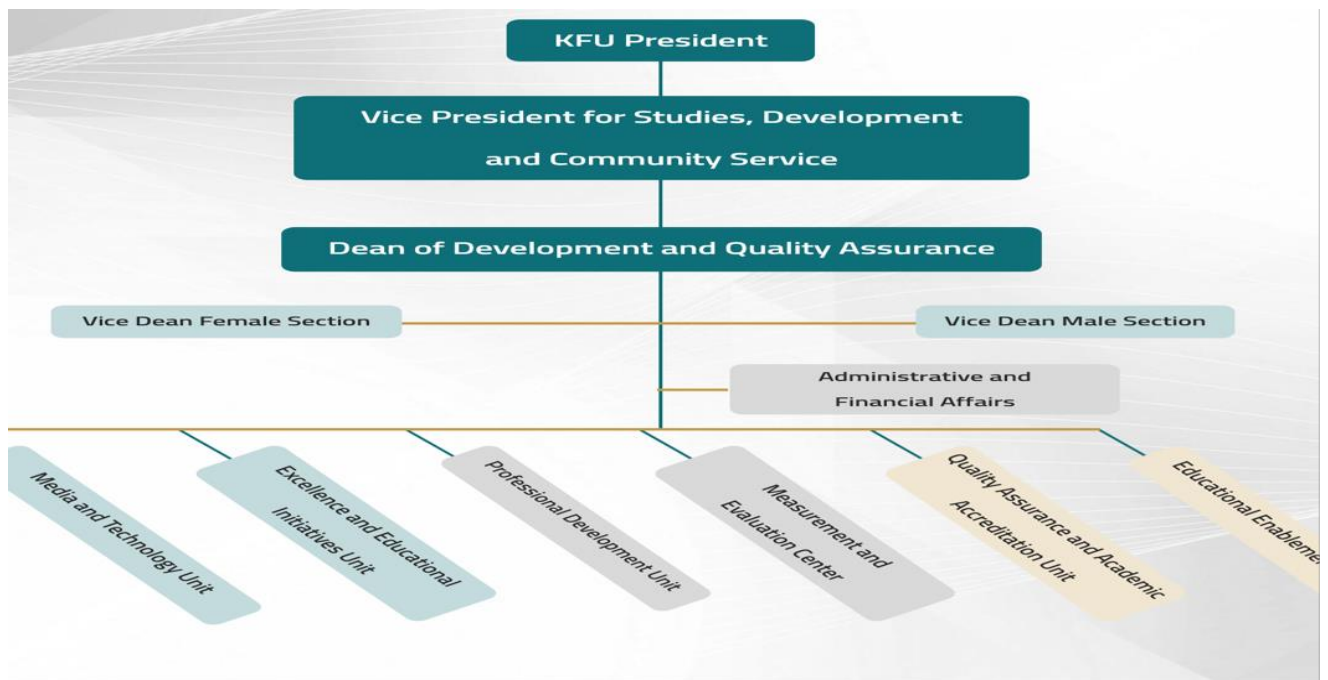


**Figure 2. 4 The VPADQ**

Source: University, KK (2021)

To manage quality improvement in Majmaah University, the Deanship of Quality and Skills Development (DQSD) was founded (University, M 2021). The aim was to ensure quality developments in all university units, improve work performance in all fields, establish systems to define how high-quality work is accomplished, evaluate and assess work performance according to the defined criteria, and supervise the progress and relevant activities (University, M 2021). The role of DQSD is to provide all types of assistance to the academic departments and administrative units in quality matters, follow up their progress, and constantly communicate about what is being done and achieved (University, M 2021). In addition, the DQSD at the university follows up staff members' requests and procedures, edits and prints the letters of staff, files all orders issued by the Dean's office and follows up their implementation, retaining and retrieving all staff documents and conducting statistical analyses, among other tasks and as requested by the dean.

At the University of Tabuk in the north of Saudi Arabia, the Deanship for Quality is one of the basic pillars of its continuous development process at the institutional and academic level (Tabuk university 2021). One of the primary responsibilities of the Deanship for Quality is to promote a quality-oriented culture throughout the university community and the wider community in collaboration with the Higher Accreditation Committees, academic units, and support deanships (University of Tabuk 2021). At King Faisal University (KFU), the Deanship of Development and Quality Assurance (DDQA) was established with the task to achieve the highest level of university education and improve the learning and teaching practices so that the university's competitiveness and institutional excellence were retained (University, KF 2020). Among its objectives is the aim to estimate training needs, arrange and supervise staff members' training sessions, propose programs and policies to improve leadership, academic and administrative capacities and a whole range of program accreditation goals and priorities. KFU's DDQA is working on a plan to meet the NCAAA's standards and assist various university colleges in obtaining program accreditation from local and international corporations (University, KF 2020). On the basis of the organisational structure of the DDQA, as shown in Figure 2.5, at the top is the KFU president followed by the vice president for studies, development and community service. The dean of DDQA is immediately below and is followed by two departments: the vice dean for male and the dean for female sections. At the bottom of the hierarchy, six affiliated administrations carry out varied quality improvement functions.



**Figure 2. 5 Organisational structure of the Deanship for Development and Quality Assurance-KFU**

Source: KFU (2020).

Therefore, from the above, it can be observed that these established quality units in these public institutions have common objectives, including raising awareness about quality, enhancing skills and quality practices through training programs, leading the drive towards meeting quality standards enabling universities to attain quality accreditations for their programs.

### 2.3 Summary

This chapter discussed the education system in Saudi Arabia and the developments through which the HE sector has gone, illustrating the main characteristic of the country's HE sector. Vision 2030 and NUL were discussed, and their impacts were highlighted in relation to the increased demand to address quality improvement issues in the context of the country's public universities. The country's national quality agency, the NCAAA, with its 11 quality standards was been discussed along with the role of the established quality deanships divisions in public universities, underlining the new pressing need to meet quality improvement standards and

advance quality practices and outcomes in the sector. The following chapter presents the background to the TQM philosophy, paradigms through which the philosophy has evolved, and core values to ensure quality developments in organisations across industries.



## **Chapter 3: A Review of the TQM Philosophy Literature and the Challenges in its adoption in the University sector**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In light of increasing attempts by the Saudi Government to reform its HE sector despite a lack of clear direction with respect to quality improvements, the current study seeks to investigate TQM philosophy as a strategy for achieving such developments. In particular, this study is designed to explore the challenges of implementing TQM philosophy and discover opportunities for the high-level integration of its values to build quality-oriented cultures and deliver meaningful change in the country's public universities. This chapter explores concepts relating to TQM philosophy. It includes case studies in which TQM has been accepted in both developed and developing nations and considers how it can inform management structures to design strategies for improving policies and their execution. In reviewing the relevant literature, a reputable database was used, comprising recent journal articles, monographs, books, book chapters, government documents and websites, all of which tackle contemporary issues pertinent to the research. A particular focus has been given to studies that discuss TQM in service delivery, particularly in a HE context, given their relevance to the research topic, research questions and the theoretical framework informing the present study. This review also provides a holistic overview of current debates in the literature concerning the concept of TQM in the HE sector, including quality issues in Saudi HEIs. The primary objectives of the literature review are to:

- collect pertinent information and perspectives
- explore in some depth the concepts of TQM and its philosophical relevance in educational institutions
- investigate its suitability for implementation in Saudi public universities.

The studies reviewed in this chapter centre on quality management, organisational culture and leadership. In addition, a comprehensive critical reading of qualitative and quantitative studies was conducted, including reviews and case studies. The focus was on reviewing research studies on TQM philosophy and its use in the HE sector. Section 3.2 explains the methodology applied for searching the relevant literature.

### **3.2 Review Strategy**

In the current study, searching the literature involved either using academic sources that were physically available in the Victoria University library or visiting an online database such as Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis, Google Scholar, Springer Link, JSTOR and Web of Science to find the relevant sources. The Victoria University library subscribes to a large number of online databases, which enabled the researcher to access these research engine databases and many other online academic databases, obtaining the relevant academic materials for the study.

The first stage in searching the literature involved the processes of online search queries using a specific set of terms, including 'TQM', 'quality management' and 'universities'. The second stage involved expanding the scope of the search to include additional keywords in combination, such as 'total quality management', 'TQM and quality culture', 'TQM and higher education sector', 'TQM and organisational culture', 'TQM and quality management', 'TQM and quality improvement' and 'TQM and cultural change'. Additional terms used in the search included 'quality improvement', 'critical success factors of TQM', 'quality culture', 'quality development', 'improved quality' and 'change management'. All sources reviewed were written in English and published in both developed and developing countries. Only a few studies explored the challenges in achieving a high-level integration of TQM CSFs in Saudi HEIs, which is suggestive of the current lack of knowledge in using TQM philosophy to drive cultural change in Saudi public universities. The researcher included peer-reviewed and up-to-

date sources as much as possible, especially recent debates surrounding the philosophy of TQM and its acceptance—or otherwise—in HEIs. The software, EndNote, was used to store, organise and keep records of the relevant sources and documents used for the study.

### **3.3 Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework is a collection of concepts, expectations, assumptions, theories and beliefs that serves as the foundation for specific studies, depending on the topic and research objectives. It guides the research study and aids the researcher in achieving the aims. It is a critical component of the research design because it serves as a road map for the study; it is defined as a written narrative in the form of a discussion, or a visual representation, that depicts and describes the major ideas, themes, key factors and variables, along with their presumed relationships (Antonenko 2015). According to Osanloo and Grant (2016), it is critical to provide a conceptual framework that clearly explains the phenomenon or phenomena under investigation. The term ‘conceptual framework’ refers to a network of interconnected concepts (Höllerer et al. 2020) and is intended to add clarity, coherence, logic and relevance to the research being conducted, particularly when it is linked to a specific problem, topic and objective (Antonenko 2015). It further assists the researcher in comprehending the connections and relationships between the chosen variables. A conceptual framework depicts a relationship between conceptual ideas that are generated from the narrative data. This interlinking of the concepts and ideas in a study, according to Maker (2021), is often depicted using visual aids, such as matrices, charts, tables, concept maps and cross-tabulations. A conceptual framework provides a comprehensive structure to depict and visualise the relationship between different concepts. After considering the debate in the literature, a conceptual framework was established for this research.

Bendermacher et al. (2019), Bhaskar (2020), Bouranta et al. (2019) and Štemberger et al. (2018) stated that when an organisation embraces TQM, it should guarantee that it is appropriate for the organisation and will lead to quality improvements. Other authors, such as Alrabeah et al. (2020), Bouranta et al. (2019) and Koc and Buser (2020), suggested that to solve the TQM implementation challenges specific to a country's setting, it is critical to first understand the interrelationships between TQM and the context in which it is being implemented. One of the primary impediments to successful TQM adoption is a misalignment between its values and the context or reality of organisations in which these values exist (Kumar et al. 2020; Manatos et al. 2017; Mukhopadhyay 2020; Rodriguez et al. 2018; Talapatra & Uddin 2019). Following a review of the literature, and in the absence of widespread agreement on a set of CSFs, a conceptual framework was developed to account for both the challenges and opportunities in achieving a high-level integration of TQM's values. This framework encompasses the social/soft aspects of TQM philosophy through nine values collectively known as CSFs. The terms CSFs and core values or values will be used interchangeably to express the same meaning, referring to the values of TQM that establish its philosophical foundations.

Nine TQM CSFs were identified and adopted from various studies. A study conducted by Zwain et al. (2017 2011) which formed the basis of the most commonly identified factors accepted by authors in TQM philosophy highlighted some TQM CSFs. These identified CSFs across the literature include leadership commitment, strategic planning, continuous improvement, customer focus, process focus, employee involvement, training and learning, rewards and recognition and management by the facts (Zwain et al. 2017; Zwain et al. 2011). These CSFs, which originate from the so-called social or soft-side aspects of TQM, are noted in many studies, such as Bayraktar, Tatoglu and Zaim (2008), Kanji, Malek and Tambi (1999), Karia and Asaari (2006) and Zwain, Teong and Othman (2011). Hence, the present study

explores the challenges faced by Saudi public universities by considering these nine TQM CSFs (see Section 3.8 for more details on each of the selected nine core values, which are supported by evidence from studies in the literature of TQM).

To address the research question(s) and accomplish the study's objectives, knowing the CSFs and their impact on quality development is crucial because they are the values that define and form the philosophy of TQM. Thus, to include the development of the level of understanding of the TQM as a philosophy beyond its current narrow definition and application as a tool for quality control, assurance and measurement, a knowledge of the social component (CSFs) of TQM is necessary for evaluating the effects they have in forming and developing a new quality-oriented culture in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities.

As presented here, the nine values of TQM, which represent the soft side of the philosophy, serve as the current study's conceptual framework, striving to bridge the gap in the knowledge concerning these core values to build a quality-oriented culture ( Dahlgaard-Park et al. 2018; Kemenade & Hardjon 2019; F. Alofan, Chen and Tan 2020; Asante & Ngulube 2020; Bouranta et al. 2019; Khalili et al. 2017; Zwain et al. 2017). Ultimately, this study seeks to identify the barriers to the high-level integration of these selected CSFs to devise a practical approach for quality-oriented culture improvement in Saudi's public universities (Aburayya et al. 2020; Ali ALShubakie et al. 2021; Aquilani et al. 2017; Asante & Ngulube 2020; Bouranta et al. 2019; Kadhim & Ahmad 2021; Najmi et al. 2021; Papanthymou & Darra 2017).

In summary, this chapter discloses the debates in the literature surrounding the TQM philosophy in the HE sector and specifically explores the quality issues related to the challenges facing Saudi Arabian universities and the opportunities to adopt TQM CSFs. The purpose is to promote the high-level integration of TQM's core values to foster a quality-oriented culture. The finalised conceptual framework also aids in categorising the study's findings, establishing

its scope, conducting a literature search, acquiring the appropriate data and answering the research questions. Without a conceptual framework, it is difficult to specify the scope of a study (Adom et al. 2018) and the researcher may wander off topic and present irrelevant information. Section 3.4 reviews the literature on TQM philosophy.

### **3.4 Background of TQM**

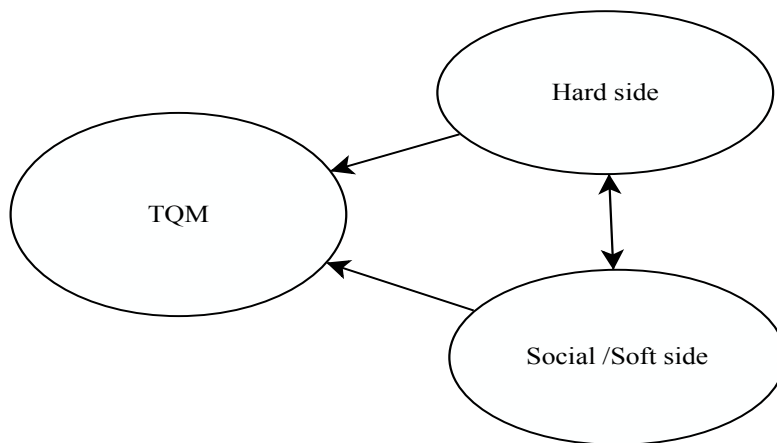
Quality has dominated management since the 1940s and remains prominent today (Beckford 2002 cited in Fredriksson & Isaksson 2018). The word ‘quality’ derives from the Latin word *qualitas* (Sahney 2016). In the early 1920s, quality improvement originated from statistical theory and, later, quality control. However, according to Sahney (2016), the term TQM appeared in the 1980s when it was suggested to replace the word ‘control’ with ‘management’ because it was believed that quality was not something to be controlled but rather managed. With its implementation and success in Japan, the US and Europe, and with the creation of several associations and foundations of quality management across the world in the 1970s and 1980s, the importance and value of quality management were popularised under several terms such as ‘kaizen’, ‘TQM’, ‘benchmarking’, ‘business excellence’, ‘Six Sigma’ and ‘ISO 9000’. According to Dahlgaard-Park et al. (2018) and Markowitsch (2018), Japan has played a significant role in participating in and shaping this quality movement and has inspired many organisations and countries worldwide, leading to its popularisation (Jung & Chung 2016; Mehra & Ranganathan 2008) and acceptance as a new management principle. As TQM has evolved into a subjective and social philosophy, according to Carnerud and Bäckström (2021), the concept of TQM started to attract increasing interest from the service industry.

The extant literature on TQM implementation practices has primarily focused on manufacturing companies (Mahmood et al. 2014). However, in recent years, the concept of TQM has also been applied to the service sector as well as the HE sector (Bouranta et al. 2019;

Mahmood et al. 2014; Nasim et al. 2020). According to Fredriksson and Isaksson (2018), many quality philosophies have been developed and implemented because of the emergence of new technologies, changes in how organisations function and global competition. According to Dahlgaard et al. (2019), TQM is a multidimensional concept encompassing all quality-related factors and the definition of approaches. Hellsten and Klefsjö (2000) stated that TQM is a management system consisting of three inextricably linked components: values, methodologies, and tools, in which the inter-dependent components work together to accomplish a system's aim. This was also supported by Al-Hazmi (2020), who asserted that TQM is built on the philosophy, principles, procedures, and practices that are all needed to work in organisations. However, the multidimensional character of TQM seems to have created complexities for organisations in various industries trying to implement it. Psomas and Antony (2017) stated that the multidimensional structure of quality management necessitates an educational institution to evaluate and think holistically when implementing the TQM philosophy.

According to Dahlgaard et al. (2019), TQM is largely about changing intangible factors like leadership, people management and partnerships to create a new organisational culture and support and improve a workplace's core activities. Given the diversity of TQM critical factors, the literature has strived to classify them according to their nature: soft (social) and hard (technical) aspects (Calvo-Mora et al. 2014) (see Figure 3.1). Soft factors relate to the social and behavioral aspects of an organisation, including the development of an organisational culture, leadership, commitment from top management, the orientation towards human resources, customers, and stakeholders, as well as fostering employee empowerment and involvement. These elements are highlighted in the works of Green (2012a), Yeng et al. (2018a), and Waddell & Mallen (2001). On the other hand, 'hard factors' refer to the tangible techniques and tools used in TQM, such as Pareto charts, cause-effect diagrams, control charts,

and statistical process control, benchmarking which are associated with more technical elements like quality planning, ongoing improvement, supplier management, process oversight, material and information management, and the design of products and services as described by Calvo-Mora et al. (2014b). Nevertheless, despite the tangible benefits offered by hard factors, understanding and exploring soft factors are fundamental for the successful implementation of TQM initiatives in organisations.



**Figure 3. 1 Hard and Soft aspect of TQM**

The soft side includes people and leadership commitment and involvement, the organisation's shared view, CF and cultural involvement principles that are difficult to observe and measure (Calvo-Mora et al. 2014). In an observational approach, Calvo-Mora et al. (2015) stated that in the service sector, organisations are paying greater attention to TQM soft factors, such as leadership, human resources management and customer focus, while manufacturing companies focus more on hard aspects, such as statistical process control, data quality and information management.

Sahney (2016) argued that 'soft' elements are more philosophical, social and behavioural aspects related to leadership, top management commitment, strategic quality planning, culture, human resources, participation and empowerment. Similarly, Bouranta et al. (2019) and Fotopoulos and Psomas (2009) argued that soft TQM practices are intangible and primarily



relate to leadership, employee empowerment and culture. Bouranta et al. (2019) observed that certain empirical research studies emphasised soft practices as a prerequisite for TQM's successful implementation. Tenji and Foley (2019) suggested that quality improvement is mostly shaped by the soft factors of TQM, with hard factors being secondary. Thus, in the evolution of theory and practice in quality management, Tenji and Foley (2019), Wu et al. (2011) and Wu (2015) illustrated that there has been a shift in understanding TQM philosophy moving away from 'hard' aspects, such as tools, techniques, practices and systems, to 'soft' social aspects, such as behavioural and cultural elements. Shreds of evidence supporting these arguments have also been stated by recent studies such as Stravinskiene and Serafinas (2020) and Vinni (2021), who showed that the TQM has undergone a shift as the interest in understanding it has increased with greater focus on the soft side, including social and behavioural elements.

According to Glaveli et al. (2021), soft TQM aspects are arguably more important than hard TQM aspects for the successful implementation of TQM, particularly during the beginning stages, because they are difficult to measure. Nevertheless, it is evident from the literature that the social aspect of TQM is still not well developed in many developing countries, including Saudi Arabian HEIs (Alofi & Younes 2019; Alsughayir 2014; Asif et al. 2013). These countries tend to lean towards the 'hard' side of TQM, which focuses on measuring and controlling processes and functions (Asif et al. 2013). However, to achieve success in implementing the TQM philosophy in Saudi Arabian HEIs, it is crucial to shift the focus from mere control to considering the broader purpose of TQM. This includes fostering a culture change in which quality is at the core of all activities, aiming to reach the desired outcomes.

### **3.5 Review of TQM Evolutions, and Most well-known Quality Awards Framework**

This section provides a brief discussion on the historical development of TQM, including the historical development of the philosophy through various paradigms that have shaped its evolution, the pivotal contributions of quality gurus to the development of TQM philosophy, and the quality awards established by governments and regional organisations to encourage a culture of quality and endorse best practices in organisations.

***TQM's Historical Development:*** The evolution of quality management has been influenced by increased competition, technological advancements, and rising customer expectations (Weckenmann et al., 2015). Since the mid-20th century, quality management has incorporated structural, power, and cultural considerations within organisations (Houston, 2007). TQM has progressed from basic inspection to quality control and assurance, reaching the comprehensive approach now known as TQM (Alghamdi, 2018; Antony, 2013). Understanding the development of TQM entails recognising several paradigms namely: quality inspection, process quality, and system quality (Weckenmann, Akkasoglu, & Werner, 2015). Between 1900 and 1940, quality inspection was the norm, emphasizing the conformance of product characteristics to specific standards. Defects were detected only after production, leading to reactive measures taken on a departmental level (Vanagas & Žirgutienė, 2005). This period was succeeded by the emergence of the process quality paradigm, stretching from 1937 to 1960. This new phase marked a departure from the waning relevance of Taylor's scientific management, embracing statistical quality control to pre-emptively address quality concerns. In this period, statistical quality control reached its peak effectiveness, shifting from a reactive post-production inspection to a preventive approach. The emphasis transitioned to enhancing the quality of each task and process rather than just the final product (Vanagas & Žirgutienė, 2005). During this era, for quality checks, there was a significant move toward using

representative sampling for inspections instead of maximum inspection for each product (Ansah, 2018).

Throughout the evolution from quality inspection to process quality, the industry's approach to quality issues expanded, yet the emphasis continued to be on product-centric processes. However, rising customer expectations and increasing market competition necessitated the development of a new paradigm, one that would guarantee quality at every stage of production. This led to the creation of the quality system paradigm, which introduced a holistic view that acknowledged and addressed systemic quality challenges. This new realisation paved the way for TQM, marking a departure from reactive and preventive approaches to one that embraces proactive initiatives. It necessitated the total engagement of all stakeholders and a commitment to continual improvement, ensuring that both present and future customer needs are met (Sinha et al., 2016; Kemenade & Hardjono, 2019).

TQM's principles, tools, and techniques, according to Weckenmann et al., (2015), represent shifts in prevailing management theories, extending beyond competitive markets into sectors like education, healthcare, and public administration, where there is a strong will to enhance performance (Carnerud, 2020). For instance, the quality of HEIs has received significant attention from various stakeholders, such as politicians, government bodies, university management, students and their parents, as well as researchers, academics, and endowment benefactors (Dwaikat, 2021; Tasopoulou & Tsiotras, 2017). The discussion above illustrates the three paradigm shifts have shaped the TQM philosophy. The following section highlights the significant contributions made by quality gurus, followed by a summary of the most internationally renowned quality awards that encourage best practices and excellence in performance.

***Quality Gurus' Contributions:*** Quality experts such as Deming, Juran, Crosby, Feigenbaum, and Ishikawa have made significant contributions that paved the way for the emergence and development of the TQM philosophy (Aquilani et al., 2017; Karuppusami & Gandhinathan, 2006; Mosadeghrad, 2014; Zairi, 2013). Their works underpinned TQM's significant growth (Shafiq, Lasrado, & Hafeez, 2019; Zairi, 2013), with Deming particularly noted as a pioneer of the industrial revolution's 'Third Wave' and the establishment of 14 management principles central to TQM (Sunder, 2016; Sitnikov, 2013). Deming developed the 'profound knowledge' system, encompassing an understanding of organizational processes, variation, knowledge limits, and human nature (Deming, 1986). Juran defined TQM as 'fitness for use' and introduced the quality trilogy—quality planning, control, and improvement—as a framework for continuous enhancement (Sudhakar & JV, 2016; DeFeo, 2019). According to Juran, excellence is a concept of managerial breakthrough, which can be attained through the quality trilogy (Sunder, 2016). He authored several prominent books on quality management, including *Quality is Free*, *Quality Without Tears*, and *Let's Talk Quality* (Fox, 2013). As a quality pioneer, Crosby defined quality as 'conformance to requirements' and promoted the idea that quality management improves profitability (Crosby, 1985, 1979). He is also known for the 'four absolutes' of quality and 14 improvement steps (Alcorn, 2011). According to Zairi (2013), Crosby reinforced Juran's insights regarding management motivation for TQM, as he was the first to state that senior management should embrace a quality management style not because it is the right thing to do but because it benefits the bottom line (Crosby, 1985, 1979).

Ishikawa, a Japanese quality expert and a co-founder of the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE), was known as a proponent of quality control circles and developed the cause-and-effect diagram, which is used to determine and break down the leading causes of a problem in quality improvement in organizations (Dale et al., 2016; Zairi, 2013). Armand V. Feigenbaum, a US quality guru, contributed valuable and influential ideas to world-class

companies in Japan for many years. Feigenbaum adopted a quality approach that differed from Deming and Juran's. His approach was built on a three-step strategy for improving quality: quality leadership, quality technology, and organizational commitment (Neyestani, 2017). Feigenbaum was the first to coin the phrase 'total quality control' and argued that the term 'total quality' is linked to broader issues such as planning, organization, and direction. Feigenbaum (1983;1991) also argued that QA cannot efficiently improve the quality of products if it only focuses on production processes. In summary, these quality gurus laid the foundation for TQM as a philosophy that enhances the quality culture with a focus on both technical and social elements. The need to improve quality practices catalysed the formation of key quality awards globally, including the Deming Prize (1950), the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (1987), the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) (1989), and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (2011). These entities are committed to establishing standards that aim to elevate performance and quality in various industries. Subsequent sections will provide further insights into these quality regulatory bodies.

***Quality Awards:*** The remarkable enhancements realised by adopting the implementation of quality initiatives, notably TQM programs, have motivated many nations to champion the concept of continuous improvement to improve performance outcomes and their economic frameworks. This commitment to excellence has been acknowledged and incentivised by creating national quality awards that recognise these achievements in advancing quality practices (Lobo et al., 2018). These quality award models have helped codify and institutionalise concepts and relationships to create framework for quality improvement for organisations across industries. For instance, the Deming prize was established in 1950 to reward Japanese companies for their excellence in quality improvement (Aydın & Kahraman 2018). The prize is now open to non-Japanese individuals and companies who have made significant contributions to advancing quality, under the guidance of the Japanese Union of

Scientists and Engineers (Deming Prize 2015). The award places special emphasis on certain core values such as customer focus, continuous learning, employee involvement and development and business agility.

In 1987 in the United States, the MBNQA was established by the US Congress. This quality regulatory model was established to encourage quality management performance and competition among American businesses (Cook and Zhang 2019). According to Hawarna et al. (2020), the criteria of MBNQA serve as a comprehensive framework for self-assessment and represent a systematic approach to organisational quality. The quality model includes seven elements: the first six are systematic processes, while the seventh focuses on performance results. Under the systematic processes comes leadership, strategy, customers, measurement, analysis, knowledge management, workforce, and operations. These are all examples of the systematic processes side of the model (Din et al. 2020). The objective of the model's seventh element is to evaluate how effectively an organisation provides and equitably distributes value among its stakeholders and promotes societal welfare.

Driven by the success of these previous quality models, the Deming Prize and MBNQA, the EFQM was created in 1989 in Brussels by fourteen leading European businesses with the endorsement of the European Commission. The aim of establishing EFQM was to increase European economic competitiveness and enhance the position of European industries and commerce by strengthening the strategic role of quality in corporations (Mendes 2017). In the Australian context, there have been several quality models, for instance, the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF) (1987) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (2011).

According to Price, Pepper and Stewart (2018), the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF) is a guiding framework that provides direction for organisational quality practices as

it plays a role in establishing various essential activities to facilitate continuous improvement. The ABEF model was developed in 1987 by the Australian Quality Council (AQC) to help improve awareness about quality and to support Australian organisations in meeting the challenges of the global market. The model shares similarities with other business excellence frameworks, such as Baldrige in the US and EFQM in Europe (Grigg and Mann 2008). It encompasses a set of seven integrated values which will assist organisations to implement quality improvements (Johnsson et al. 2021). These seven values are leadership, strategy, policy and planning, information and analysis, people, customer focus, strategy and planning processes, quality of process products and services and organisational performance. Another quality model in the context of Australia is the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (2011).

Australian quality policy has been influenced by developments in countries and regions such as the United Kingdom (UK), Europe and the United States of America (USA) (Yorke & Vidovich 2016). Thus, TEQSA was passed into law on 11 July 2011 with the purpose of evaluating the performance of tertiary education institutions against five broad standards. The purpose of the TEQSA framework was to enhance quality development in the sector of HE in the country (Australian Government 2011). These comprise the Provider Standards, Qualification Standards, Teaching and Learning Standards, Information Standards, and Research Standards (Yorke & Vidovich 2016). All higher education providers must meet these to register and operate within Australia's education system. The specific key objectives of TEQSA are:

1. **National Consistency** - To ensure uniform regulation across the Australian higher education sector.

2. **Quality Framework** - To regulate higher education using a standards-based quality framework while adhering to regulatory principles concerning necessity, risk, and proportionality.
3. **Reputation and Competitiveness** - To protect and enhance Australia's international standing by ensuring quality in higher education and training services.
4. **Excellence, Diversity, and Innovation** - To promote a culture of excellence, diversity, and innovation within Australian higher education institutions.
5. **Educational Needs** - To encourage the development of a higher education system that aligns with Australian social and economic requirements for a well-educated and skilled workforce.
6. **Student Protection** - To protect students by requiring the provision of quality higher education.
7. **Access to Information** - To ensure that all current or prospective students have access to information regarding higher education in Australia.

According to Baird (2013), TEQSA holds the typical powers of many external quality assurance agencies in the country for institutional and programme accreditation. TEQSA has enacted a set of threshold standards for each of these accreditations. Consequently, educational providers, including universities, must continuously comply with these accreditation standards. A study by (Padró et al. 2020) showed that TQM practices are present within the originating TEQSA statute. TEQSA incorporates many TQM elements representing a change from traditional quality assurance (QA) review processes to a risk-based approach to regulatory compliance (Padro and Sankey, 2018; Padro et al.2020). Among the common values and practices that TEQSA adopted from TQM are benchmarking and a focus on accountability. However, TEQSA is seen as a costly and burdensome process because of the extent of evidence required. The above section has outlined the quality awards models that were established across



different countries and regions to encourage best practice and improve quality performance and outcomes. The following section discusses TQM CSFs and the challenges faced when attempting to adopt the philosophy values in the HE sector.

### **3.6 TQM CSFs and Quality in Organisations**

TQM plays a significant role in enhancing quality in organisations. According to Asante and Ngulube (2020), TQM is the art of managing processes to achieve excellence. Therefore, TQM takes the view that organisations are systems with processes that seek to serve and satisfy customers by meeting their expectations. Kumar and Sharma (2017), stated that TQM is a management philosophy necessary for all organisations to survive in a competitive business environment. However, its implementation is associated with CSFs and their success (Hietschold, Reinhardt & Gurtner 2014; Kumar & Sharma 2017). Calvo-Mora et al. (2014) posit that CSFs are essential principles and practices for TQM programs to produce the desired effects for an organisation's results and performance. Talib, Rahman and Qureshi (2013) and Fatemi, Wei and Moayerifard (2016) argue that TQM is a combination of philosophy and guiding principles representing the foundations of a continuously improving organisation. Moreover, Dahlgaard-Park (2011) explains that TQM combines principles and practices that lead to business excellence. Therefore, TQM CSFs (soft or social side) hold great significance when it comes to quality improvement.

Mosadeghrad (2014) stated that there is no consensus among TQM gurus, researchers and consultants on the basic principles and the CSFs of TQM. Authors of TQM literature have provided different definitions for these CSFs, which comes as no surprise since the circumstances, priorities and contexts in which organisations operate are varied (Zhao et al. 2021). For example, the CSFs in the manufacturing sector are different from those in service-related industries. Therefore, TQM CSFs have been discussed from a variety of viewpoints.

Differences exist among authors regarding the definitions and number of CSFs, but quality authors believe that the CSFs constitute the TQM philosophy and are the most influential and impactful factors necessary for its adoption and successful implementation, irrespective of the type of sector or delivery of services or products.

Nevertheless, without sufficient knowledge of CSFs (social or soft elements), TQM adoption and implementation are doomed to fail in organisations (Alzoubi et al. 2019, Asif et al. 2013). Seetharaman, Sreenivasan and Boon (2006) and Rodriguez, Valenzuela and Ayuyao (2018) suggest that TQM CSFs can determine the success or failure of an organisation. Moreover, Carmona-Márquez et al. (2016) state that other authors discussed the failure of TQM programs, attributing the failure to the implementation factors rather than shortcomings in the content of TQM programs. In line with this, Khanna, Sharma and Laroia (2011), in their study argued that TQM CSFs are factors that affect organisations for better or worse. With this in mind, CSFs require special attention as they provide an early warning system for management and a way of avoiding surprises or missed opportunities. This means that CSFs are the processes that management can manage and control to achieve its objectives (Khanna, Sharma & Laroia 2011). Consequently, the CSFs of TQM are essential to an organisation's success, so they must be carefully managed for integration to ensure the success implementation of TQM to improve quality and meet development objectives.

Bouranta, Psomas and Pantouvakis (2017) and Alzoubi et al. (2019) assert a need to identify what constitutes TQM and the key TQM factors in establishing an effective TQM model to succeed in the service sector. Seetharaman, Sreenivasan and Boon (2006) argue that the effectiveness of TQM implementation involves the definition and deployment of several key elements. This is because the main reason TQM programs fail is because of a lack of knowledge regarding their proper implementation. Boynton and Zmud (1984) view the CSFs of TQM as

things that must go well to ensure success. Yusof and Aspinwall (1999), conversely, define them as the practices needed for the successful implementation of TQM programs. In their work, Wali, Deshmukh and Gupta (2003) argued that CSFs are overarching conditions and drivers required for a firm to achieve its purpose. According to Jehangir (2017), CSFs are critical areas of managerial planning and action that must be practised to achieve effective quality management in a business unit in an organisation.

Although organisations in service industries, including the HE sector, differ from those in manufacturing industries (Pattanayak, Koilakuntla & Punyatoya 2017), the concept of TQM is no longer restricted to the manufacturing industry. Now TQM has its way in the service sector owing to its accepted importance and businesses' need to achieve consistent quality as expected by customers. The need to meet specific quality standards, reduce operational costs, sustain development and satisfy customers has led many organisations in the service sector to adopt TQM values (Dahlgaard-Park 2011). Nowadays organisations in the service sector, including health, banking, transportation, hotels and education, both for-profit and non-profit, are adopting and applying the principles associated with TQM (Talib & Rahman 2010). The following details the studies which attempted to explore TQM CSFs or core values in organisations from the service sector.

### **3.7 TQM CSFs in Service Context**

Numerous authors have investigated TQM and its critical success factors (CSFs) in service sector organisations. Research in this area has identified a range of practices deemed critical for TQM's successful deployment (Dahlgaard-Park, 2011; Garza-Reyes, Rocha-Lona, & Kumar, 2015). While service businesses have adopted TQM philosophies, there remains a need to clearly define its key elements. Echoing this sentiment, Wei and Moayerifard (2016), along with Bouranta et al. (2019), have called for more precise definitions of TQM's key factors.

Bouranta, Psomas, and Pantouvakis (2017) contend that applying TQM in services necessitates the identification and prioritization of necessary actions. Nonetheless, TQM's implementation is influenced by regional variations in its components (Sun, 1999; Huarng & Chen, 2002; Ng, 2012), adding a layer of complexity to its adoption in organisations.

The discussion of TQM within organisations recognises that different agencies/departments may place varying levels of emphasis on the philosophy's values, even within the same industry (van Donk & Sanders, 1993; Sila, 2018). A study conducted by Klefsjö (2000) found that TQM is generally understood and frequently described as a management philosophy centred on core values, including everyone's commitment, continuous improvement, process orientation, fast reaction, result orientation and the ability to learn from others. Investigating this further, an extensive literature review was carried out by Mahapatra and Khan (2006) who identified six key factors pivotal to TQM's success: leadership and management commitment, customer focus, process control, training, and employee involvement. These factors stood out among twenty initially considered, highlighting their significant importance as the cornerstone of TQM. In the similar vein, Lenka and Suar (2008) in their study also identified six factors of TQM that can help organisations achieve business excellence. These key six factors of TQM are transformational leadership, customer orientation, human resource management, organisational culture, continuous improvement and quality measurement.

Al-Marri, Ahmed and Zairi (2007) highlighted the key principles of TQM. In their study number, 16 values were confirmed as TQM crucial practices for a well-functioning service sector. The highlighted CFSs were top management support, customer focus, strategy, benchmarking, employee's involvement, recognition and reward, problem analysis, quality technologies, service design, services capes, service culture, social responsibility, human resource management, contiguous improvement, quality department and quality systems.

Brah, Wong and Rao (2000) identified and empirically validated critical areas of TQM on the basis of perceptions and experiences of a range of total quality practitioners in Singapore's service industry. They discovered that the CSFs of TQM implementation were senior management support, customer focus, employee involvement, employee training, employee empowerment, supplier quality management, process improvement, service design, quality improvement rewards, benchmarking, cleanliness and organisation. A study conducted by Sit et al. (2009) found that leadership, human resource focus, information analysis, knowledge management and strategic planning were among the CSFs in Malaysia's service organisations.

By reviewing the literature, it appears there are different opinions on the CSFs of TQM in the service industry. Bouranta et al. (2019) suggest that a wide range of elements of TQM would compromise managers' understanding, resulting in the less than successful implementation of TQM. As Manatos (2017) explained, in higher education, the concept of quality is often controversial and non-consensual because HE is situated in a particular environment, namely universities, which may have different outcomes for how quality is managed. Therefore, to better understand how the CSFs of TQM have been prioritised in relation to universities, the current study needs to narrow the scope to studies that specifically identify the CSFs of TQM. Thus, the following subsection discusses the nine CSFs of TQM adopted in this current study's framework, and then the broader challenges faced in adopting the TQM philosophy in developing countries.

### **3.8 TQM CSFs**

According to Zabadi (2013) and Ali, Mahat & Zairi (2010), TQM is not merely a management program or initiative package but rather a holistic philosophy that seeks to create an organisational culture in which everyone is committed to quality and understands its strategic importance in affecting procedures, routines and workplace behaviour. Regardless of the

challenges being confronted by HEIs in implementing a high level of quality, Rodriguez, Valenzuela and Ayuyao (2018) argue that various benefits go along with the implementation of TQM. These include better employee morale, teamwork, customer satisfaction and continued professional development of all HEIs personnel. Similarly, Ali and Shastri (2010) contend that TQM is inevitably a common factor that could shape the strategies of HEIs in their attempt to satisfy various stakeholders, these generally being students, parents, industry and the broader society. As a result, people's interest in understanding TQM has increased, and they have shifted away from its 'hard' factors—such as tools, techniques, practices and systems—towards understanding its philosophical side, including a focus on its behavioural and cultural components (Tenji & Foley 2019; Wu, Zhang & Schroeder 2011).

In this sense, Ali and Johl (2022) maintained that TQM has two sides—the soft and hard aspects of quality. Similarly, authors such as Dahlgaard-Park (2011), Prajogo & McDermott (2005), Yunis, Jung, and Chen (2013) and Lycke and Tano (2017) asserted that the adoption of soft TQM is mostly to deal with quality improvement practices and behaviours, while hard tools and techniques are secondary considerations. Therefore, assessing TQM implementation might focus on the hard side, which refers to quality improvement tools and techniques, or the soft side, which is associated with management concepts and principles. The hard side of TQM incorporates elements such as flow charts, relationships diagrams or plans, scatter diagrams, control charts, Pareto analysis, quality function deployment and design of experiments, among others (Fotopoulos and Psomas 2009). In comparison, soft side elements include factors such as leadership, employee empowerment and culture which is related to management developments that advance the correlation between TQM and the performance improving quality in an organisation (Ali & Johl 2022).

The current study has concentrated on levelling up knowledge concerning the soft side of the TQM philosophy, more precisely its CSFs with a focus on the HEI context. According to Ali, Mahat & Zairi (2010), the term ‘critical success factors’ (CSFs) highlights the importance of ensuring success in a particular process or project. Gates (2010) defines the CSF of TQM as a few critical areas in which organisations must continually perform well to accomplish their objectives. Ferguson and Dickinson (1982) mentioned that CSFs are internal and external factors that must be identified and taken into account because they can either support or jeopardise a company’s achievement of its objective. Hence, TQM CSFs can be opportunities or threats to institutions’ strategic planning for improvement. Therefore, CSFs are critical areas that must be meticulously identified and carefully evaluated to ensure the implementation of the TQM program will succeed in organisations (Ali, Mahat & Zairi 2010)

Following a review of CSFs in the literature, nine elements were selected as part of the current study’s conceptual framework. The selection of these nine CSFs was determined on the basis of their popularity or frequency across studies as reported widely in the literature (see table 3). The nine CSFs that were found to occur the most frequently are leadership commitment, strategic planning, continuous improvement, customer focus, process focus, employees involvement, training and learning, reward and recognition and management by fact . These CSFs, which are derived from the so-called social or soft side components of TQM, have been highlighted in the literature across numerous research studies (e.g., Zwain, A, Teong & Othman 2011; Zwain, AAA, Lim & Othman 2017; Bajaj, Garg & Sethi 2018; Fotopoulos & Psomas 2009). The next section explores each of these CSFs in detail, with a particular emphasis on their associations and implementation in HEIs when possible.

**Table 3: TQM Critical Success Factors (CSFs)**

Practice of TQM CSFs	Leadership Commitment	Strategic Planning	Continuous Improvement	Customer Focus	Process Focus	Employee Involvement	Training Learning	Recognition/ Rewards	Management by the Facts
References									
Aamer (2017)			✓						
Aamer et al. (2017)			✓						
Aladwan and Forrester (2016)			✓						
Alhwairini and Foley (2012)	✓								
Allen and Kilmann (2001)								✓	
Aquilani et al. (2017)							✓		
Arasli (2012)									✓
Arunachalam and Palanichamy (2017)								✓	
Ashraf (2019)	✓			✓					
Asif et al. (2013)		✓		✓				✓	
Bajaj et al. (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Bayraktar et al. (2008)				✓	✓				
Bendermacher et al. (2017)	✓							✓	
Bouranta (2019)				✓					
Bouranta et al. (2019)				✓	✓		✓		
Brookes and Beket (2007)		✓							



Bruçaj (2018)			✓						
Bugdol (2020)	✓								
Calvo-Mora et al. (2014)		✓		✓					
Calvo-Mora et al. (2005)	✓								
Chang (2005)			✓						
Cruickshank (2003)						✓			
Dahlgaard et al. (2013)		✓		✓					
Dahlgaard-Park (2013)									✓
Dahlgaard-Park et al. (2013)									✓
Eagle and Brennan (2007)									✓
Farooq et al. (2007)						✓			
Fay and Thompson (2001)								✓	
Flumerfelt and Banachowski (2011)	✓								
Flynn and Saladin (2006)									✓
Fredriksson and Isaksson (2018)				✓					
Glaveli (2021)								✓	
Glaveli et al. (2021)							✓	✓	
Hsu and Shen (2005)									✓
Huq (2005)					✓				
Juran (1974, 1989)								✓	
Kanji (1999)									✓
Kanji et al. (1999)									✓

Karuppusami and Gandhinathan (2006)							✓		
Khan et al. (2019)	✓								
Lagrosen et al. (2010)				✓					
Lapia et al. (2015)			✓						
Lycke and Tano (2017)	✓								
Manatos et al. (2018)				✓					
Mazais (2012)					✓				
Mazais et al. (2012)					✓				
Mehralizade and Safaeemoghaddam (2010)				✓					
Mohammad (2013)					✓				
Mohammad Mosadeghrad (2014)	✓	✓						✓	✓
Mohammad Mosadeghrad (2013)					✓				
Mohammad Mosadeghrad (2014a)								✓	
Mohd Ali and Borhandden (2012)							✓		
Mosadeghra (2014)		✓						✓	
O'Mahony and Garavan (2012)			✓						

Oluwafemi and Laseinde (2020)							✓	✓	
Owlia and Aspinwall (1997)	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		
Pineda (2013)		✓							
Prajogo and McDermott (2005)				✓					
Praksh (2018)	✓								
Psomas and Antony (2017)	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Ramanauskien and Ramanauskas (2006)		✓							
Rodman et al. (2013)						✓			
Rodriguez et al. (2018)							✓		
Royo 2017)				✓					
Sitalakshmi (2007)	✓	✓							
Srima et al. (2015)				✓					
Sulaiman et al. (2013)						✓			
Sunder (2016)				✓		✓			
Talaq and Ahmed (2003)								✓	
Talib and Rahman (2015)		✓					✓		
Talib et al. (2011)		✓			✓				
Tar and Dick (2016)					✓				
Temponi (2005)			✓						
Tort-Martorell et al. (2011)									✓

van Kemenade & Hardjono 2019;									
Venkatraman (2007)			✓		✓	✓			
Waddell and Mallen (2001)					✓				
Wani and Mehraj (2014)					✓				
Zabadi (2013)	✓		✓			✓	✓		
Zairi (2013)							✓		
Zwain (2017)								✓	
Zwain, Lim and Othman (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zwain, Teong and Othman (2011)	✓								

### 3.8.1 Leadership Commitment

The crucial role of leadership commitment to quality development has been emphasised in various empirical studies (Ashraf 2019; Bajaj, Garg & Sethi 2018; Bendermacher et al. 2017; Calvo-Mora, Leal & Roldán 2005; Flumerfelt & Banachowski 2011; Khan, Malik & Janjua 2019; Lycke & Tano 2017; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Psomas & Antony 2017; Sitalakshmi 2007; Zwain, Teong and Othman 2011; Zwain, Lim and Othman 2017). Leaders are identified as a central facet of TQM in the tertiary education sector through their role in ensuring that quality culture permeates the HE sectors. Thus, leadership is recognised as one of the fundamental core values, forming the building blocks of a TQM framework in the HE sector. This is because leaders are the central drivers who determine how, when and where resources are allocated. They also clarify and distribute roles and responsibilities, create partnerships,

and generally run the process of people/staff management (Bendermacher et al. 2017; Calvo-Mora, Leal & Roldán 2005; Flumerfelt & Banachowski 2011; Sitalaksmi 2007). The role of leadership in TQM is also to promote trust, drive change and develop understanding. According to Alhwairini and Foley (2012) and Bugdol (2020) & Zabadi (2013), strong leadership is essential to achieving high-quality improvements through the successful implementation of TQM. This argument is supported by Mohammad Mosadeghrad (2014) who indicates that the TQM program in an organisation will definitely improve performance if there is a strong leadership commitment in place for planning, training and developing a quality structure and culture. However, there is a concern that a strong commitment by leadership to the adoption of TQM values may limit flexibility and adaptability and impede the ability of the university to respond to shifting conditions and opportunities.

Given the importance of leaders in implementing TQM in a HEI context, the perceived barriers to accepting TQM can be overcome, in part, by the commitment of a strong leader who can build a willingness to change, motivate people, create a climate of trust and shared understanding, and improve communication policies (Cruickshank 2003; Praksh 2018). Conversely, poor leadership, such as a leader who focuses only on inspection and control methods or strategies, can be perceived as inhibiting the full implementation of TQM in a HE context. Thus, the evidence from the literature confirms leadership commitment is a critical element of TQM philosophy.

### **3.8.2 Strategic Planning**

Like leadership commitment, strategic planning is another critical component of TQM CSFs. Strategic quality planning ensures the availability of resources for TQM implementation and assists in identifying customer and other stakeholder requirements, developing strategies, and implementing action plans that strive to meet the goals and objectives of a workplace

(Mosadeghra 2014). Thus, quality, in essence, should be viewed as a strategic objective that can realise the institution's vision and mission statements (Dahlgaard et al. 2013; Pineda 2013; Ramanauskien & Ramanauskas 2006). According to research studies, strategic planning is one of the most important CSFs, and its absence results in inefficient or poor quality in organisations (Bajaj, Garg & Sethi 2018; Mosadeghrad 2014; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Psomas & Antony 2017; Talib & Rahman 2015; Zwain, Lim & Otman 2017).

According to Talib and Rahman (2015), implementing a quality program such as TQM for the purposes of improving an organisation entail analysing and meticulously designing detailed plans ahead of time. In the HEI context, it has been proposed that TQM principles be incorporated into strategic plans to ensure quality development (Asif et al. 2013; Brookes & Beket 2007). Similarly, Talib et al. (2011) and Mohammad Mosadeghrad (2014) maintained that many issues that emerge when implementing the TQM philosophy can be resolved by strategic planning. Therefore, TQM concepts must be implemented by incorporating quality objectives into the planning process, including setting quality goals, developing policies, methods, and action plans, and defining all personnel roles and duties (Mohammad Mosadeghrad 2014). Poor planning for quality TQM implementation, by contrast, demonstrates a lack of long-term strategy quality planning, a lack of creative ideas, unclear quality action plans, insufficient resources for effectively implementing TQM, and a majority of employees believing that TQM is irrelevant to their situation (Talib et al. 2011). Thus, in HEIs, the potential for building a sustainable, long-term, and human-centred approach to TQM depends on proper strategic quality planning (Calvo-Mora et al. 2014; Psomas & Antony 2017; Sitalakhmi 2007). However, one significant drawback of engaging in strategic planning is the potential for it to be a resource-intensive and time-consuming process. This can lead to the allocation of resources away from other crucial initiatives or activities within the institution,

potentially causing resistance from various stakeholders. As a result, achieving buy-in and successfully implementing the strategic plan can become challenging.

### **3.8.3 Continuous Improvement**

Continuous improvement is another vital TQM CSF. According to Bajaj, Garg, and Sethi (2018), O'Mahony and Garavan (2012), Zwain, Lim, and Othman (2017), Zabadi (2013), Chang (2005), Temponi (2005) and Aamer (2017), continuous improvement is very important to the TQM program. Continuous improvement is framed on a shared commitment to continuous quality improvement and an unrelenting pursuit of better methods. Thus, as a customer-focused strategy, TQM focuses primarily on a continuous improvement plan backed up by innovation to develop a strong culture capable of improving competitiveness and performance (Lapia, Kairia, & Araina 2015). According to Zabadi (2013), established TQM models, founded on the teachings and insights of quality gurus, often incorporate several fundamental principles or features, including continuous improvement. Therefore, TQM implementation means putting considerable emphasis on monitoring quality development at all levels accompanied by continuous improvement (Chang 2005). However, placing excessive emphasis on continuous improvement in universities may result in a focus on achieving quick wins at the expense of sustainable solutions. This approach can lead to surface-level changes that fail to address the fundamental structural issues affecting education quality. As a result, resources may be diverted from more critical matters, hindering progress towards lasting improvements.

A few years ago, Psomas and Antony (2017) and Bruçaj (2018) pointed out that TQM adoption in HEIs should maintain a focus on developing a culture of continuous improvement. According to Temponi (2005), continuous improvement in academic institutions is a critical area that needs to be focused on, as it includes evaluating the needs and expectations of their

stakeholders, namely the faculty, students, staff, board of directors, accreditation agencies and members of the community, and regularly re-evaluating the effectiveness of programs delivered and overall quality initiatives. However, in developing countries, such as those in the Arab region, studies such as Aamer, Al-Awlaqi and Alkibsi (2017) and Aladwan and Forrester (2016) have illustrated that although there is clear evidence for the importance of continuous improvement when implementing TQM to improve quality, a continuous improvement culture is clearly lacking in many countries in the region owing to a low level of quality education and insufficient investment by organisations to educate staff (Temponi 2005).

#### **3.8.4 Customer Focus**

In essence, TQM is a customer-oriented approach that emphasises creating changes to satisfy a customers' needs. Thus, customer focus is one of the most studied aspects of TQM and has been widely acknowledged as one of the philosophy's keys values (Calvo-Mora et al. 2014; Dahlgaard-Park et al. 2013; Prajogo & McDermott 2005). According to Fredriksson and Isaksson (2018) and Mosadeghrad (2014), customer focus is the bedrock of the TQM philosophy, and its main existence is built on meeting or exceeding customers' needs and expectations. (Mosadeghrad 2014). Similarly, Bouranta (2019) asserts the importance of customer focus in driving an organisation to function excellently and achieve customer satisfaction. The view that customer focus is one of the major CSFs that has constructed the TQM philosophy is also supported by various other studies in the TQM literature (Ashraf 2019; Bajaj, Garg & Sethi 2018; Calvo-Mora et al. 2014; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Zwain, Lim & Othman 2017; Bouranta et al. 2019) who have collectively indicated customer focus is one of the most important factors of TQM.

For the successful implementation of TQM, Sunder (2016) asserts that quality programs in organisations must begin with an understanding of their customer requirements. For this



reason, it is essential to develop a thorough understanding of customers' needs and expectations before starting the quality program. Once the 'voice of the customer' is understood, it can then inform the design of production and service processes to generate a product or service that best fulfills that person's needs (Srima, Wannapiroon & Nilsook 2015). However, in a university setting, the TQM concept of customer focus may lead to challenges in determining the true 'customers' of the institution. While in a business context, the customer is easily defined as the person or group paying for the product or service, in a university, the customers can be represented by various groups, such as students, parents, government, accreditation bodies and donors, each with their own specific expectations and priorities. This can make it difficult to balance these competing demands and determine the priority of the needs of these different customers. Furthermore, an excessive focus on satisfying external stakeholders rather than fulfilling the educational needs and goals of the students, which is the university's primary mission, may lead to pressure on the university to sacrifice academic integrity and intellectual freedom (Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Royo 2017)

In the university context, the terms 'customer focus' and 'delighting customers' in relation to TQM adoption remain a contentious topic because it gives total emphasis on understanding quality from the customer's perspective, which pertains solely to commercial activities (Mehralizade & Safaeemoghaddam 2010; Lagrosen, Seyyed-Hashemi & Leitner 2010). Therefore, when discussing TQM philosophy in the HEI setting, Lagrosen, Seyyed-Hashemi, and Leitner (2004) and Venkatraman (2007) supported the use of the term stakeholders rather than customers since it is less controversial and takes into account both internal and external stakeholders. In this study, the term stakeholders will be adopted. Here, stakeholders refers to students, academics, demonstrative employers, families, government, accreditation agencies and the wider society, all of which constitute a university's typical internal and external stakeholders (Sunder 2016; Manatos, Rosa & Sarrico 2018). Thus, since academic programs

are the main product of any HEI and serve to satisfy the needs of students and other stakeholders (Asif et al. 2013), they should be assessed regularly to ensure they meet the needs of student and all other stakeholders (Bayraktar, Tatoglu & Zaim 2008). Thus, TQM philosophy through customer focus provides a method for incorporating the voice of various stakeholders into program design by taking opinions and allowing for feedback with a primary focus on addressing the needs and expectations of stakeholders.

### **3.8.5 Process Focus**

Another important TQM CFS is process focus. Several studies in the literature have highlighted the importance of focusing on the process as a key factor for successful TQM implementation (Bouranta et al. 2019; Huq 2005; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Talib et al. 2011; Zwain, Lim & Othman 2017; Mazais, Lapia & Liepia 2012; Mohammad Mosadeghrad 2013). By way of contrast, it has been stated in the service industry that a lack of process focus will result in TQM failure (Huq 2005) and this is because TQM incorporates continuous improvement concepts that are most effectively realised through a process management approach (Mazais 2012). When connected resources and activities are managed as a process, the desired results are accomplished more efficiently by implementing TQM (Owlia & Aspinwall 1997, Huq 2005). One challenge is that the emphasis on process focus within the context of universities can result in an inflexible approach to education, wherein established procedures and protocols are prioritised over experimentation and innovation. This can result in a lack of adaptability in the educational process, which can impede the development of new and effective teaching methods and learning strategies. Furthermore, adherence to process focus can also lead to a stifling of creativity in teaching methods and a lack of opportunities for students to explore and pursue their interests and passions.

According to Bouranta et al. (2019), Tar and Dick (2016) and Mohammad (2013), competent top management is critical in setting a focus for effective process management, as the lack of effective concentration on processes improvement results in difficulties in implementing TQM in organisations. Therefore, managing and improving the process will bring about the desired quality output and consolidate the way quality is improved in institutions. The stated words ‘process over the product principle’ according to Owlia and Aspinwall (1997) was an indication of the importance of the focus on the process on the HEIs context rather than the outcomes as the emphasis should be on the teaching process rather than examinations to enhance students’ performance in the classroom. Thus, the quality perspectives in HE have changed over time by transferring from experience to technique to style and ultimately to process. Regular evaluation and monitoring are two process activities that are involved parallelly and contribute to enhancing administrative and academic quality at a university (Bayraktar, Tatoglu, & Zaim 2008; Tar & Dick 2016). In short, TQM is regarded as a process-oriented strategy that focuses on the process to achieve high-quality improvement outcomes, and so process focus is an essential CSF of the TQM philosophy.

### **3.8.6 Employee Involvement**

Employee involvement is also recognised as a critical component of TQM CSFs (Psomas & Antony 2017; Bajaj, Garg & Sethi 2018; Sunder 2016; van Kemenade & Hardjono 2019; Zabadi 2013; Zwain, Lim & Othman 2017). According to Waddell and Mallen (2001), as cited in van Kemenade and Hardjono (2019), employee involvement drove the evolution of quality management from its highly rational and exclusively statistical origins to its more recent emphasis on soft concepts. In the context of HEIs, it is widely accepted that increasing staff involvement is a critical aspect that favourably affects the institution’s overall quality program. In fact, Sulaiman, Manochehri, and Al-Esmail (2013) ranked employee involvement as the second most important factor in determining the success of TQM initiatives in university

contexts. Conversely, Zabadi (2013) constrained the impact of employee involvement to the extent to which they receive the appropriate education and training to ensure they possess the requisite skills and knowledge for successful TQM implementation in an organisation. Hence, Venkatraman (2007) proposed that training and skill development programs that are aimed at increasing employee involvement in quality development should be connected with the institution's goals. Achieving total employee participation as mandated by TQM philosophy in the context of universities can be challenging because of the diverse nature of the workforce. This includes faculty members who possess a high degree of autonomy and academic freedom, as well as non-faculty staff with varying levels of education and job responsibilities. In addition, the traditional hierarchical structures and inadequate communication channels in universities can make it difficult to involve all employees in the decision-making process and ensure that their perspectives are taken into account.

According to a study conducted by Cruickshank (2003), employees' negative attitudes and lack of engagement are a significant hurdle to implementing TQM in universities. As a result, Wani and Mehraj (2014), as well as Farooq et al. (2007), endorsed the notion of systemic participation and emphasised the importance of each individual contributing to the continuous improvement process to ensure total quality in the field of education. This participatory approach is viewed as a fundamental element of TQM when it comes to addressing the issue(s) of educational quality (Farooq et al. 2007). As a result, the participation of employees is critical when implementing TQM in HEIs (Rodman, Biloslavo, & Bratoz 2013), as employees should be viewed, managed, and guided as architects of an organisation's future and the custodians of critical forms of knowledge that are essential for driving quality improvement. Thus, to ensure the sector's effective quality development, it is necessary to promote positive attitudes towards TQM implementation among academic and administrative staff and provide them with

sufficient education and training programs to improve their skills and knowledge about TQM adoption at a university.

### **3.8.7 Training and Learning**

The TQM philosophy is an ongoing process that emphasises the need for quality training programs to empower, encourage and support personnel in pursuing quality development in an organisation. Studies such as Bajaj, Garg, and Sethi (2018), Oluwafemi and Laseinde (2020), Owlia and Aspinwall (1997), Talib and Rahman (2015), Venkatraman (2007), Zabadi (2013), Zairi (2013), Zwain, Lim, and Othman (2017) emphasised the importance of staff training and education in TQM. Karuppusami and Gandhinathan (2006), Zwain, Lim, and Othman (2017), and Aquilani et al. (2017) conducted an extensive review of the TQM literature and concluded that training and education are the key dimensions of the TQM philosophy and are an essential factor in its successful implementation in educational institutions. According to Aquilani et al. (2017), training and learning as a component of the TQM concept grew in prominence from 2003 to 2007 and then again from 2013 to 2015. Recently, findings from studies such as Bouranta et al. (2019) and Glaveli, Vouzas and Roumeliotou (2021) revealed that training and education are one of the most important factors for the successful implementation of the TQM philosophy, and the importance of these factors is still relevant today for the successful implementation of TQM in organisations.

Training and learning have been shown in studies to be critical issues that must be considered to prepare and support employees in their anticipated new activities linked with the adoption and implementation of the TQM concept in universities. Oluwafemi and Laseinde (2020) state that specialised quality training programs along with the appropriate knowledge about the organisation's mission and vision are required to promote quality in the workplace. Hence, a quality training program should educate, inform, and train every individual in an organisation

under the supervision of specialised people who have acquired the knowledge and skills in quality improvements and quality edits (Oluwafemi & Laseinde 2020). Such concentrated quality training programs, offered by quality experts, will assist employees in increasing their knowledge and improving their ability to deal with quality development demands. The implementation of training on quality management can prove to be a costly endeavour, as it necessitates the engagement of specialised quality experts to design and deliver training programs. Providing quality training programs that align with the university's objectives requires a thorough understanding of the organisation's mission and vision. However, obtaining such an understanding may be challenging if the quality experts are engaged on short contracts to provide coaching without an adequate comprehension of the university's vision and mission.

Therefore, personnel require more training before becoming deeply involved in TQM operations, as such activities entail increased responsibility. Mohd Ali and Borhandden (2012 p. 291) stated: 'Achieving quality in faculty members' performance requires institutions of higher learning to have advanced and dynamic staff training programs and quality culture in place'. Owlia and Aspinwall (1997) and Rodriguez, Valenzuela, and Ayuyao (2018) agreed that employees involved in quality improvement activities should be supported by proper training programs that are reinforced by senior management in an institution. Accordingly, training and learning are viewed as significant CSFs for assisting employees in advancing their knowledge and developing the skills and abilities to deal with quality challenges and solve problems.

### **3.8.8 Reward and Recognition**

Reward and recognition play a significant part in deciding an organisation's capacity to attract and retain high-potential individuals and help to maintain higher levels of quality and

performance (Fay & Thompson 2001). Thus, meaningful reward and recognition is fundamental for TQM practice (Talaq & Ahmed 2003) as it is necessary to motivate individuals in an organisation to be quality driven. Several studies in the literature have recognised reward and recognition as an important part of TQM since it helps to keep employees motivated, satisfied and target-oriented (Asif et al. 2013; Bajaj, Garg & Sethi 2018; Zwain 2017; Bendermacher et al. 2017; Glaveli, Vouzas & Roumeliotou 2021; Mohammad Mosadeghrad 2014a; Mosadeghrad 2014; Oluwafemi & Laseinde 2020). For instance, according to Asif et al. (2013), Zwain, Lim, and Othman (2017) and Glaveli, Vouzas, and Roumeliotou (2021), reward and recognition is the third most researched aspect associated with the maintenance of seamless TQM within an organisation.

Reward and recognition promote the development of increased intrinsic motivation within employees, which entails the establishment of focus on achieving the organisational goals and is also associated with the development of growth potential within employees. In addition, it helps create better coordination among the employees and the managers, thus enabling better management potentiality. In their study, Allen and Kilmann (2001) emphasised the need to align the reward system to assist in successful TQM adoption. Furthermore, according to the well-known quality guru, Juran (1989), intangible rewards such as recognition can inspire the cultural change essential for TQM adoption. Thus, to create a favourable work atmosphere and encourage employee engagement, organisations should have an effective, transparent and functional reward system supporting the TQM program. However, a disadvantage of reward and recognition is that it can lead to an over-reliance on rewards and incentives as the primary means of motivating employees. This can create an environment in which employees only focus on short-term gain driven by the desire to achieve rewards rather than taking ownership of their work or striving for continuous improvement. Additionally, a reward and recognition system framed solely on TQM metrics may only partially recognise and reward employees who

have made important contributions that do not fit within those specific metrics. This can lead to demotivated employees who do not feel appreciated for their efforts.

Glaveli (2021) and Arunachalam and Palanichamy (2017) similarly confirmed a favourable association between reward and recognition and employee job satisfaction. Thus, manager recognition, appreciation, and acknowledgement of achieving quality objectives will enhance employee involvement in TQM activities and commitment to quality improvement (Mohammad Mosadeghrad 2014a). As a result, it appears critical for senior management to ensure a well-developed and effective reward system to create an environment conducive to TQM adoption for quality development. According to Mohammad and Mosadeghrad (2014), adequate reward systems with quality objectives can reinforce involvement and enhance the environment for quality developments.

### **3.8.9 Management by Fact**

Different scholars have identified management by fact as a critical component of TQM for quality improvement. Studies in the literature define management by fact as a management philosophy that requires managers to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the current organisational position to develop viable management strategies for improvement (Arasli 2012; Dahlgaard-Park et al. 2013; Mohammad Mosadeghrad 2014; Eagle & Brennan 2007; Hsu & Shen 2005; Kanji, Malek, & Tambi 1999; Zwain, Lim, & Othman 2017). Dahlgaard-Park (2013) found that the management by fact was widely identified as a core value in TQM across 566 studies. According to the same study, management by fact was ranked second in importance behind people-centred management/universal participation, which was the most frequently reported value across studies of the literature in their study. According to Kanji (1999, p. 152), management by fact signifies that:



management must have the facts necessary to manage business at all levels. Giving that information to people so that decisions are based upon facts rather than ‘gut feelings’ is essential to continuous improvement.

Tort-Martorell, Grima, and Marco (2011) noted that the Malcolm Baldrige and EFQM quality models emphasise the importance of an organisation making decisions using factual information and data analysis. With its emphasis on the use of data as evidence of knowledge in TQM, management by fact relies on data and information gathered from various sources as a necessary component of the process of quality improvement efforts. Therefore, for the development of complex decisions within the organisational framework of the management by fact system, Flynn and Saladin (2006) pointed out that it is important to affirm comprehensive organisational details so that decisions are made using factual information, which will lead to the reduction of uncertainty associated with decision-making.

Although it is true that managers will rely on information and data from a variety of sources in making decisions with the adoption of management by fact—rather than relying solely on their own judgement or intuition—one main disadvantage of management by fact is that it requires company-wide commitment to ensure the collection of proper information, which can often be difficult and complex. In response to the barrier mentioned above, Arasli (2012) recommended that organisations need to focus on collaboration when establishing and evaluating quality improvement processes using the organisation’s performance measurement system. In summary, management by fact involvement in the use of fact-based decisions for quality development has been identified as a critical component of the TQM philosophy as it helps create the ability to deliver value to each stakeholder while simultaneously maintaining productivity maximisation and quality improvement. The preceding subsections discussed nine TQM CSFs namely leadership commitment, strategic planning, continuous improvement, customer focus, process focus, employee involvement, training and learning, reward and

recognition, and management by fact. Studies in the literature have put more emphasis on the importance of focusing on these specific nine core values of TQM and demonstrated widespread agreement that their consideration while adopting and implementing would result in successful TQM philosophy adoption to improve quality. Section 2.11 explains the challenges facing TQM adoption in organisations.

### **3.9 Challenges in Adopting TQM in Developing Countries**

Developed and developing nations are at different stages of the quality movement. Developed countries have embraced the quality movement for many years, driven by intense market competition. In the context of higher education in developing countries, the uptake of TQM has not gained the same momentum as countries with advanced economies (Shams 2017; Sila 2018; Latif et al 2019). In leading economies, such as the US, Japan, and Germany, the imperative to improve service and product quality has been adopted as a key national directive (Wang 2020). Hence, TQM first gained prominence in developed nations, later evolving into an advanced management approach now practiced globally. The literature reveals, however, a disparity in understanding the nuances of TQM in certain parts of the world, particularly in developing regions of Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East (Punnakitikashem et al. 2010; Jaeger, Adair & AlQudah 2013; Sila 2018; Aletaiby, Rathnasinghe & Kulatunga 2021; Talapatra & Uddin 2019). Although extensive research on quality practices from the UK, Western Europe, the US, and Japan has been disseminated, there is an evident need for more in-depth exploration of how TQM has been adopted and applied in the context of developing countries (Haffar et al. 2019; Mehralian et al. 2016; Mohammed, Alotibie & Abdulaziz 2016; Nasim, Sikander & Tian 2020).

The growing interest in the development of quality management, as noted by Al-Ababneh (2011), contrasts sharply with the persistent barriers identified in emerging market economies

(Mosadeghrad 2014; Talapatra & Uddin 2019; Dilawo & Salimi 2019; Talib & Rahman 2015). For instance, Mosadeghrad (2014) observed that the most frequently noted key challenges in TQM implementation in these countries were a lack of management support and employee involvement, poor leadership, a lack of training, and inappropriate organisational culture, along with the absence of recognition and rewards for success, and a rigid, top-down organisational hierarchy. Talapatra and Uddin (2019) identified a dearth of training, resources, and financial backing as significant contributors to the challenges faced in implementing TQM in developing versus developed nations. Dilawo and Salimi (2019) highlighted deficiencies in knowledge and communication as barriers to TQM in these countries. Similarly, Talib and Rahman (2015) observed obstacles such as inadequate training, resistance to change among employees, insufficient empowerment, poor managerial commitment, inter-departmental discoordination, and weak planning and communication obstructing TQM in service organisations.

In the context of Arab countries, various studies (Al-Zamany et al. 2000; Al-Ababneh 2011; Jaeger & Adair 2016; Amer, Al-Awlaqi & Alkibsi 2017; Sila 2018) have outlined the challenges that mirror those in broader developing countries. These complexities include the roles of governments, technology knowledge, organizational practices, limited employee involvement, and an inability to integrate quality management methods into performance indicators properly. Adopting the TQM philosophy, its principles, and practices continues to be a challenge in most Arab countries, and therefore, further research is needed (Alshehri 2016). Saudi Arabia is not an isolated case, as there is a dearth of research and a lack of understanding of the TQM philosophy (Ali, Hilman & Gorondutse 2020; Papanthymou & Darra 2017). The subsequent section presents the evolving trend of TQM philosophy within the context of HEIs, followed by a specific focus on the intrinsic and generic challenges reported in the literature that arise during the adoption of TQM values in this sector.

### **3.10 TQM Trend in HEIs**

Quality exerts a significant impact on organisational performance, cost reduction, customer satisfaction and loyalty, and profitability (Sunder 2016). Thus, quality has become a key area of interest for practitioners and researchers alike, especially in recent decades. It is worth noting that quality principles and practices originally associated with manufacturing companies, have found their way into service industries such as banking and healthcare and higher education .... etc (Talib, Rahman & Qureshi 2012; Psomas & Antony 2017; Bouranta et al. 2019). In the context of higher education, the applicability of TQM theories has attracted the interest of numerous theorists and practitioners (Al-Ibrahim 2014; Latif et al. 2019). Interestingly, TQM was not introduced into HE until a decade after manufacturing (Kanji, Malek & Tambi, 1999). The adoption of TQM values and practices in HEIs can be attributed to reasons similar to those that drove interests in its practices in businesses industries such as achieving objectives, enhancing performance and productivity, meeting stakeholder or beneficiary needs and expectations, and reducing costs (Wilson 2014; Sony, Therisa & Baporikar 2019). Therefore, HEIs worldwide, especially those in the US, have been influenced, according to Kanji, Malek and Tambi (1999), and Sunder (2016), by the successful application of TQM in many large firms in the business industry such as Texas Instruments, Xerox, IBM and Motorola. Given income shortfalls, fiscal difficulties and controversies that have eroded public trust in higher education, many HEIs have turned to TQM as a means of enhancing quality and rebuilding or strengthening public confidence in the sector (Castillo 2020; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Rodriguez, Valenzuela & Ayuyao 2018; Sitalakshmi 2007).

The majority of HEIs worldwide are urgently seeking performance improvement through models that have been successfully tested and implemented in industry and commerce (Antony 2018). In 1991, the US hosted a Total Quality Forum to discuss the role of TQM in American colleges, with a particular emphasis on business and engineering institutions. The participants

at the forum viewed TQM as a powerful competitive weapon for sustaining and expanding a university's global position. Moreover, they believed that HE institutions reluctant to embrace TQM could miss an opportunity to effect change, and even risked losing relevance in the business sector (Osseo-Asare 2004; Sohel-Uz-Zaman & Anjalin 2016). Since the Forum, the situation in the US has changed considerably, and a growing number of universities have started accepting TQM (Kanji, Malek & Tambi, 1999; Doherty 2003; Omachonu & Ross 2004). According to Markowitsch (2018), the US school system was the first to adopt corporate TQM, following a decade of TQM adoption by US businesses.

TQM was first implemented in HE at two schools in the US, and it quickly became popular. By 1990, 78 HEIs were using TQM (Coate, 1993), and less than a decade later, over 300 HEIs in the country were incorporating quality ideas into their administration systems and infrastructure (Lozier & Teeter, 1996). Since 1999, when the Education Criteria for the MBNQA was introduced, many universities started implementing TQM. The Education Criteria rewarded education institutions for adopting TQM (Khawaldeh 2017; Memon & Gangoor 2017; Salah & Salah 2019). Similarly, but at a slower pace, the EFQM excellence model encouraged institutions in the UK and other countries across Europe to implement TQM. In Europe, most academic institutions are driven by the desire for quality and accountability (Ahmed 2008). As a result, an increasing number of universities in Europe embraced TQM as a tool for QA and accountability (Ganguly 2015).

The dynamic national, regional and global changes have compelled the HE sector to transform swiftly to meet the increasing demand for higher education, which is likely to continue to grow. According to Shams (2017), the global student population is projected to increase from 99 million in 2017 to 414 million by 2030. Therefore, concern about the quality of HE sparked a debate on the applicability of quality management principles, concepts, techniques and models

from business, mostly manufacturing, to the public services sector, including HE (Manatos, Sarrico & Rosa 2017). However, owing to resource constraints and growing public pressure to enhance quality, the implementation of the TQM philosophy in HE has been accelerated (Rezeanu 2011; Sohel-Uz-Zaman & Anjalin 2016; Latif et al. 2019). As a result, in recent years, the education sector has established itself as a fast-growing and competitive market to meet the growing demand for HE (Latif et al. 2019). Consequently, HE has become a highly competitive market for many reasons, among them being pressure from various stakeholders, including policymakers, governments, senior university management, students and their parents, researchers and academics and even endowment donors, which has increased significantly.

The literature demonstrates that universities have implemented quality management systems because of external and internal pressures or motivations (Manatos, Sarrico & Rosa 2017). According to Ehlers (2009), in HE, quality concepts such as quality control and assurance are typically viewed as technocratic, top-down techniques that frequently fail. Therefore, HEIs across the globe have started to integrate principles and practices derived from the TQM philosophy in various ways to invoke change, sustain growth and improve quality if they are to remain competitive. The quality of HEIs is currently receiving more attention than ever before (Tasopoulou & Tsiotras 2017; Latif et al. 2019; Dwaikat 2020; Wilkins 2020). However, because of the nature of the sector, implementing quality management practices and achieving quality improvement in universities remains difficult and complex, as service organisations have historically had less success with TQM than manufacturing organisations (In'airat & Al-Kassem 2014; Manatos, Sarrico & Rosa 2017; Shams 2017).

Implementing TQM in the public sector, particularly in HE, has proven difficult and achieving quality in non-profit educational institutions, as in Saudi Arabia's public universities, is even

more difficult owing to a lack of competition, centralised management and knowledge of how to integrate quality management values like those derived from TQM philosophy. Therefore, HEIs often approach quality development practices with a degree of scepticism, as they are cautious about its complexity and the potential to be merely a passing trend. According to Latif et al. (2019), the institutions in HE sector possesses distinct characteristics that set it apart as different from the service sector, which is generally run on competitive and profit-making lines, and where a single interaction can determine the value of the service delivered. The unique characteristics specific to the HE sector have accelerated the sector's complexity and have led to a lack of consensus on a uniform TQM framework, as pointed out by Latif et al. (2019).

### **3.11 Obstacles to TQM Adoption in HE**

Quality has become increasingly important for HEIs worldwide to succeed; they need to embrace values and methodologies driven by global and national dynamics. However, there is an inherent complexity in accepting the fundamentals of TQM philosophy for institutions in the sector. The values of this philosophy have received criticism concerning whether they are applicable in the university context. According to Meirovich and Romar (2006), circumstances have made the application of TQM in HEIs more challenging and the concept of quality less clear. According to Houston (2007), universities' foundational values include academic autonomy, collegiality and professionalism. Furthermore, the diverse and complex processes involving the teaching, research, and service community make it difficult for these educational institutions to fit within the machine metaphor that dominates TQM practice and the language framework that constitutes its rhetoric.

These views regarding the challenges facing TQM adoption in HEIs were also supported by Soomro and Ahmad (2012, p. 148), who contend that managing quality in the HE sector is a very challenging task since the sector differs from organisations with an industrial products

orientation, stating that ‘Higher education is not a product in an industrial sense rather it is a service’. Manatos et al. (2017) noted that the characteristics of HEIs make the job of managing quality particularly difficult. From the literature, in the context of the HE sector, two major categories of challenges were reported, while the adoption TQM includes: (1) generic and (2) intrinsic challenges.

The generic challenges represent a common barrier that is not exclusively linked to the HIE context but is found to be among the most frequent challenges faced when adopting TQM values for quality development in organisations, whereas the intrinsic challenges are those associated particularly with universities. The following two subsections briefly discuss the first of the generic challenges and then the second part discusses in more detail the intrinsic challenges inherent in the HE sector which are specifically associated with universities. By classifying the challenges into generic and intrinsic types, a good understanding of these issues will be developed to aid in the discussion of TQM in the Saudi Arabian HEI context.

### **3.11.1 Generic Challenges**

The discussion in the literature on the challenges faced when dealing with TQM implementation to bring about improvement has underlined various generic challenges that educational institutions encounter when attempting to adopt and implement the values and practices of the TQM philosophy. These generic challenges constitute common obstacles that universities share with other organisations across industries in applying TQM including but not limited to issues such as a lack of top management commitment, employee resistance to change, ineffective communication and a lack of a continuous improvement culture, a lack of stakeholder involvement, increased bureaucracy and workload, and a lack of sufficient resources, as listed in Table 4 (Venkatraman 2007; Brigham Steven, 1993; Owlia & Aspinwall,



1998; Sulaiman, Manochehri & Al-Esmail 2013; Harvey & Newton 2007). A brief discussion on these common challenges follows.

**Table 4: Generic Challenges in TQM Implementation in HEIs**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Key References</b>
Top Management Commitment	The lack of commitment from senior leaders hinders TQM adoption. Leadership's involvement is essential for encouraging acceptance and integration of TQM values.	Brigham and Steven (1993), Talib and Rahman (2015), Asif et al. (2013)
Resistance to Change	Employee apprehension towards altering existing practices can impede TQM efforts.	<u>Owlia and Aspinwall (1998)</u> , <u>Ramdass and Nemavhola (2018)</u>
Ineffective Communication	Poor communication undermines the understanding and successful implementation of TQM.	<u>Sulaiman, Manochehri and Al-Esmail (2013)</u> , <u>Ab Wahid (2019)</u>
Lack of Continuous Improvement Culture	The absence of a continuous improvement culture within institutions can prevent the sustained adoption of quality improvement practices.	Talib and Rahman (2015), Ab Wahid (2019), <u>Dwaikat (2021)</u>
Stakeholder Involvement	Varied perceptions of quality among stakeholders make it challenging to achieve consensus on TQM initiatives.	Lynne and Ross (2007), <u>O'Mahony &amp; Garavan (2012)</u>
Increasing Bureaucracy	TQM can be perceived as a contributor to increased bureaucracy and workload, causing scepticism and resistance.	Harvey and Newton (2007), Cardoso et al. (2019)
Insufficient Resources	Limited budgets and resources hinder the implementation process of TQM	<u>Sitalakshmi (2007)</u> , Koch & Fisher (1998)

In the HE context, senior management's commitment is crucial for overcoming *scepticism* and fostering belief in TQM efficacy (Cyert, 1993; Youssef et al., 1998; Talib & Rahman, 2015). The depth of TQM integration is dependent on the leaders' investment in and adherence to its core values and practices. However, obstacles such as insufficient experience, reluctance to change, and hesitation to implement improvement strategies necessitate strong leadership (Talib & Rahman, 2015). Thus, dedicated leadership is imperative for creating a quality culture and ensuring the successful implementation of TQM in universities (Asif et al., 2013). Employee resistance to change was highlighted as another obstacle faced when dealing with TQM in the HE sector. According to Owlia and Aspinwall (1998), resistance to change significantly hinders TQM adoption in educational institutions, often stemming from a lack of insight into TQM's philosophical basis and benefits. Ramdass and Nemavhola (2018) assert that TQM necessitates a profound shift in mindset to enhance work culture and facilitate a better understanding that helps to overcome such resistance. Similarly, but with a focus on the leader's role, Sunder and Antony (2018) emphasise that leadership plays a critical role in effectively communicating and promoting acceptance of change within the university context. In addition, the literature highlights ineffective communication as among the key obstacles in TQM adoption (Sulaiman, Manochehri & Al-Esmail 2013; Ali, Mahat & Zairi 2010; Wahid 2019).

For instance, Ab Wahid (2019) and Ali, Mahat, and Zairi (2010) stressed that overcoming barriers to quality improvement in the university context hinges on resolving the core issue of ineffective communication, thereby ensuring employees have a clear understanding of TQM. In line with this, Dale et al. (2016) stated that it is only through effective communication that people can be persuaded to seriously engage in TQM. A lack of a continuous improvement culture was also among the critical challenges emphasised by studies in the literature (Rosa

and Sarrico 2018; Dwaikat 2021). Developing a continuous improvement culture is vital for sustaining people's full commitment to quality improvement activities and directives. However, according to (Talib and Rahman 2015), in the absence of a mature quality culture, it is difficult to realise the successful adoption of TQM in the university context. Thus, for effective TQM implementation, a well-developed continuous improvement culture is necessary (Dwaikat 2021). The lack of stakeholder involvement was underscored in the literature as among the common barriers which organisation face when implementing TQM for improvement. It is widely acknowledged that the concept of quality is problematic and contested owing to differing perceptions among stakeholders about what it actually means (Houston 2007 cited in O'Mahony & Garavan 2012). The sector's wide-ranging stakeholders, including students, academic and non-academic employees as internal stakeholders, and employers, government, and families as external stakeholders, may challenge university leadership in understanding what effective participation is about.

According to Lynne and Ross (2007), these stakeholders do have legitimate interests, and so their perceptions are critical if quality improvement is to be real. The lack of agreement among stakeholders' perspectives has created difficulties in deciding on appropriate measures to assess the quality of education outcomes. Thus, in the university context, achieving total stakeholder involvement remains one of the most difficult tasks that quality developers encountered when implementing TQM. Another hindering factor to the successful implementation of TQM in an organisation is the perception that it increases bureaucracy. Studies such as Harvey and Newton (2007); Cardoso et al (2019) and Soliman and Soliman (1997) emphasised the perceived increase in bureaucracy as an impediment to the implementation of TQM in the HE context. Studies have warned of the emerging culture in which TQM is seen as a source of increased bureaucracy and workload. This assumption has somehow made people more hesitant about and suspicious of TQM, resulting in a resistance to the philosophy if it means

having to change one's pattern or system of work. For instance, Harvey and Newton (2007) and Cardoso et al. (2019) highlight that the managerial demands for consistent high quality in universities has disempowered the academic community and forced lecturers and tutors, among others, to respond to bureaucratic requirements. In the HE context, most employees are predominantly professionals more devoted to teaching rather than working on requirements to meet quality standards dictated by TQM. Thus, bureaucracy is likely to increase, especially if procedures become more formalised, such as the monitoring and measuring of academic performance. The lack of sufficient resources is another impediment faced when dealing with TQM implementation. The successful adoption of TQM requires training individuals and ensuring the availability of the necessary funds, equipment, and infrastructure for quality improvement. In line with this, Sitalakshmi (2007) stated that inadequate funds/budgets and resources pose significant obstacles to implementing TQM in education institutions. This is because TQM may result in substantial cost increases (Koch & Fisher, 1998), which creates hesitancy when considering its applications in institutions. Therefore, achieving the effective implementation of the TQM philosophy and striving for quality improvement necessitates adequate funding and a well-trained workforce to lead and understand the process. To sum up, addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, with a strong emphasis on leadership, strategic communication, stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, and cultural transformation towards quality improvement. Only with these concerted efforts can HEIs hope to realise the full benefits of TQM. The following discusses these intrinsic challenges.

### **3.11.2 Intrinsic Challenges**

Universities have unique characteristics that distinguish them from other institutions. As a result, quality is frequently contentious and non-consensual, which can be especially problematic. The intangibility and inseparability of the processes in the university context have sparked considerable debate regarding TQM and its applicability in the sector. *Intangibility*,

*inseparability, academic culture, and the paradox associated with quality terminologies* contribute to the complexity of accepting and implementing TQM values and methodologies to improve quality in the context of the HE sector. This section discusses how the four characteristics of the HE sector, namely *intangibility, inseparability, academic culture and the effect of TQM language*, have added to the complexity in adopting and integrating values from the TQM philosophy for quality improvement in the universities context.

### 3.11.2.1 Intangibility

One factor contributing to the sector's difficulty in managing and measuring quality is intangibility (Becket & Brookes 2006; Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996; Dwaikat (2021); Venkatraman 2007; Prakash (2018)). According to Sahney (2016), the HE sector is distinct from other industry sector and quantifying outcomes is a difficult task owing to the intangibility of outcomes. Dwaikat (2021) reported that despite numerous attempts and various models for assessing the quality of HEIs, there is no consensus on models for assessing quality outcomes in the sector. Similarly, Arrieta and Avolio (2020) argued there is still no global agreement on a model for measuring quality in the HE sector. However, in some organisations, particularly those in the manufacturing sector, tangibility (physical properties) enables outputs to be quantified and facilitates measurement (Does et al. 2002). According to Prakash (2018) and Chong and Ahmed (2012), despite TQM's popularity, measuring outcomes in HE remains a significant challenge, and the models developed thus far are not convincing.

Various models for assessing quality in the service sector, including banks, hospitals and other relevant organisations, have been documented. For example, the well-known SERVQUAL model for service quality assessment was developed in the mid-1980s to help assess quality throughout the service sector (Baki et al. 2009; Dyke, Prybutok & Kappelman, 1999). However, this model encountered various limitations as suggested by Shekarchizadeh, Rasli

and Hon-Tat (2011). SERVQUAL has not been without flaws and Altuntas and Kansu (2019) argued that SERVQUAL has limitations and reported that it is impossible to manage service quality holistically when using SERVQUAL because it only considers the discrepancies between expectations and perceptions in service systems and ignores service design and possible service delivery failures. Another limitation of SERVQUAL was articulated by Cuthbert (1996), who stated that because the model's application in HE is concerned with the delivery of services rather than outcomes, the dimensions it has for measuring service quality in HE may well be inappropriate. Despite efforts to tackle the intangibility-related complexity of quality improvement in HE, successfully measuring quality remains a difficult issue for quality developers, especially given that most quality models originated from the private sector industry (Dwaikat 2021; Chua 2004; Arokiasamy & Krishnaswamy 2021; Nasim, Sikander, & Tian 2020).

### *3.11.2.2 Inseparability*

Inseparability is another intrinsic feature associated with the HE sector (In'airat & Al-Kassem 2014). According to Venkatraman (2007), unlike manufacturing-related industries, in which statistical QC techniques can be applied because they involve tangible processes (such as determining the quality of goods or services using product specifications), what occurs in HE, however, is the process of production and consumption occurring at the same time. The inseparability of the processes in universities is one of its particularities, in which production and consumption cannot be separated from the value chain. Thus, in the HE context, the inseparable processes involving the production and consumption of services raises another concern when managing quality. In'airat and Al-Kassem (2014) explained that services, unlike tangible commodities, are ephemeral because they can only be consumed as long as the activities or processes are ongoing.

For example, in HE, teaching and learning, which constitute the institutions' core functions, occur simultaneously, and involve both production (teaching tasks) and consumption (learning). Production and consumption must coexist, as the latter cannot occur without the former. This implies that it is difficult to manage quality and plan ahead for improvement. The inherent inseparability of processes during production and consumption activities has complicated the acceptance of the TQM philosophy, owing to the way institutions have historically been hostile to TQM's goals (Bolton, 1995, Sunder & Mahalingam 2018). Additionally, because of the inseparability of the production and consumption processes in the sector, quality attributes cannot be observed, felt, or touched in advance (Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996). Thus, the inherent complexity of adopting values from the TQM philosophy for quality improvement is exacerbated by both intangibility and inseparability. The following section discusses how academic culture has also been a hurdle in integrating TQM values for improving quality in the HE context.

### *3.11.2.3 Academic Culture*

Academic culture has also emerged as one of the intrinsic challenges in the literature, contributing to the difficulties in adopting the TQM philosophy in HE. According to Åkerlind (2005) and Michael (2004), intellectual freedom and academic autonomy are core values that provide an unrestricted or less restricted environment to academics. Basir et al. (2017) and Koch (2003) argued that academic culture has not been receptive to TQM philosophy, while Pratasavitskaya and Stensaker (2010) found that the inability to adopt a new culture that makes it possible for the integration of quality improvement values, as well as the lack of training on the application, have contributed to the failure of TQM in tertiary contexts. The fact is that academics may perceive TQM as either completely or partially incompatible with educational institutions because it was originally developed for manufacturing industries, in which the focus is on process control, accountability, customer satisfaction, teamwork and self-

assessment. These aspects may not align perfectly with the academic context, leading to scepticism and reservations about the suitability of TQM in HE. According to Zabadi (2013), quality management is not easily applied to HEIs, especially because the academic culture is quite strong and reluctant to accept the concepts, principles and practices from TQM.

Therefore, adopting TQM in universities continues to be controversial in the academic community, as academics often view the philosophy as an imposed system that will not work easily in HEIs considering the reputation academics have for liberalism and nonconformism (Holmes and McElwee 1995). A study by Tight (2020) reported that implementing quality management in HE entails more than simply introducing a set of methodologies that have proven successful in manufacturing or other public sector agencies. Rather, it encapsulates theoretical perspectives for organisations and their operations viewed by academics as an intervening managerial approach that involves monitoring and controlling their work, undermining autonomy, emphasising accountability, and cultivating a culture of survival in which front-line academics who are pressed for time must deal with perplexing demands and expectations. Laughton (2003) and Tight (2020) argue that academics are more likely to perceive the set of practices or guidelines imposed by quality agencies as contradictory to the core values of the learning and research culture, ultimately viewing them as a subversion of academic identity. Consequently, academics are showing caution concerning the TQM philosophy.

Quality is frequently linked to an adherence to standards, giving priority to conformity and administrative control (Newton 2002; Harvey 2006). In line with these preconceived notions, Houston and Paewai (2013) found that academics perceive quality activities aimed at improvement as having minimal real impact on curriculum development, teaching quality or student learning experiences. Instead, they perceive these activities as sources for increasing



bureaucratic requirements, adding to time and costs and diverting attention from the core processes involved in teaching and learning activities. Consequently, academics have expressed growing concerns (Skolnik 2016) and have shown significant resistance to the directives derived from the TQM philosophy. Traditionally, academics have shown cautiousness and resistance to external interventions, including the introduction of new management approaches, as noted by Kanji, Malek, and Tambi (1999) and Sunder (2016). The values embedded in TQM philosophy are perceived as incompatible with the beliefs and working methods of academics, as they primarily emphasise control and scrutiny while having a limited impact on the development of learning and teaching skills. As a result, the deep-rooted culture and attitudes of academics present a significant challenge in adopting the values of TQM philosophy and implementing its practices within the sector (Koch 2003).

#### *3.11.2.4 The Effect of TQM Language*

The effect of the language of TQM and its fit with organisational culture is a major thread in the critique of the applicability of TQM to HE (Houston 2007). TQM in HE faces confusion over terminology issues (Cruickshank 2003). According to Tight (2020), quality-related terminologies from TQM are relatively new in the sector, and there are specific language, concepts and tools from TQM that are difficult to understand or are inconsistent with HE (Houston 2007). TQM is a customer-oriented approach with its core message stressing the focus on clients' needs (Sahney, Banwet & Karunes 2004; Rodriguez, Valenzuela & Ayuyao 2018). This particular principle of the customer focus has emerged as another intrinsic challenge while implementing TQM philosophy in the HE sector. According to Mehralizadeh and Safaeemoghaddam (2010) and Harvey (1995), the principle of the customer orientation of TQM is generally accepted in commercial and private enterprise organisations but in the HE context, it has caused controversy and created a problem because many academics do not work according to market principles. Saunders and Walker (1991) stated that the inability to classify

customers is at the heart of failed TQM efforts in education institutions. This view was also supported by Zabadi (2013), who argued that ambiguity in customer identification has created hurdles in TQM implementation. He acknowledges in his study that faculty members (academics) may struggle to accept the view of students as customers, believing it to be excessively commercial; as a result, there seems to be a little agreement within HEIs on defining students as customers. According to Cruickshank (2003) and Harvey & Williams (2010), answering the customer's questions in the sector is not as easy to do as in other industries and remains an area of intense debate because academics are reluctant to view students as customers. A study by Lomas (2007) examining the notion of the student as a customer in UK universities also found that academic staff do not really support this notion, despite the fact that the government and its agencies stress the need to consider students as customers.

According to Eagle (2007), because TQM is most frequently founded on the notion that the customer determines quality, this raises the question of what constitutes quality in the HE sector. Calma and Dickson-Deane (2020) highlighted that the student-as-customer could be viewed as a part of a social process that alters the power dynamics inside the university system in favour of a certain interest group. Thus, Eagle (2007) concluded that, while treating students as customers may stem from the best intentions, the notion is valueless since it is more likely to result in consequences contrary to the students' best interests. The lack of unanimity and ambiguity around the definition of customers in HEIs creates an inherent difficulty in implementing TQM (Asif et al. 2013). Indeed, defining the customer in HE has been a challenge, and terminology like 'customers' needs and expectations' and 'delighting the customer', which originated in TQM, creates a barrier to adoption. According to Houston, (2007), the concept of viewing students as customers can alter the essential dynamic between students and academics. As a result, some research advocated the utilisation of terminology

such as stakeholders or recipients rather than customer when referring to students to mitigate the intense debate over such terminologies (Eagle 2007; Scrabec Jr 2000; Venkatraman 2007). For example, Venkatraman (2007) believes that ‘customers’ are more appropriately referred to as stakeholders in education, while Scrabec Jr (2000) was more resistant to use the term ‘customers’ in the sector and refers to students as education recipients.

### **3.12 Summary**

This chapter detailed the study's conceptual framework and offered a brief review of the evolution of the TQM philosophy. It delves into discussions concerning TQM's fundamental values and prevailing trends within HE institutions. The chapter also sheds light on the challenges of adopting and implementing TQM values and practices in the context of universities sector. Chapter 4 details the methodology and methods employed in this qualitative exploratory study, and outlining the process and procedures adopted in selecting participants, data collection, and data analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology Adopted and Method Used for Data Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research methods adopted in this qualitative exploratory study concerning the challenges facing the high-level adoption of CSFs in the TQM philosophy in public universities in Saudi Arabia to improve the quality-oriented culture. The main emphasis is on the methods and procedures used to collect data to answer the research question and the sub-questions addressed in the introductory chapter. The objective is to describe in detail the adopted methodology and the study design and provide a justification of the chosen methodology for the current research study. In addition, the chapter will disclose the rationale behind the selection, the researcher's role, procedures for recruitment, information about participants, the data collection, the data analysis procedures, and any relevant ethical considerations. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary of the main aspects covered.

### **4.2 Research Aim and Questions**

**Aim.** This qualitative exploratory research study aims to explore the challenges and identify the drivers for promoting the high-level integration of TQM core values. It is predicted that the high-level integration of these quality values can strategically drive change and create a quality-oriented culture in Saudi public universities. Therefore, formulating the research question holds great significance as it guides the current study's entire process. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), a good research question generates a link to further research a theory and questions. Subsequently, the proposed research question and sub-questions have been established to guide how this study is conducted.

**Research question.** ‘How can Saudi Arabian public universities foster and sustain a quality-oriented culture through the high-level integration of the TQM CSFs?’ To answer the overarching question, it is divided into the following four sub-questions:

**Sub-question 1.** How has the TQM philosophy been perceived and what factors have promoted its adoption in public universities?

**Sub-question 2.** What are the current challenges for the high-level integration of the TQM philosophy in Saudi universities?

**Sub-question 3.** How can quality deanships strategically improve the quality culture through the high-level integration of TQM CSFs in Saudi public universities?

### **4.3 Study Design**

This section details the research methods employed, the chosen paradigm and the selected research design. It also offers a concise overview of the research process involved in data collection and analysis. Further information concerning the different stages of this research can be found in greater detail throughout this chapter.

#### **4.3.1 Research Methods**

There are three well-known research methods for conducting a scientific research study. These three methods are quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches. According to Patton (2015), answering research questions through the quantitative method requires standardised measures to generalise their results so that the findings or results represent the population for which a sample has been chosen. In this current study, neither a standardised tool nor quantitative measurement was used, as the aim was not to generalise the findings in terms of the wider population. For these reasons, a quantitative method was deemed not to be appropriate. Mixed methods include incorporating techniques that use numerical and non-numerical data to inform

a study's conclusions (Patton 2015), yet this method was also not applicable; for example, closed-ended questions or using a quantitative survey for data collection were not required. Instead, a qualitative research method was selected which includes semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions for data collection purposes.

It was crucial to adopt a methodology designed to best obtain rich and detailed insights to uncover information through individuals' views and lived experiences relevant to the phenomenon explored in this thesis. According to Yin (2018), qualitative research can be used to investigate a particular phenomenon or issue to uncover hidden information within the responses obtained from participants who have answered research questions. Qualitative researchers explore the context in a realistic context or environment, which provides additional insights to help comprehend an organisation's internal and external contexts or circumstances. Qualitative research is well-suited for unpacking interesting occurrences because it involves a varied range of "interpretive strategies" that can result in a more nuanced and rich knowledge of the subjects under inquiry (Van Maanen 1979 cited in Birkinshaw, Brannen & Tung 2011). Another supportive argument was made by Darlaston-Jones (2007, p. 25 ), who stated that 'qualitative methodologies provide the means to seek a deeper understanding and to explore the nuances of experiences not available through quantification'. Yin (2018) stated that qualitative research will offer new perspectives by developing concepts and acknowledging the value of gathering, interpreting and symbolising data from different sources.

Therefore, for the current study, which involves the investigation of challenges and exploring opportunities associated with TQM adoption and implementation within the context of Saudi Arabian public universities, a qualitative methodology was justified for adoption due to its suitability for exploring complex phenomena. It allows for a nuanced examination of the subject matter and methods for data collection, such as in-depth semi-structured interview

techniques. The methodology facilitates the collection of rich data and contributes to a holistic understanding of the topic under investigation. Furthermore, it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the context in which a phenomenon occurs, exploring the nuances, meanings, and experiences of individuals or groups within a specific context. With a qualitative methodology, the researcher can employ data collection strategies to generate robust and in-depth data. The contextual depth of a real-life phenomenon can help to explain *how* and *why* the investigated phenomenon occurs in a setting (Yin 2014). This potential is far more likely to be realised by adopting a qualitative methodology approach to guide the current research study.

#### **4.3.2 The Paradigm Adopted for the Current Research Study**

According to Williams (2016), research philosophy refers to the basic, fundamental beliefs that are the fundamental features of specific theories and concepts. It underlines two assumptions that control this type of thought and guides how the surrounding reality where people live is comprehended and explicated. The first assumption is about the belief or ‘ontology’, which produces knowledge, while the second is about ‘epistemological’ assumptions. The latter deals with the study of knowledge and what is generally perceived to be authentic knowledge (Goertz & Mahoney 2012; Wilson 2014).

Ontology, however, seeks to encompass a realistic viewpoint in line with the researcher’s own perspective. Ontology concerns the way reality is viewed. According to Bracken (2010), researchers may adopt ontological perspectives or ways of viewing social reality. For example, this might involve adopting the belief that the world of social interactions exists independently of what is perceived. For interpretivists, however, Walsham (1995) stated that they ontologically assume that reality is socially constructed through the interaction of individuals. Epistemology, on the other hand, answers the question about how elements in the real-world

function and discern the best ways to attain relevant knowledge (Michalos 2017). According to Bell et al. (2018), research philosophies commonly include positivism, realism and interpretivism, and the choice of a philosophy is determined by the research questions to be answered. With the positivist approach, measurable data takes the form of numerical/statistical or quantitative data. Conversely, according to Collis and Hussey (2013), in qualitative data, adopting an interpretive philosophy leads to an in-depth analysis of human behaviour within a given social context. This includes how people behave and justify their actions under certain circumstances.

Therefore, Yin (2014) asserted that the decision to select different types of research philosophies is not a matter of free choice since researchers are more likely to have made many assumptions about their chosen topics. Research philosophies commonly include positivism, realism and interpretivism and the choice of a philosophy is determined by the underlying research question (Bell et al. 2018). Therefore, this study views reality as being constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds (Merriam & Tisdell 2016). Thus, the epistemological orientation adopted is the interpretivism paradigm in which knowledge has been socially constructed and is engendered by people's personal interactions. The need for an in-depth understanding of the participants' responses beyond simply the analysis of spoken words led to the adoption of the interpretivism paradigm as the most suitable one for this qualitative exploratory research study. Collis and Hussey (2013) state that first, qualitative researchers set out to elicit and explain people's behaviour and shared experiences within a given social context; and second, through interpretive analysis, researchers can explore certain topics or themes.

Therefore, concerning the current study's ontology and epistemological stance, reality is viewed as socially constructed through the interaction of individuals and interpretivism is



adopted as the study paradigm. The adopted interpretivism paradigm will lead to an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data and concentrate on exploring the topic through selected participants' views and lived experiences. According to Neusar (2014), interpreting the data that the researcher compiles is the act of building meaningful descriptions and creating insights from the observation of the studied phenomenon. Thus, the interpretivism paradigm is deemed to be the best fit paradigm to explore relevant and crucial information about TQM as a philosophy through the participants' views and lived experiences. To the best of the author's knowledge, this study is the first of its kind to introduce to the world the views of Saudi Arabian quality deanship personnel, including both men and women, on the topic of TQM as a philosophy, seeking to contribute to the development of the understanding of the potential challenges faced when adopting the TQM philosophy values and practices. In other words, it is producing new knowledge about the phenomena from the perceptions of the study participants. Therefore, study participants were interviewed in-depth, including quality deanship personnel, quality deans, the vice dean, managers and staff.

In this study, data were gathered from both male and female respondent who have extensive experience, and who understand and possess knowledge about improvements in the quality of the selected public universities. A qualitative method makes an interpretive approach possible for the phenomenon being studied in its natural setting, making sense of each participant's viewpoint. The aim is to explore the challenges that prevent the high-level integration of TQM CSFs and seek to identify the drivers that promote these quality values and practices in the public universities in Saudi Arabia to ultimately improve quality and move towards the creation of a quality-oriented culture in these public universities.

### 4.3.3 Designs in Qualitative Research

Choosing the best methodology is vital because a qualitative research approach requires that the study design serves as the main path the researcher travels to conduct an effective study (Wahyuni 2012). The study design encourages the exploration and assessment of data collected through a qualitative method (Singh 2015). Yin (2014) and Creswell (2013) assert that employing an exploratory design is crucial in qualitative research studies because it incorporates inductive reasoning, which assists researchers in discovering new ideas. A qualitative methodology approach and design comprises questions to explore the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of a real-life phenomenon, and to attain a deeper understanding of the various issues associated with data collection and analysis (Yin 2014). In this thesis, an exploratory design is adopted because it allows for maximising discoveries not bound to deductive reasoning, preconceived ideas, and hypotheses. There could be other qualitative methods in addition to the ones described above. Among them is what is known as grounded theory. According to Engward (2013), grounded theory in qualitative design is used to develop or change a specific theory. However, the current study has not been formulated to pursue such a task. Thus, a qualitative design which involves grounded theory was considered an inappropriate choice for this exploratory kind of study which has no intention to initiate attempts to make a change to theory.

Ethnographic design is another alternative theory of qualitative design that this study could have adopted. It is a qualitative method adapted to a particular study group in which the researcher becomes the data collection instrument (their opinions are subjective, just like those of the respondents) (Marshall & Rossman 2015). Ethnographers often conduct fieldwork lasting months to explore a phenomenon, whereas researchers use interviews and observations, collect artefacts, and examine archival documentation (Patton 2015). This type of qualitative design would not be appropriate, either, for the current study, since this research is a cross-

sectional study, involving observation and individual interviews with participants at one point of time. The time framework available is another restraint making the ethnographic design unsuitable for this current study. The study aims to explore the subject matter from individual perspectives and lived experiences at a specific time (cross-sectional study), involving male and female participants working in university quality deanships. In this study, in-depth, individual, semi-structured interviews are conducted however group interviews or discussions were not. Therefore, adopting qualitative methods and using an exploratory design seems the most suitable approach since the current research study does not involve collecting numerical data. According to Yin (2014, 2018), qualitative methods and exploratory design enable researchers to carry out in-depth studies to understand complex social phenomena and allow the researcher to determine what happened and why it happened in a research study.

#### **4.3.4 Exploratory Study Design adopted for the Research Study**

According to Patton (2015) and Yin (2014), qualitative studies serve to obtain information and use how and what questions about why something has occurred. This process is undertaken to explore such things as perceptions, beliefs and opinions in the words of those who have undergone experiences associated with certain phenomena in the setting in which they occurred. Yin (2014) identified three types of qualitative study designs, namely, explanatory, descriptive and exploratory. An explanatory study design involves investigating various facets of causal relationships (Yin 2014); however, in this thesis it was not considered because it is not suitable. A descriptive study design is used when describing an intervention (Yin 2014). According to Zainal (2007), the descriptive approach may lack the necessary rigour and that problems may arise at any point during the project, consequently it is not appropriate for this research. According to Patton (2015), qualitative researchers seek to understand as opposed to only attempt to measure and quantify research by asking why- and how-framed questions. An

exploratory study design as the third type of research design relies on how and why questions that affect how the interview is to be conducted (Yin 2014).

According to Yin (2014,2018), in qualitative studies, an exploratory study design is preceded by statements about what to explore, the purpose of the exploration, and the criterion/criteria by which the exploration will be judged. Exploratory studies are devised to investigate any phenomenon found in the data that might address why and how questions (Yin 2014). According to Zainal (2007), an exploratory study serves as a point of interest to the researcher, for instance, an exploratory study may ask questions that are intended to open the door for further examination of the phenomenon observed. Therefore, an exploratory study design was adopted as it is the most logical choice of design for this research. Yin (2014) recommends that an exploratory design incorporating multiple data sources enhances research findings by providing a form of check and balance. This approach prevents direct replication due to reliance on a single data source.

#### **4.3.5 Research Process**

A qualitative data collection method, namely in-depth semi-structured interviews was used. Open-ended questions were used to obtain answers from each institution's selected respondents and the gathered information was evaluated to answer the main research question and accompanying sub-questions. Three public universities located in different parts of Saudi Arabia were employed as avenues from which the data were collected. The analysis of the study data involved the adoption of Yin's five-phase framework, comprising compiling data, disassembling data, reassembling data, interpreting data, and conclusion. The data collected was thematically analysed using deductive and inductive approaches to explore the challenges preventing the high-level integration of TQM CSFs and identify drivers with potential for prompting quality initiatives in the sector.

More details about Yin's five-phase framework adopted for the data analysis in this exploratory study are provided in the data analysis section. NVivo 12 software was employed during the process of data analysis for organising and sorting the data and conducting the coding process. Tools available in NVivo12, such as Word Cloud, Tree Map and Mind Map, were used to search and visualise content through the study database, which facilitated the process of coding to arrive at themes for producing valid knowledge. Sections 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 present detailed information about the overall population, the proposed sample, field test, and the selected participants. Specific more information about the researcher's role, data collection and methods employed in this study are provided in Sections 4.4–4.6.

#### **4.4 Target Population and Sample**

This section provides information on the study population and the sample to be researched. To select the participants, purposive sampling was the method adopted. This kind of sampling method was adopted to ensure that the research inquiry included only those people with particular traits or characteristics that qualified them to address the questions being asked. Purposive sampling allows researchers to deliberately select participants who possess specific characteristics or experiences that align with the research objectives (Yin 2014; Adu 2019). These people are expected to be well informed about the phenomenon of interest. Hence, information about population, sample and the selected participants are provided.

##### **4.4.1 Population**

According to Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010), a study population is a group of individuals (sample) chosen to represent a larger group (the population) for the study or research question. This qualitative exploratory study's targeted population includes individuals from the quality deanship departments at three public universities in Saudi Arabia, both men and women who worked on developing quality processes in the three universities. Therefore, quality deanship

personnel, including quality deans, vice-deans, consultants and managers emerged as the type of respondents able to provide rich data since they were the most experienced and knowledgeable about quality development issues in universities. Data and information were gathered by interviewing the people who were working in the quality deanship departments at three public universities and perceived to possess rich information and wider experience about the development of quality issues in the sector. The saturation point was reached when repetition was noticed in the information with no new significant patterns or idea emerging from the data after a total of 29 semi-structured interviews were conducted with both male and female respondents. In the subsequent section, more details are provided about how the strategies adopted in this study contribute to reaching saturation point.

#### **4.4.2 Sample**

In a qualitative study, an adequate sample is fundamental to credible research, since, with a high-quality sample of participants, a researcher can obtain enough and rich data, supporting the analysis process and yielding valid findings (Marshall, Cardon, & Poddar 2013). Determining the sample size in qualitative research, according to Boddy (2016), is contextual and partially reliant on the scientific paradigm in which the research study is framed. Consequently, the supreme objective of sampling is to recruit respondents who are representative of those who possess extensive experience and knowledge concerning quality development in public universities. Interview sampling in this study was purposeful rather than random. Purposeful sampling means the informants are chosen but not randomly. The general aim of achieving the ideal sample size is to reach the point of data saturation (Boddy 2016). Yin (2018) defined saturation as the number at which the participants' data becomes repetitive and no new information or perspectives emerge.

According to Boddy (2016, p. 427), ‘this idea of sampling until data saturation is reached can be used as a justification for the use of a particular sample size in any qualitative research which is guided by this idea’. Thus, interviews were carried out in each university with the study respondents until saturation was reached, when a repeated pattern in the response started to materialise. At this stage, the researcher began to observe recurring patterns, with no additional substantial information emerging from the responses. In total, 29 in-depth interviews were conducted with personnel from three quality deanship departments in three Saudi public universities when saturation was reached. If enough data were not collected to reach saturation in this current study, additional interviews would have been conducted at universities. Although in a qualitative study, there are no specific rules about how big a qualitative study sample should be, according to Dworkin (2012) and Mason (2010), between 5 to 50 people is considered an appropriate number. For this thesis, the sample size was 29 participants, and this number was sufficient to reach data saturation.

#### **4.4.3 Participant Selection and Hiring Procedure**

In this qualitative exploratory study research, purposive sampling strategies made it possible to select the most experienced and qualified participants. The purposive sampling method was used to identify and select the study’s suitable respondents. Purposive sampling according to Yin (2014) is considered an efficient method to ensure alignment with study goals and to provide accurate and relevant data. Patton (2002) agreed that purposive sampling is an effective method of recruiting participants who have in-depth experience and knowledge of the phenomenon being studied.

The inclusion criteria included the requirement that the participants (i) be currently employed in the selected universities, (ii) be working in quality deanships departments, and (iii) have no less than five years’ experience. Concerning the characteristics of the universities to be

employed for this current exploratory research, the following requirements must be met: a selected university must be a government-run institution, managed by the Ministry of Education, have a quality system for quality improvement, have achieved quality accreditations and have a quality deanship (quality department) in its administrative structure for managing quality developments. These universities were established in different regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and were founded between 1999 and 2009. In addition to these criteria, it is worth noting that the selected universities shared some additional commonalities including the primary language of instruction being Arabic; they had a diverse student population that included Saudi nationals and international students; the established missions of these institutions stress a strong commitment to providing quality education and research; they offer a broad spectrum of undergraduate and postgraduate programs; and the design and delivery of training programs on quality improvement are either independently and directly delivered by quality deanship divisions or in collaboration with external specialised quality improvement bodies and experts.

Purposive sampling was used to effectively select participants with substantial knowledge and experience in university quality management based on the above predefined criteria. This method further facilitated the selection of appropriate universities for data collection during the fieldwork phase. Obtaining official approvals from the selected universities was necessary before recruiting the potential participants from the quality deanship departments. To begin this process, the researcher commenced communication with five universities. Three universities responded, so they were chosen for this study. Universities granted the researcher official approval to visit and interview the individuals in their quality deanship departments. Official approvals were obtained to recruit and interview those who would willingly participate. Upon receipt of the authorisations, all participants who met the inclusion criteria were contacted after obtaining their phone numbers and email addresses. Upon determining a



participants' eligibility, those individuals who expressed their willingness to participate in the study voluntarily were asked to sign the consent form. An informed consent form with all the relevant information about the topic was given to each respondent before the interview, allowing enough time for a participant to make an informed decision before deciding to take part in this study. I clarified that participation was voluntary, and that respondents had the right to withdraw at any time with no consequences. The respondents were told that their information was protected and would remain confidential throughout the research process and after. I also explained that participants' names would be coded to conceal their identities. The expected timeframe for the interview will be approximately 30 minutes to an hour, and the interviews will be recorded and later transcribed for analysis purposes, as stated in the Information Form (see Appendix 6). The individual interviews were then scheduled for the participants' preferred time, date and location. In total, 29 people (both men and women) across the three universities were interviewed.

I had, however, experienced some challenges in making direct contact with the women's quality deanships departments owing to cultural sensitivities and customs. In Saudi Arabian society and not just the education system, men and women are generally segregated, and remote connection is the popular method of communication. Owing to gender segregations, each quality deanship is divided into two gender-determined departments in each university. To obtain truly representative views of the women participating in this study, I sought to contact as many female individuals as possible in the female quality deanship offices. The initial step was to establish trust and build the right communication channel with the men's quality deanship departments. I first contacted the heads of the male departments and provided them with the relevant details, explaining the study aim and objectives. I also explained how important it was to include participants from both the men and women's quality deanship departments.

Through these interactions with the male quality divisions, contact numbers and email addresses of some female employees in the women's quality section were obtained, initially in collaboration with their colleagues. This collaboration from the male division was crucial as they introduced me and the purpose of my study to their female counterparts. After some female quality development employees expressed a willingness to participate in my research study, I began to contact them and extended the communication with more female participants with the help of their peers in the female quality divisions. This led to the successful scheduling of additional interviews with women working in quality deanship roles across the setting of the three public universities. The whole process of making contact with men and women who worked in quality deanships enabled varied and rich views to be elicited through the interviews. Before interviewing the study participants, some measures were put in place to ensure clarity of the designed open-ended question for the semi-structured interviews, gain familiarity and improve skills for conducting interviews with the study respondents. Therefore, a field test which consisted of reviews by experts and mock interviews was conducted before the actual participants were interviewed. The following explains these two phases that took place prior to meeting and interviewing the study participants to ensure efficiencies in conducting the interviews with the study's potential participants.

#### **4.5 Field Test**

A field test helped the researcher detect any possible flaws in the data collection instrument before the interviews began. According to van Wijk and Harrison (2013), a field test can add value and credibility to the research project. A field test helps researchers practice interviewing techniques and enables them to ascertain how well a research instrument will work in the actual fieldwork of study. The purpose of the field test was to ascertain the effectiveness and appropriateness of the questions. The field test consisted of an expert review and mock interviews conducted prior to the actual interviews to ensure the appropriateness of the

questions being asked on the subject of the high-level adoption of the CSFs of the TQM philosophy in Saudi Arabian public universities.

#### **4.5.1 Expert Review**

The researcher refined the interview questions, which included semi-structured and open-ended queries. An expert reviewed them and provided feedback on the questions. The expert review process was to highlight ambiguities, contradictions, and unnecessary questions by identifying potential problems. The expert reviewers offered recommendations to change or modify some interview questions. Questions that were considered too sensitive were removed as the expert advised. Thus, the formulation of indirect and open-ended questions, and moving step-by-step from very general questions to more specialised questions kept the interviewees at ease and open to new occurring questions and the conversation evolving. On the advice from experts, the researcher sought to improve his interview skills. Finally, a total of 16 semi-structured questions were designed to guide the discussions with the respondents.

#### **4.5.2 Mock Interviews**

According to Knox and Burkard (2009), in qualitative research, mock interviews are a practice or simulation of conducting interviews in a controlled setting before the actual data collection phase. It is a technique used to train researchers or interviewers to refine interview protocols and identify potential challenges or areas for improvement (Goodell, Stage & Cooke 2016). After the refinement of the open-ended questions that would be guiding the discussion with the study respondents, the researcher conducted mock interviews with two individuals who met the inclusion criteria before collecting data for the main study. The purpose of the mock interviews was to test the clarity of the questions being asked, remove and revise questions that might have ambiguities, and ensure that relevant data would be generated. The interviews provided an opportunity to modify any questions that might be difficult for the participants to

answer. At the end of the two mock interviews, the researcher made only a few revisions to the interview protocol on the basis of the participants' responses in the mock interviews. These two techniques helped the researcher to become familiar with the interview protocol, develop rapport-building skills, practise active listening and learn how to probe for deeper insights.

## **4.6 Data Collection**

The qualitative research approach supports the collection of data from participants. According to Yin (2018), data collection needs to be strategic and transparent, which renders rich data after achieving saturation. Data collection refers to the process of collecting insights and information from the relevant sources to address the research questions (Roller & Lavrakas 2015). For this reason, the qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews techniques were chosen for the data collection. In this exploratory research study, qualitative data were collected to explore the challenges to the high-level adoption of the TQM philosophy in public universities in Saudi Arabia.

### **4.6.1 Source (avenues) of Data**

As stated earlier, three public universities were selected as the avenues from which the study data and information were gathered using in-depth semi-structured interviews. Although, the criteria outlined for inclusion encompasses details such as (i) they are all public sector universities, (ii) they are funded by the government, (iii) they are overseen by the Ministry of Education, and (iv) they have a quality deanships department that manages quality improvement, these institutions will remain unnamed for confidentiality reasons, so for the presentation of the findings in Chapter Five, each university is given a code, specifically University 1, University 2 and University 3.

Visits were made to the main campuses where the heads of the quality deanship departments of the three selected universities are located. Collecting data from three different avenues, as in this research study, is considered a more compelling and robust approach for generating sufficient data and carrying out cross-case analysis. According to Stewart (2012), drawing data from multiple cases makes it possible to discover broader theoretical developments and answer the research questions. Evidence drawn from multiple cases is found to be strong and reliable (Baxter & Jack 2008 cited in Gustafsson 2017). Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) also confirmed that multiple cases allow the wider exploration of the research questions and theoretical evolution. Therefore, the multiple case study approach was chosen, whereby three public universities (not one) were selected as the primary sources of data for this qualitative exploratory study. Employment of one or two universities in a research study, according to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) might be challenging to reach information redundancy or data saturation. Therefore, the employment of three public universities will produce rich and thick data that will help capturing a brooders prospective, and reaching saturation point and answer the research question.

#### **4.6.2 Instrumentation**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument responsible for collecting the data (Marshall et al. 2013). As such, the researcher examines and evaluates the participants' experiences and their points of view. Semi-structured interviews, according to Jamshed (2014), are among the ideal methods for gathering information about participants' lived experiences. According to Merriam (2009), semi-structured interviews are typically guided by a list of more flexibly worded questions. The study utilised 16 predetermined open-ended questions (see Appendix 8). Although, the semi-structured interview guideline has a certain degree of order, including predetermined open-ended questions, in this study I ensured flexibility in the manner and order while I was conducting the conversations with the study's participants. I ensured that

the interview questions facilitated the conversational flow of information and allowed participants to share their views and experiences freely. Efforts were made to ensure that the interview questions helped the conversational flow of information and allowed the participants to share their views and experiences freely. Therefore, the participants' perspectives were fully explored on the issue of challenges and opportunities regarding the high-level adoption of the TQM philosophy in the participants' university workplaces. The study's rationale was to construct meaningful interpretations and consistent reports from each respondent's lived experience and viewpoints, striving to address the research question(s). The interview with each participant took approximately 30 minutes to an hour and was conducted face-to-face, by telephone, Zoom or Skype meeting "The Demographic Profiles" (see Table 5). All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed into Microsoft Word documents, and uploaded into NVivo12 to be coded and thematically analysed.

#### **4.6.3 The Researcher's Role**

As the author of this study, I was responsible for evaluating each respondent's views and experiences. The researcher's role is to ensure that the study is conducted ethically, ensuring that the participants' privacy and confidentiality are protected and respected, and the data is properly evaluated, ensuring validity, credibility and reliability (Merriam 2009; Yin 2014; Kaiser 2009; Patton 2015). According to Lukka (2010), the researcher's primary role in interpretive research is to describe and provide insights into a given phenomenon. In this study, I ensured the participants' privacy and confidentiality was a high priority and aimed to ensure that the elements, including credibility and reliability, were met through internal and external validity. The attempt was to convey in-depth and relevant information by analysing and or interpreting. Credibility requires a measure of objectivity, which the researcher can achieve by keeping detailed records of the research procedures, field test, notes, recordings, transcripts,

etc. (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008). Reliability is achieved by providing robust details on the research setting, sample, data collection and procedures used for analysis and interpretation.

My role as the researcher in this study was to ensure that a deeper understanding of the phenomenon was achieved. Yin (2014) asserted that certain abilities such as being a good listener, asking the right questions, knowing the topic, caring about the data, multitasking and preserving the data are all essential attributes. Furthermore, Yin advised that researchers should speak less than the interviewees, be nondirective and allow the discussion to flow, and give participants the freedom to describe their experiences, etc. Consequently, I became more aware of knowing the importance of building trust, respect and maintaining transparency throughout the interaction with the study's participants and put them at ease before the interview commenced. Most interviews were carried out in the respondents' offices in their universities, and during working hours except where interviewees preferred the discussion to take place after working hours. Phone calls and Skype were used to interview the female participants, while for the men, the interviews were conducted face-to-face. I transcribed all the interviews, organising, coding and thematically analysing the data.

Before starting each interview, I followed the semi-structured protocol by briefly explaining to each participant that his/her participation was voluntary, and I introduced the research aims and objectives. Additionally, the brief covered why the respondent's participation was needed and what the findings or results in this study could mean for quality improvement in Saudi Arabia's HE sector. At the start of the interview, the interviewees were asked simple general questions to ensure that communication, or general engagement, was comfortable and conducive (Walliman 2011). Once the interview was over, I thanked the interviewee and provided contact details in case they were interested in receiving updates about the findings. The researcher also asked the respondent whether they would like to add anything that had not

been covered during the interview, and whether they had any advice or suggestions. In total, I conducted 29 semi-structured interviews and stopped recruiting more respondents as the study achieved saturation where no more significant information occurred.

#### **4.6.4 Achieving Data Saturation: Obtaining Rich and Thick Qualitative Data**

In qualitative research, obtaining rich and thick data greatly depends on the study design and multiple sources of data involving different methods and techniques. Data saturation should be considered when the data generated is convincingly rich and thick (Dibley 2011). Thick data imply a variety or suitable quantity of information, while rich data are considerably intricate, multi-layered, nuanced and detailed. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that the purpose of sample size is to gather data that is consistent and more focused on quality rather than quantity. Therefore, data saturation, according to Burmeister and Aitken (2012), is about the depth of the data (richness) and not the amount of data (thickness).

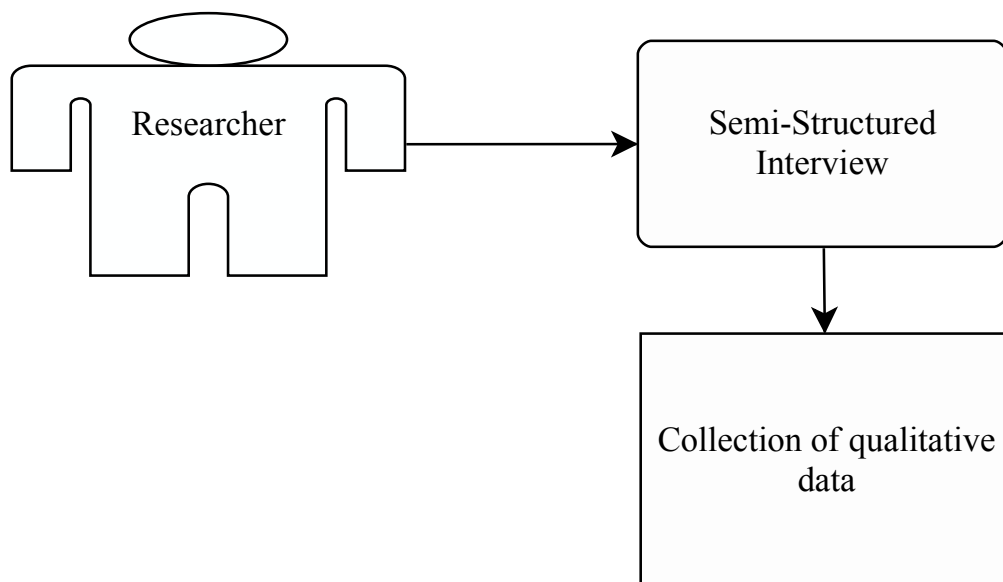
In this study, various methods contributed to achieving rich and thick data. An example of this was the purposeful sampling and criteria set for selecting participants, which included both male and female respondents. Structuring the interview questions in such a way that the bulk of questions were consistent made the data collection more systematic. Employing more than one institution was another strategy to obtain rich data, where three public universities were employed as the avenues from which the study data and information were collected. The qualitative method namely an in-depth semi-structure interviews for the data collection also contributed to the achievement of rich data. All these strategies and steps were considered in the study design to ensure that both rich and thick data were obtained with the view of achieving data saturation (O'Reilly & Parker 2013). Yin (2018) defined saturation as the number at which the participants' data becomes repetitive without new information or perspectives emerging. Therefore, data were continuously analysed as new information was obtained; saturation was



determined when a repeated pattern occurred and there was no need to find anything new (Yin 2014). Thus, for this study, it can be stated that, rich and thick data were obtained, and point of saturation was determined when a pattern of repeated answers materialised and proved to be authoritative.

#### 4.6.5 Selection of Methods

As mentioned earlier in the study design section, a qualitative method was undertaken for the study, namely the semi-structured interviews. The use of in-depth semi-structured interviews resulted in generating first-hand data (primary data) for the current study (see Figure 4.1). This involved directly interviewing the study participants using open-ended questions following the conventions of the semi-structured interview protocol. I sought to obtain rich and thick data from the interviewees. The following subsection explains how the adopted semi-structure interviews were carried out to collect relevant data.



**Figure 4. 1 The qualitative methods adopted for data collection**

Source: Author's creation.

Semi-Structured Interviews: One of the most common forms of collecting qualitative data is through interviews. According to Pezalla et al. (2012), the interview process is a form of social interaction, where the goal is to produce a series of consistent and credible findings. Seidman (2013) asserted the critical role of interviews is to serve as an effective inquiry method, emphasizing that interviews are the best and oldest approach to understanding a range of human perspectives. According to Oplatka (2018), semi-structured interviews can elicit rich information for studies. Therefore, the interviews with this study's participants involved partially open-ended questions and they were not overly structured (Quinlan et al. 2019). This method was necessary to obtain new insights and identify the emerging patterns by paying keen attention to the data presented by each participant. Harrison et al. (2017) and Grant and Osanloo (2014) argued that the semi-structured interview method should address or reduce any concerns over bias that may occur, where the researcher controls the interview's direction since predetermined questions are typical of structured interviews. Therefore, to understand the challenges and opportunities for the high-level integration of the TQM philosophy into the Saudi public university system, in-depth semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were designed and applied.

The semi-structured interviews were guided by 16 open-ended questions designed to elicit related data such as goals and drivers for adopting the TQM philosophy in public universities; challenges facing public universities in adopting TQM, and different strategies that may have been created and adopted in some of those universities leading to the better integration of TQM CSFs (see Appendix 8). As part of the interview process, the researcher posed additional follow-up questions based on the participants' responses to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. The semi-structured interview question sheet included a designated space for taking notes on crucial responses and for noting follow-up questions that arose during the interviews with participants from the three deanship departments (see Appendix 8)

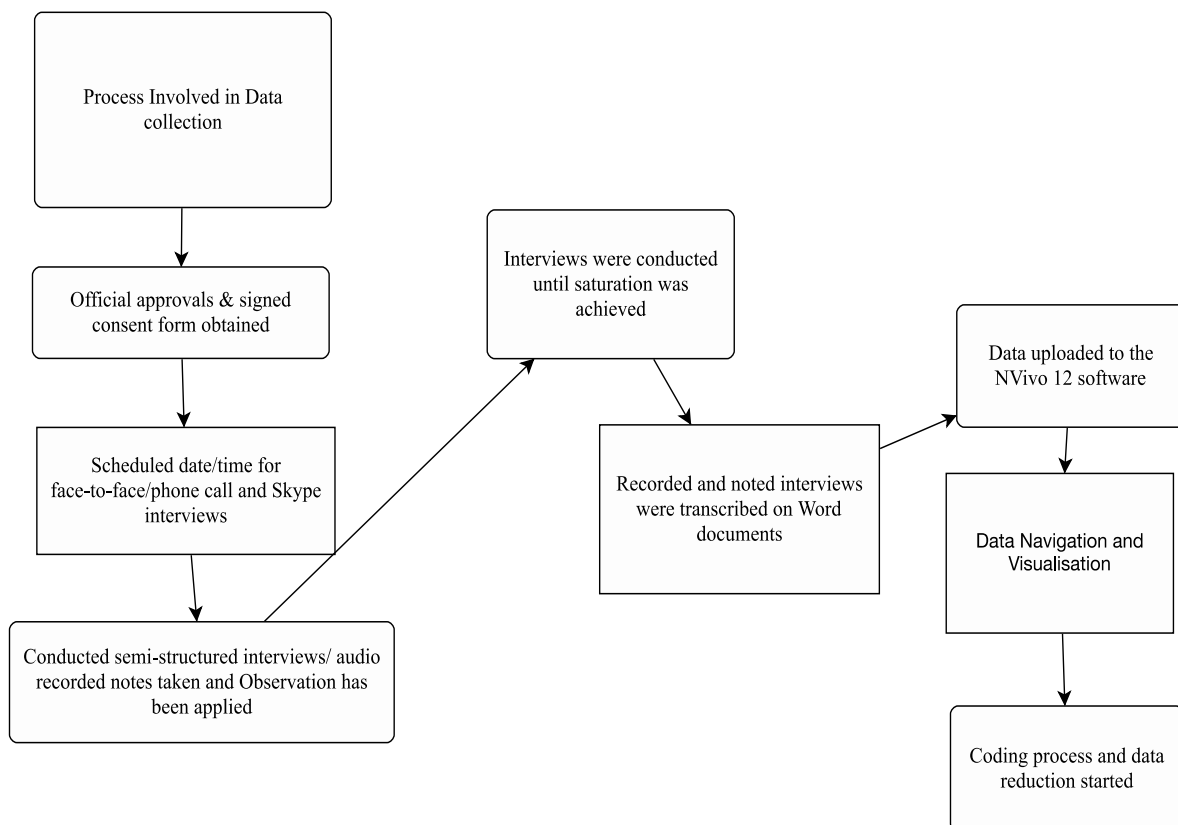
A recorder was used to tape the interview with the interviewee's permission. Writing these up as notes was an alternative method if the respondent did not want the interview to be recorded. Therefore, of the 29 interviewees, 27 semi-structured interviews were recorded and two were noted down by hand. Although most of the interviews were carried out in person (face to face), interviews with female participants were facilitated through telephone, Zoom, or Skype due to cultural considerations. Converting the recorded interviews into textual formats was essential to become familiar with all the data, followed by reading and re-reading the text. All the interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents and then uploaded into the NVivo 12 software to code and explore themes for the stages through which the study data was collected and organised ( see Figure 4.2) .

In addition, relationships with stakeholders, leadership, communication, employee involvement, empowerment, training and education service design, delivery, performance measurements, data and information management, and identifying any operational changes brought about by TQM were also covered in the questions. I utilised an interview protocol to attain maximum data integrity consistently during the data collection process with each interviewee. The interview protocol included the procedures for the researcher's role, initial contact with potential participants, and conducting the semi-structured interviews. For instance, I started by greeting the interviewee, then I explained the following:

- that participation was voluntary and why his or her role was needed for the study.
- the study's aims and what the study's findings mean to quality development in public universities.
- that a recording device would be used to record the discussion if not approved; alternatively, notes would be taken as a reference for the answers and discussion.

- that data would be stored (R-drive) in a secure place for approximately five years. The recorded interviews would be converted into text and data analysis would involve NVivo software.
- that opened-ended questions (semi-structured) would be asked during the interview, and if the participant had difficulty answering, he or she could ask for more clarification.
- that participants had the right to abstain from answering questions if they preferred not to answer.
- that the interview would take between 30 minutes to an hour unless the interviewee wanted to talk longer.
- that the identity of the interviewee would be kept anonymous, and no name or information would be linked to the responses.
- that the consent form must be signed and received before the start of the interview.
- that if a question was not clear enough, the interviewee had the right to ask for further clarification.

I concluded each interview by thanking the interviewee and asked whether there was anything he or she would like to add, any questions they may have, or any advice/recommendations for my field research. Finally, I left my contact number and email address if an interviewee should wish to contact me concerning any questions later. The data, including all audio recordings and transcripts were uploaded into NVivo 12 software for data coding and analysis. Figure 4.2 illustrates the process of gathering data and preparing them for analysis.



**Figure 4. 2 Process involved in data collection**

Source: Author's creation

## 4.7 Data Analysis

This section explains the steps and actions taken to analyse the current research study data. However, before discussing the model employed and the technique utilised to analyse the gathered data, I briefly present the demographic characteristics of the study's participants who took part in this study and the employment of the NVivo 12 software (Mac version)

#### 4.7.1 Study Participants

For the current study, purposive sampling was selected because participants had to meet predetermined sampling criteria whereby a participant must be (i) currently employed in the selected university, and (ii) working in the quality deanship of that university, and (iii) with no less than five years' experience. The *purposive sampling* technique, also called judgement sampling, is a research technique employed to select participants who possess substantial and rich information about a specific context or set of circumstances (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim 2016). According to Patton (2002), purposive sampling is considered an efficient method to utilise limited resources by recruiting participants who have experience and knowledge of the phenomenon being examined; it has been widely used as a technique in qualitative research when an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon is desired (Patton 2002). The aim of targeting purposive participants is to elicit data and information from those with extensive experience and knowledge concerning quality developments in three Saudi public universities.

Therefore, the current research study's participants were selected from three quality deanships departments in three public universities in Saudi Arabia, including quality deans, vice-deans, quality consultants and quality staff who met the inclusion criteria. In addition, the researcher included the views of both men and women participants to gain a wider perspective of the topic under exploration. In total, 29 participants were interviewed, with 11 women representing 38% of the total number of samples. The researcher collected demographic data for a specifically descriptive purpose concerning the interviewees' characteristics. Demographic indicators included respondents' ID, age, level of education, years of experience, gender, employing university, the type and duration of the interview. The demographic profiles of the participants and interviewees' characteristics are given in Table 5.

**Table 5 Demographic Profiles of the Study Participants Exported from Project on NVivo 12**

Respondent's ID	Age	Qualification	Gender	Year of Experience	Interview Type/ method	Duration of the Interview
<b>University 1</b>						
P1	52	PhD	M	20	Face to face	58 minutes
P2	48	PhD	M	10	Face to face	42 minutes
P3	62	PhD	M	12	Face to face	41 minutes
P4	60	PhD	M	20	Face to face	45 minutes
P5	40	PhD	M	6	Face to face	53 minutes
P6	38	Master	M	9	Face to face	51 minutes
P7	34	Master	M	8	Skype meeting	49 minutes
P8	27	Bachelor	M	5	Face to face	39 minutes
P9	35	Master	F	11	Zoom meeting	54 minutes
P10	35	Master	F	10	Zoom meeting	64 minutes
P11	48	PhD	F	14	Phone call	55 minutes
P12	31	Master	F	11	Skype meeting	42 minutes
<b>University 2</b>						
P13	55	PhD	M	22	Face to face	49 minutes
P14	45	Master	M	17	Face to face	52 minutes
P15	62	PhD	M	20	Face to face	45 minutes
P16	65	PhD	M	20	Face to face	40 minutes
P17	50	PhD	M	15	Face to face	68 minutes
P18	49	PhD	M	15	Face to face	45 minutes
P19	40	PhD	M	13	Face to face	57 minutes
P20	49	PhD	M	20	Face to face	61 minutes
P21	54	PhD	F	16	Phone call	55 minutes
P22	65	PhD	F	14	Phone call	63 minutes
P23	52	PhD	F	13	Phone call	49 minutes
P24	41	PhD	M	7	Skype meeting	43 minutes
<b>University 3</b>						
P25	51	PhD	M	18	Face to face	68 minutes
P26	41	PhD	M	14	Face to face	54 minutes
P27	45	PhD	F	17	Phone call	47 minutes
P28	41	PhD	F	17	Phone call	51 minutes
P29	45	PhD	F	16	Phone call	49 minutes

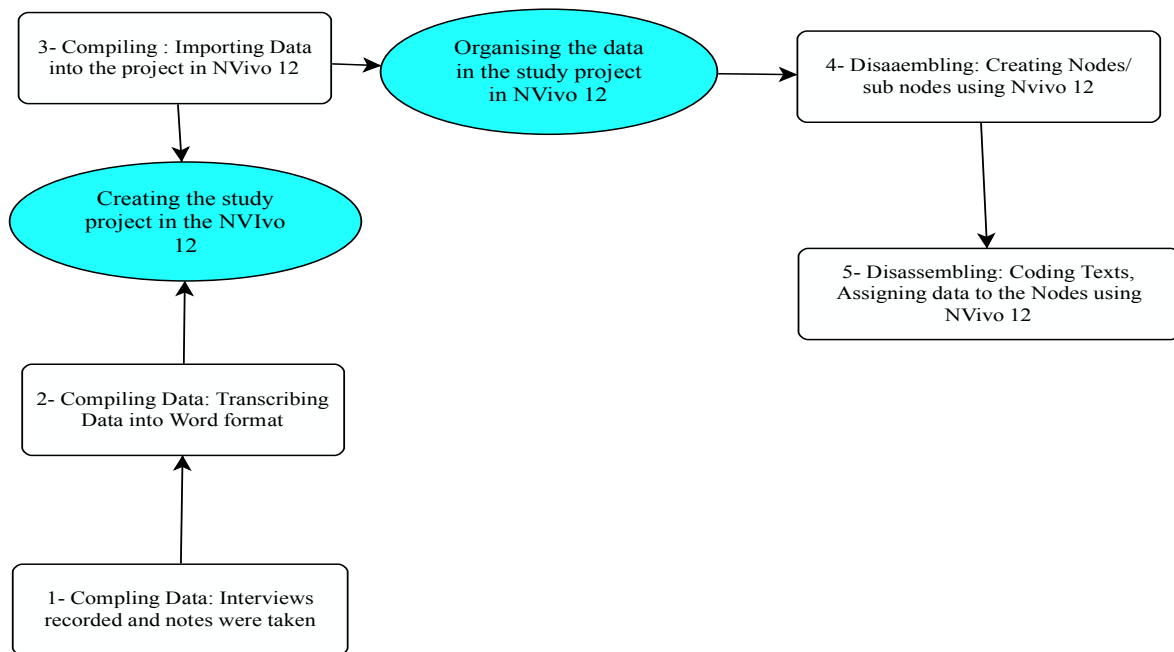
Interviews were conducted between January 2020 and April 2020. Thereby, rich, and thick data were obtained from the selected participants who possessed lengthy experience in quality development in the selected universities. Data and related information were stored securely on

the R-drive and protected using a password. Section 4.7.2 explains the utilisation of NVivo 12 software and the strategies employed to organise the study's qualitative data for analysis.

#### **4.7.2 Employment of NVivo 12 Software in the Current Study**

In this study, NVivo 12 (Mac version) was used to organise and code the data. NVivo helps researchers manage data, find themes, obtain insights, and draw conclusions (See Figure 4.3). To begin the data analysis, the researcher reviewed and re-read all transcripts and made notes. Before entering the data into the NVivo program, several codes were established manually while listening to the recorded interviews and re-reading the transcribed interviews. Although QSR International developed the NVivo 12 software as a qualitative analysis tool to assist researchers in analysing qualitative data, the researcher is well aware that no software can analyse qualitative data. Thus, the tools available in NVivo 12 (Mac version) were used to organise, code and visualise data to generate themes and subthemes. However, the researcher remained the primary instrument for conducting thematic analysis. Additional information regarding the data analysis method is provided below. All the transcribed interviews were imported into NVivo for in-depth coding and increased immersion in the data to generate themes and subthemes. Figure 4.3 shows visually the phase of NVivo 12 employment during the process study analysis. This section summarises how NVivo 12 software was used to assist in the analysis process during the stages of analysis, particularly during the first two stages of data analysis which involved data organisation (compiling phase) and data coding (disassembling phase), as illustrated in Figure 4.3.





**Figure 4. 3 NVivo12 software utilisation during the phases of data process analysis**

Source: Author's creation.

#### 4.7.2.1 Recording Interviews and Notes Made

The researcher utilised an Olympus recorder device to record the interviews undertaken with the study participants. However, for those respondents who did not agree to their discussions being recorded, the researcher took notes to document what they said. In total, 27 interviews out of 29 were recorded, while 2 were noted down. According to Bailey (2008) and Carter et al. (2014), it is legitimate to record an interview but only when all persons have been informed of the intention to do so. Thus, in this study, the consent form informed that a recorder device would be used to record the interviews unless an interviewee disapproves of the recording. Before each interview, the researcher also stated that the recorder device would be used to ensure that the interviewee was aware of this. Recording the interviews was essential as it helped me capture the participants' exact words and expressions, thereby minimising the risk of misinterpretation or relying solely on notetaking and memory bias. This allowed me to revisit the interview data multiple times, which aids in identifying nuances, patterns and themes that would not have been apparent or identifiable during the initial interview and notetaking.

#### *4.7.2.2 Transcribing the Data*

According to Bailey (2008), representing audible data in written form is the first step of analysing data. For this study, converting the recorded interviews into a textual format, that is, a Microsoft Word document, was essential for managing and analysing the data entered into the NVivo 12 software. I was careful about transcribing data as the responses' meanings should not deviate from the study's objectives. By converting the recorded interviews into transcripts in a Microsoft Word format, the researcher could read and re-read through these transcripts, make notes and highlight items of potential interest or meaning units. Furthermore, the researcher has shared these transcripts with the participants to ensure accuracy. Having the audio recorded interviews and the notes transcribed in a Microsoft Word format was necessary to work on them using the tools available in NVivo software coding and visualising data. The NVivo software features allowed for each uploaded interview transcript to be linked to the participant with whom that specific interview had been conducted. The researcher created a case classification for each respondent and assigned a unique ID to each person to protect their identity and distinguish one participant from another (see Table 5). The word count of all the interview transcripts amounted to 97,037 words.

#### *4.7.2.3 Creating a Project and Importing Data into NVivo 12*

The researcher created the study project in NVivo 12 (Mac version) and gave it the codename 'project 21'. In the study project, I created three folders named University 1, University 2 and University 3 to pave the way for importing and allocating those transcripts and other relevant documents to their correct places. Obtaining access to the NVivo software enables qualitative researchers to import different types of data including Microsoft. Thus, in total, 29 transcripts were imported separately into the folders created in NVivo12. The steps, including the creation of the study project on NVivo 12, turning all audio recorded interviews as well as the notes

into transcripts in a Microsoft Word format, and creating case classification for each participant, were part of organising the study data, which according to Yin's five-phase framework, represents the phase of compiling data. The next section explains the process of employing NVivo to aid in disassembling data as the second phase for data analysis (coding process).

#### *4.7.2.4 Creating Nodes for the Study Project in NVivo 12*

According to Houghton et al. (2017), researchers use nodes to collate information in one place to help identify emerging patterns. Nodes are like containers used to hold relevant coding references in NVivo 12. Therefore, for this study, after gathering all the study data into one place and creating case classifications for each participant, nodes and sub-nodes were created. This step aims to group similar data during the process of coding across all the uploaded transcripts in one place. After the nodes and sub-nodes were created, the next step was to commence the coding and assign similar data to the associated nodes and sub-nodes created via NVivo 12. The aim was to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the data; hence I began to code the data directly, assigning the coded data to those nodes and sub-nodes, which was also a step in reducing data and exploring patterns to generate themes. Features in NVivo 12 provide flexibility for coding data into the created nodes and uncoding those data, merging one node or more to another or separating nodes from the same note's hierarchy and changing labels in an attempt to pave the way for finding patterns of similarities across data in these nodes and categorise them. During this stage, I was able to dig deeply into the data and explore it through a range of visualisation methods, including charts, mind maps, concept maps, word clouds and word trees. Through data visualisations, the researcher garnered a more in-depth understanding of the data to hand and prepared for the next step, which involved creating nodes and conducting an extensive coding exercise. The next section explains the continuation of more in-depth coding of the data.

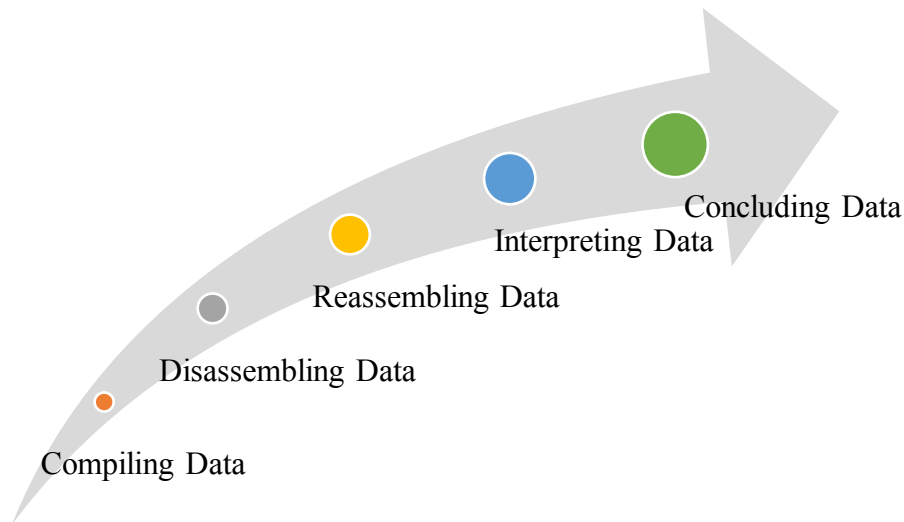
#### 4.7.2.5 Coding Process

NVivo software enables a researcher to dig deeper into the data through queries which search for frequently occurring words and phrases (Feng and Behar-Horenstein 2019). In this study, the queries in the software served to navigate the word frequencies in expressions, and I used code comparison to compare the coded data across the entire responses. After coding all the data, I explored the patterns in the coded data across all nodes and sub-nodes in the study project. In this analysis phase, several candidate themes stood out and were examined before being reported in the findings chapter. Details on the identified themes and subthemes are presented in the findings chapter. Therefore, the employment of tools from the NVivo 12 software aided the process of analysis during the phases of compiling and disassembling data. Tools available in the NVivo 12 software made retrieval easier and faster. In addition, they enabled me to visually display the study data in multiple forms, which would have been a complicated process if I had relied totally only on manual coding (NVivo 2020). The following section provides details about the framework adopted and mechanism process involved in analysing the current study collected data.

#### 4.7.3 The Current Study's Approach for Data Analysis: Yin's Five-Phase Framework

In the present study, for the thematic analysis of the collected data, I used Yin's (2014) five-phase framework of analysis: *compiling data*, *dissembling data*, *reassembling data*, *interpreting data*, and *reaching a conclusion* (see Figure 4.4). Castleberry and Nolen (2018) suggested that Yin's five-phase approach for analysis can enhance thematic analysis. The following explains in detail the process involved with reference to the five phases employed for analysing the collected data, as advised in Yin's five phases for research study data analysis (Yin 2014). Tools from NVivo 12 software were also used, which facilitate the process of analysis throughout the implementation of *compiling data*, *dissembling data*, *reassembling*

*data, coding interpreting data and developing themes in this study.* Figure 4.4 illustrates the sequence of the five phases of Yin's framework as applied in the current study, utilising tools from NVivo 12 (Mac version) for data analysis.



**Figure 4. 4 The adopted model for data analysis**

Source: Yin (2014).

#### **4.7.4 Compiling the Data**

Compiling data was the first step in analysing the data collected in this study. According to Yin (2014), compiling data involves creating a database in an organised way to prepare the data for assessment. According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), compiling data into a useable form is the first step to finding meaningful answers to the research question(s). For this phase, I recorded the interviews to capture all the relevant details. Then, I transcribed the audio recordings into Microsoft Word. I repeatedly listened to the interview recordings, re-read the interview transcripts and noted any personal assumptions. Converting the recorded interviews into a Microsoft Word format and then uploading them into the NVivo 12 software were essential steps for sorting data and coding them. Within NVivo 12, I created a folder for each participant where the transcript, notes and related observed information were entered. NVivo software has the capability to organise participants and data into case files called case nodes

(Siccama & Penna 2008). Therefore, each participant's transcript and assigned attributes including gender, age, qualification and years of employment in dealing with quality issues were organised using tools that were available in the NVivo software.

The process of data compilation enabled me to remain close to the data. In total, 29 transcribed interviews were uploaded into NVivo12 for the coding process so that themes could be developed. Three folders were created in NVivo 12; each folder encompassed all the data and information collected from each university. The interview transcripts of each participant were given an ID code to give each participant a distinct identity. These features in NVivo enabled me to effectively manage the first phase of the analysis, which is compiling the collected data. After compiling the data, I started the processes of disassembling the already compiled data into smaller sets (see Figure 4.5). This phase made it possible to discover the data components through coding.

#### **4.7.5 Disassembling the Data**

Yin (2014) suggested that the disassembling phase should focus on dividing data into groups. In this stage, the coding process is initiated to sort and reduce data and make sense of what it means. Disassembling can include coding and sorting data in several ways to create new meaningful insights (Yin 2014). With the aim of thematically analysing data from the semi-structured interviews and in order to sort out data, the coding process was carried out to break down the compiled data into snippets and use categories to label them. NVivo software assisted in disassembling data by creating nodes (labels) and coding the empirical data to explore themes (Braun & Clarke 2006). Each node containing the empirical data was coded across the database, and this was done to explore patterns among the coded data in each node. In other words, disassembling data involves creating meaningful groupings after taking the data apart (Castleberry & Nolen 2018). Features in NVivo software enabled me to code data on the

uploaded transcripts separately, create memos and retrieve the coded data as well as trace its original sources (transcript sheet) quickly and effectively. This facilitated the process of moving back and forth to navigate through the study data.

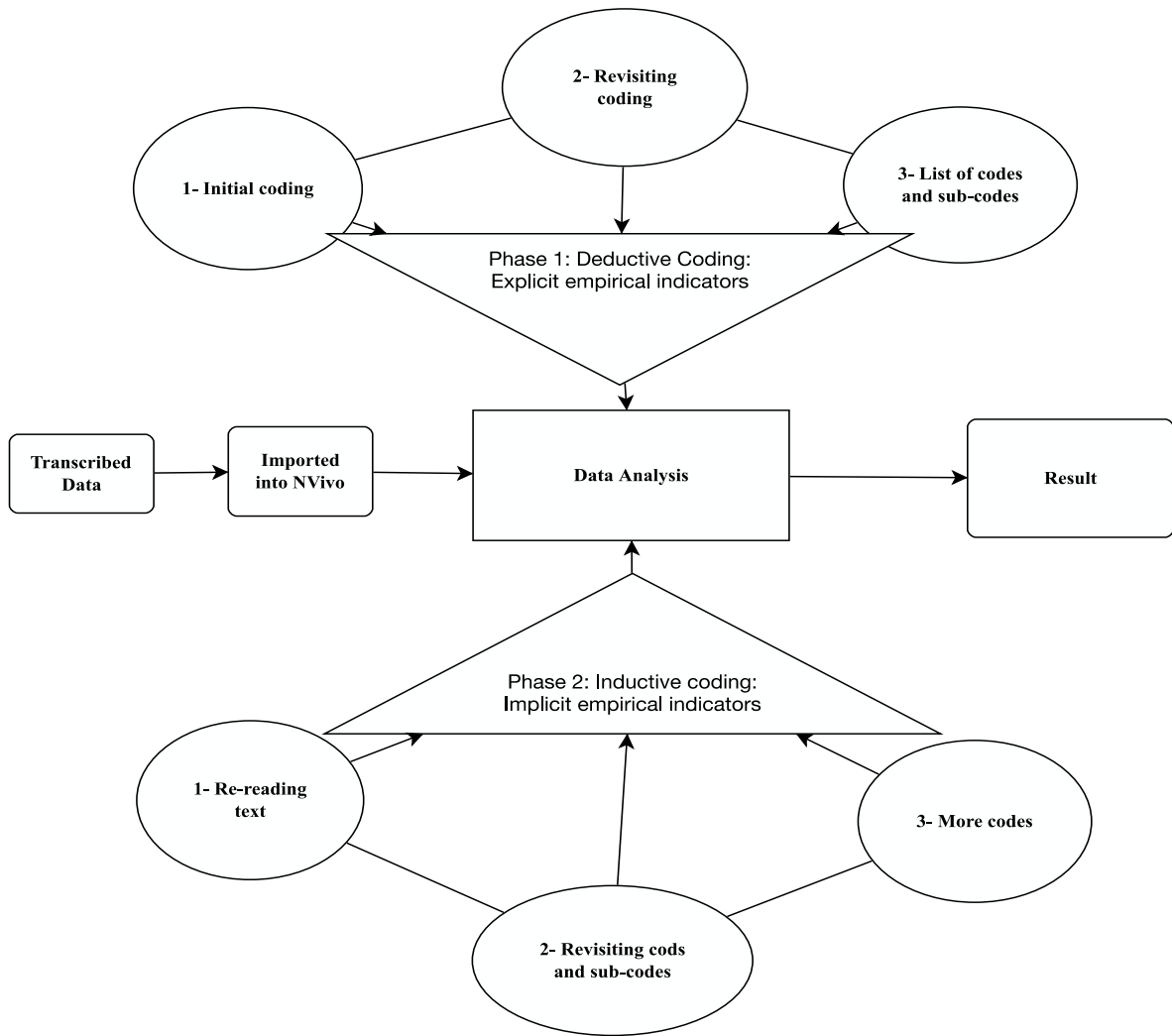
Researchers use coding to identify the relationships between the coded data and the phenomenon under investigation (Braun & Clarke 2006). Researchers often use coding to disassemble and reassemble data (Castleberry & Nolen 2018). I used smaller sets of data to create meaningful groupings after disassembling the information. For this study, coding processes were carried out deductively guided by the research question(s) and then inductively adopting the driven data (bottom-up) approach (see Figure below 4.5).

According to Adu (2019), in qualitative data, there are explicit and implicit empirical indicators. Explicit empirical indicators are those data that can be coded easily by a researcher as they have direct and straightforward associations with the questions being asked. However, implicit empirical indicators in qualitative data have a hidden connection with the research questions (Adu 2019). These two types of empirical indicators of qualitative data are both significant for research study and require careful consideration by researchers during the coding processes. Therefore, in this study and in accordance with the statement made above by (Adu 2019), I initially developed codes deductively with the explicit data. The relationships between the coded data and the questions being asked in this phase were explicit and straightforward to identify. Then, I adopted a data-driven (bottom-up) approach for developing codes inductively by coding the implicit empirical indicators in the data collected. This entailed carefully reading and re-reading all the transcribed interviews to identify common patterns in the empirical data in the transcripts and what they meant. According to Adu (2019), implicit empirical indicators are significant sources of data and information, but they are hidden and need to be tested to see if they can answer the questions posed. Codes were created using the

NVivo software and according to how the researcher interprets the identified data (Siccama & Penna 2008; Adu 2019).

NVivo 12 software has helped scholars to understand data through visualisations and developing more codes by navigating their way through the data. I used the tools available such as Word Cloud, Word Tree and related text or word frequency query strategies to enhance my familiarity with the study's data. Therefore, the adopted deductive and (data-driven approach) approach during the coding process with the aid of NVivo 12 enabled me to complete the coding process throughout the entire study dataset. In this stage, the coding process made it possible to identify significant patterns among the coded data. Potential themes to be identified from the coded data represented the next step following Yin's five-phase model which is the phase of reassembling the data.





**Figure 4.5 Dissembling phase**

Source: Author's creation.

#### **4.7.6 Reassembling the Data**

Reassembling the data is the third phase implemented in the process of data analysis adopting Yin's five-step approach. In the reassembling phase, the process involved clustering and categorising themes into a sequence of groups. Reassembling can include categorising and recombining data, such as using cross-case analysis to discover repeated patterns (Yin 2014). Here, candidate themes and subthemes have been identified by questioning what recurring concepts and ideas (repeated patterns) mean across the coded data in the related nodes. The process of coding to develop categories in the previous steps led to themes being generated. It

is the process of identifying codes, relationships, patterns and combinations where themes have been identified (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2013). In other words, themes have emerged through interpreting something that is significant in the coded data and appears consistently. The node tools in NVivo 12 were created as places for the coded data and helped to search for repeated patterns throughout the data that were coded. According to Houghton et al. (2017), researchers use the nodes feature available in NVivo to collate and code information in one place and search for patterns. In this phase of the analysis, the coding processes led to patterns that were detected throughout the coded data. The developed codes formed potential or candidate themes and subthemes. Themes normally emerge as a result of further examination of categories, in turn reducing them to concepts that represent sets of codes and empirical indicators (Adu 2019).

Austin and Sutton (2014) asserted that coding in the realm of qualitative research focuses on how raw data are identified and then gradually converted into useable data through different steps such as themes, concepts or ideas that are to some extent connected. In this study, NVivo software helped illustrate the relationships between themes and subthemes using a feature called the Concept Map and Mind Maps to explore relationships between concepts and themes. Braun and Clarke (2013) advised researchers to use thematic mapping to reveal the relationship between the identified concepts and themes. Thus, I used Concept and Mind Maps in NVivo to conceptualise and further explore the relationships between concepts and themes. This made it possible to interpret the dataset's features through the analysis of themes and their correlation to the coded data. However, the key point to note in this step is that the theme's crucial purpose does not rely only on its repetitive nature, occurrence and quantity of data (Yin 2011). Instead, the purpose of the theme is whether it contains data that could determine answers to the research questions.

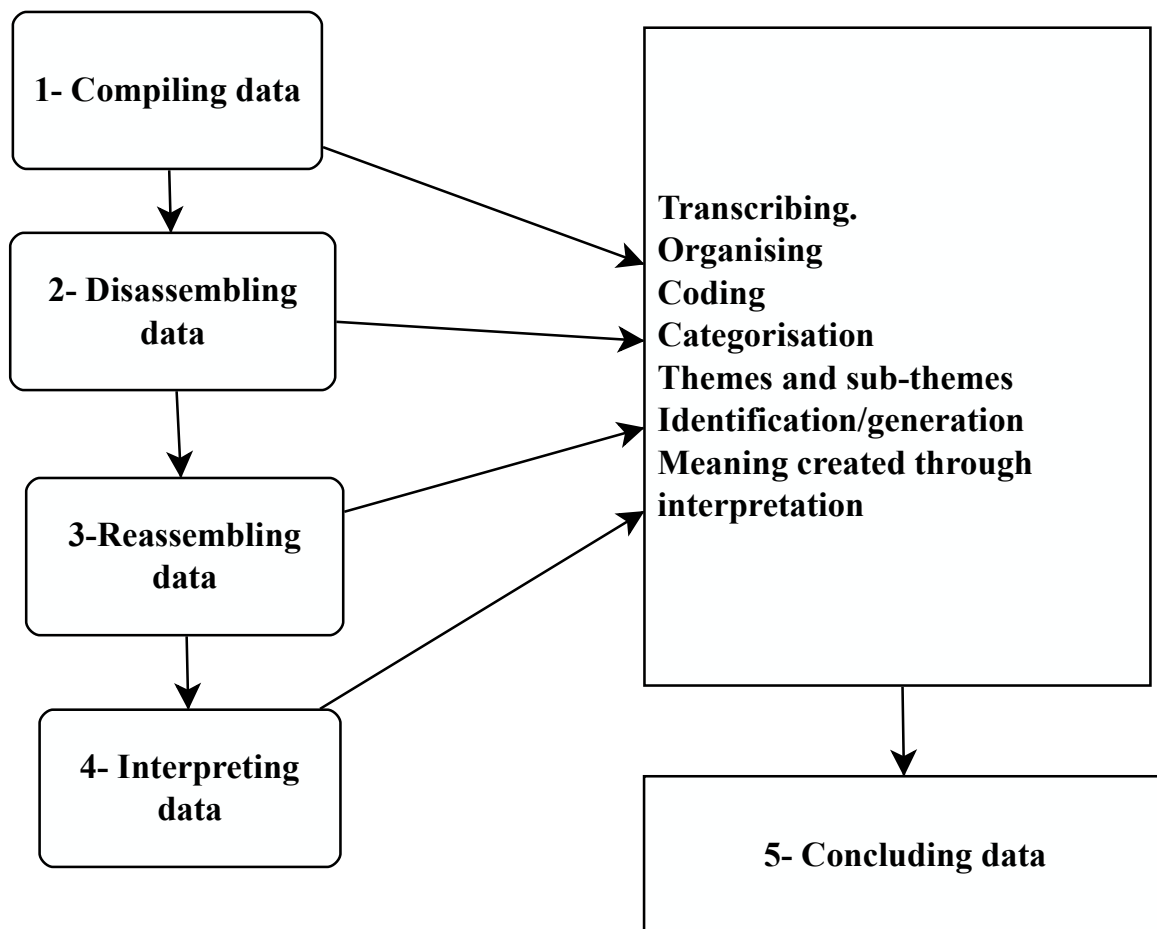
#### **4.7.7 Interpreting the Data**

After reassembling the data, the interpretation phase took place. This applied thematic analysis to the already reassembled data, which involved an abstraction and synthesis of the data (Castleberry & Nolen 2018). The process involved organising, coding and categorising data, throughout which compiling, disassembling, and reassembling data led to identifying what the data meant (Yin 2014). Candidate themes and subthemes were defined and further refined, which are presented in the findings section. The essence of each theme is illustrated by giving meaning to each one to determine what each theme or subtheme captured. Elo et al. (2014) argued that researchers use coding to discover the relationships between coded data and the overarching phenomenon under investigation. I used coding to reassemble closely related data into categories and then develop themes, whereby the interpretive analysis of the identified themes occurs in relation to the examined phenomenon. Interpretation according to Yin (2014) involves discoveries in producing the findings. Therefore, in this study, interpretations took place where meanings had been created rather than simply by means of paraphrasing, describing or the act of putting spoken sounds on paper (Braun & Clarke 2006).

#### **4.7.8 Conclusions**

The fifth phase of Yin's analysis framework, reaching a conclusion, can only be achieved once all the other phases are completed. In this thesis, the conclusion occurs at the end of the data analysis process. The study aims to explore the challenges and identify drivers in public universities to promote the higher-level integration of TQM's core values to create a quality culture. The NVivo 12 software helped store, organise, code, map and provide a visual representation of the data. The data in turn was thematically analysed using the five-stage data analysis, consisting of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting and making conclusions (Yin 2014). Throughout the data analysis process, emphasis was placed on

identifying patterns within the dataset, and through thematic analysis, establishing relevant themes and subthemes that directly address the study’s research questions. Furthermore, in light of the current findings of this research study, the research will provide suggestions for future research to build upon the new knowledge created by the current study concerning the topic of TQM philosophy adoption in universities. Figure 4.6 illustrates the current study’s adopted approach.



**Figure 4. 6 The current study’s adopted approach for data analysis includes Yin’s five-phase analysis framework**

## 4.8 Data Validation

In this study, the aim was to ensure that the research conclusion produced an acceptable level of validity. Validity refers to how well the data collection and data analysis captures the studied reality. Researchers, according to Swanson and Holton (2005), must address three important issues: the internal validity or credibility of the findings, the consistency of the results and the external validity, which concerns the reliability or transferability of the reported findings. According to Maxwell (2012), one of the strengths of qualitative research is to describe the processes that led to the study outcomes. Validity and reliability are two factors that are a consequence of designing a study and determining credibility (Patton 2015; Elo et al. 2014). For an exploratory study such as this one, Yin (2014) maintains that the strength of internal validity is connected to the study design.

Therefore, aspects include a clear rationale for the adopted methodology, paradigm, design, methods for data collection and analysis, and the criteria of purposeful sampling for selecting participants to ensure the validity and reliability of the qualitative exploratory study research. Lauckner, Paterson and Krupa (2012) contended that enhancing credibility requires identifying realistic strategies, such as long-term engagement in the field and accessing multiple sources. the strategies that were adopted while conducting the current study in an effort to ensure internal validity, which refers to credibility, and external validity, which refers to reliability and transferability of the findings are described as follows.

***Internal Validity:*** Internal validity or credibility is achieved in qualitative studies through the collection of data from a variety of different sources (Yin 2014; Lauckner, Paterson & Krupa 2012). In this thesis, the data were collected from three public Saudi universities using qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The purposeful

sampling method was used to recruit the study participants, both males and females, to enhance the validity of the data. Furthermore, the field test involved feedback from experts and interviewees during the development of the open-ended questions, and the mock interviews also enhanced the internal validity of the data since these kinds of prior measures according to Baškarada (2014) develop convergence of evidence to construct validity. The semi-structured interview protocol provided a basic format and ensured consistency in collecting the data. The collected data and information were initially coded manually to identify categories or domains, patterns and themes. Therefore, internal validity was enhanced in this study by keeping detailed records of research procedures, notes, recordings and transcripts. (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008; Yin 2014). The researcher created a memos section in NVivo 12 to keep a reflexive journal about the analysis processes. In this way, I was able to suspend judgement and document any preconceptions I had about the TQM philosophy in Saudi public universities. According to Finlay (2002) and Palaganas et al. (2017), the practice of reflexivity involves keeping notes in a journal about a researcher's emotions and beliefs about the data, and how to avoid bias. By following those processes, I was able to ensure data credibility.

***External validity:*** External validity additional measures were applied because this is a critical component of qualitative exploratory study research, as stated by (Yin 2014). In qualitative studies, external validity refers to the transferability and replicability of the results (Golafshani 2003). Yin (2014) stated that validity and reliability are widely used as criteria for determining the quality of research, and using more than one data source is recommended to enhance research reliability. Patton (2015) argued that reliability is the consequence of validity in a study. The researcher provides robust details regarding the research setting, sample and data-collection procedures used for analysis and interpretation.

A detailed and comprehensive description of the procedures used to guide the process and development of the study made external validity and transferability viable. According to Braun and Clarke (2019) and Nowell et al. (2017,) transferability in qualitative studies can be achieved through a robust description of the research setting, methodology, sample, data collection, analysis and interpretation, which the researcher has done. All these aspects are explained in detail. Details were also offered on the measures applied to protect participants' confidentiality, data management and the storage of information. Coding, categorising and theme identification were also covered in this chapter. My research aims to generate specific and contextualised knowledge from multiple public universities that could contribute to the literature on the TQM philosophy and practically support quality leaders and managers in the HEI context. Although this does not mean that the aim of this qualitative exploratory study is to generalise, it does refer to the generalisation from empirical observations to theory, rather than a population (Yin 2014). Attempts have been made to ensure that the results could be transferable from the findings of these public universities to others in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere, such as Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries or other Middle East nations or similar contexts of other developing countries in the region.

#### **4.9 Ethical Considerations**

The current research study's overall design, including information sharing, data storage and data destruction, ensured compliance with ethical standards. Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC) gave permission to conduct the study and carry out in-depth semi-structured interviews with the potential respondents at three Saudi public universities. This was to engage in in-depth discussions using semi-structured interviews with quality deans, vice-deans, quality consultants, managers and staff working in quality deanship departments. The process of obtaining ethical approval involved thorough consideration of all

aspects to maintain the study's adherence to the ethical guidelines for conducting research. Protecting participants' privacy was a priority in this study.

Therefore, the study adheres to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2018 (National Health and Medical Research Council 2018). The researcher began with the ethics application using the university website (Victoria University website 2021) and then uploaded the requested documents as required by VUHREC. The uploaded documents comprised the consent form, study information form, official approvals from the selected universities and the semi-structured interviews. The consent form contains information about the methods used during the interviews and the data collection. The participants who had agreed to be interviewed were asked to sign the consent form before taking part in the study. The consent form included contact details of the study's principal supervisor and VUHREC. The study information form included notes on the aims, objectives and potential outcomes of the research. To ensure ethical consideration was being followed in the study, participants were informed of the following:

- that open-ended questions would guide the interview process using semi-structured interviews
- the timeframe required for the entire interviewing process
- their rights to abstain from answering any question deemed to be inappropriate or unanswerable, and to withdraw from the study
- details about the interview recording tools, which included a voice recorder, the use of which required the respondent's permission. Alternatively, notes would be taken if participant did not allow the discussion to be recorded.
- the retention period for the data collected, that is, five years



- assurance of the anonymity of interviewees and that measures were put in place for data management and protection
- the focus of the overall research.

Since most of the interviews were carried out in the Arabic language, each document was translated by a certified translator agency and stamped to ensure accuracy and preciseness in all the translated documents. After all the requirements for ethics approval demanded by VUHREC had been met, ethical approval was granted and the reference number HRE19-174 was obtained.

The researcher valued and guaranteed the participants' confidentiality. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), confidentiality is one of the major ethical requirements for a researcher regarding their participants and their voluntary role. Therefore, no names, locations or any other leading information exposed any of the individuals. Thus, all the participants were given an alphanumeric code (e.g., Participant 1 [P1], Participant 2 [P2], and Participant 3 [P3]) to maintain their anonymity. The same method was employed for the three universities (e.g., University 1, University 2, University 3).

The researcher ensured there was a secure place in which to store the collected data and effectively manage them. The R-drive is managed by the university to store graduate-level students' research work and offers a secure place for the data. Participants' details, interview records and transcripts, official approvals from the visited universities, signed consent forms, and all other official documents were digitally uploaded into the R-drive and encrypted to minimise any potential risk of losing data or details disclosure. The R-drive allows the researcher to organise the data digitally and easily erase them after the retention period of 5 years. Furthermore, the transcripts and other documents uploaded to the NVivo software for analysis were cleaned of any information that could lead to participant or university

identification. The NVivo signing in was encrypted with code that only the researcher knows. Therefore, in line with VUHREC's guidelines, all these measures were applied to ensure the participants' information and the identity of the universities that were visited are kept securely confidential.

#### **4.10 Summary**

This chapter comprehensively described the methodology adopted for conducting the research study investigations. It provided the rationale for the chosen research design, target population and sample method. Furthermore, it outlined procedures for participant selection, protection, data management, collection methods, analysis procedures, research instruments and ethical considerations. The main techniques adopted for data gathering were explained, and more information about the study participants was provided, including those of male and female respondents from quality deanship departments in three Saudi universities. The process involved in analysing data with the adoption of Yin's five-phase framework for data analysis was explained in detail. Chapter 5 presents the major findings, including themes and subthemes that were derived from the data analysis process seeking to address the research study question(s).

## Chapter 5: Findings

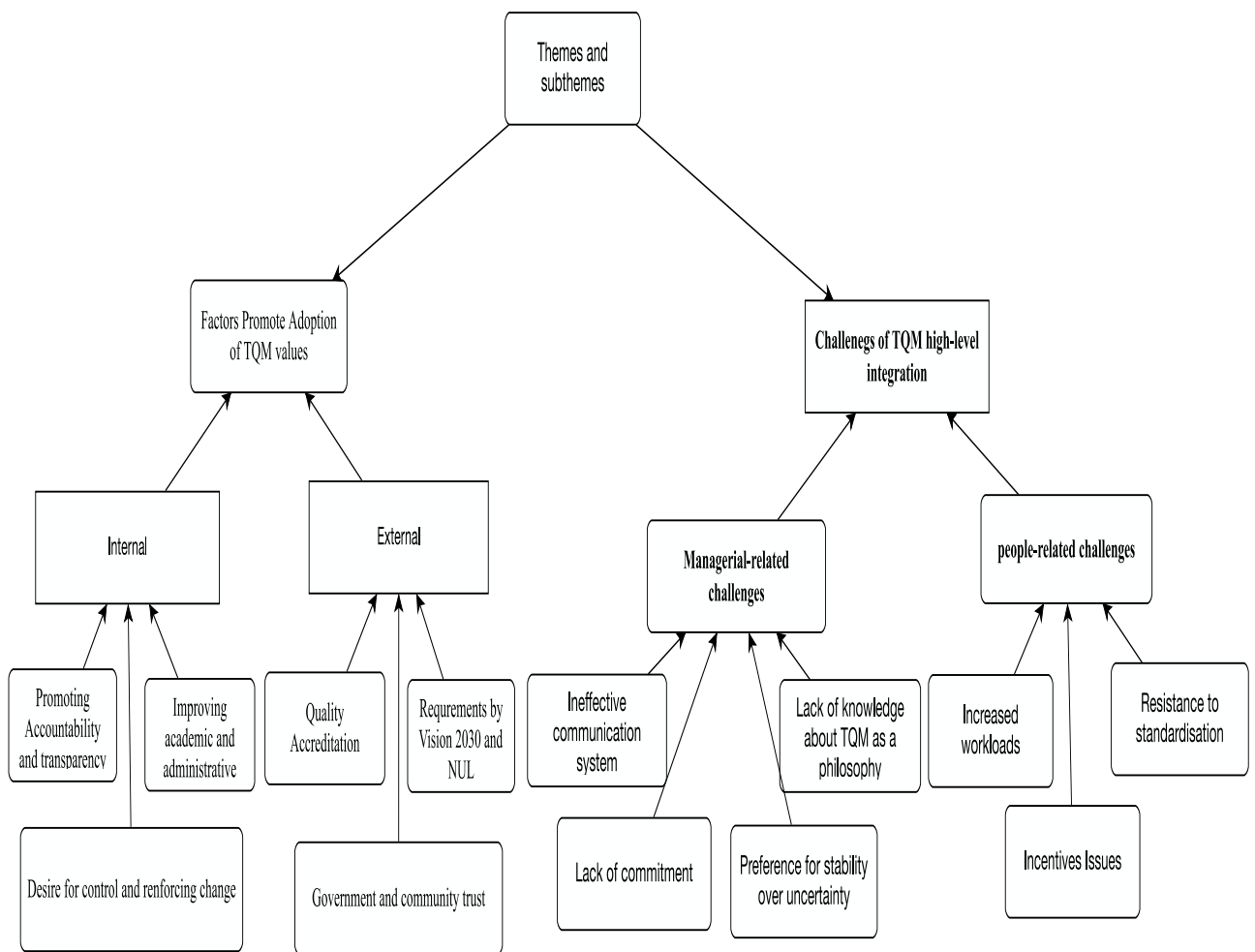
### 5.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to identify the drivers and explore the barriers to the high-level integration of TQM's core values (CSFs) in Saudi Arabian public universities to foster a quality-oriented culture. The primary data collected was subjected to several stages of in-depth analysis to address the research study's question, *How can Saudi Arabian public universities foster and sustain a quality-oriented culture through the high-level integration of TQM CSFs?*, as stated in the preceding chapters. The data collected for this qualitative research study were thematically analysed using Yin's five-phase framework for analysing research study data. Additionally, the researcher for this study used features included in the NVivo 12 software during a different stage of analysis. Consequently, major themes and subthemes were identified.

External and internal drivers are major issues examined in conjunction with causes that have pushed for quality improvement through the adoption of quality values. Each of these two central themes is further subdivided into several subthemes. The external drivers incorporate the following subthemes: (a) need for quality accreditation, (b) Vision 2030 and NUL requirements, and (c) government and community trust. Internal drivers include the following: (a) enhancing accountability and transparency, (b) a desire for control and driving change, and (c) enhancing performance and quality outcomes.

Additionally, the analysis revealed the presence of several barriers within public universities that hindered the successful implementation of TQM values for quality improvement. These identified obstacles were broadly categorised into two groups: managerial and people-related challenges. The first set of challenges primarily pertains to managerial issues, while the second set is related to common obstacles faced by employees, including those in non-managerial

roles. Subthemes under the managerial challenges category include (a) a lack of commitment, (b) a lack of understanding of TQM as a philosophy, (c) ineffective communication, and (d) a preference for stability over uncertainty. Conversely, people-related challenges include the following: (a) increased workloads, (b) resistance to standardisation, and (c) a lack of incentives (see Figure 5.1). In light of the study data analysis, the major themes and subthemes explored through the thematic analysis and contributed to the generation of the major findings are presented in Sections 5.2–5.3. The chapter provides the results pertaining to the major themes and their subthemes, beginning with the drivers and subsequently displaying the identified challenges.

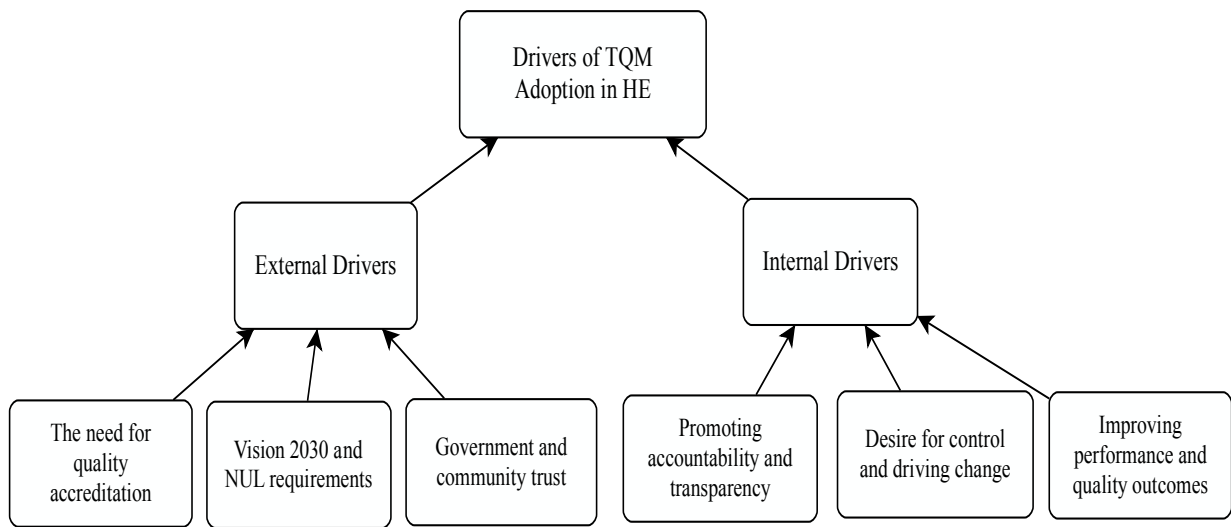


**Figure 5. 1 The current study’s adopted approach for data analysis includes Yin’s five-phase analysis framework**

## 5.2 External and Internal Drivers

The semi-structured questions were designed and utilised during the interviews to collect pertinent data to explore the drivers that have promoted quality-related values, methodologies and practices in these public universities, including the adoption of TQM. The in-depth analysis of the responses yielded in the exploration of the group of drivers promoted the movement towards quality development in these universities. Hence, two major themes and six subthemes were identified, all of which relate to the naturalisation of quality-related practices involving the adoption of TQM values and tools in these public university setting. The two key themes were labelled: (1) external drivers and (2) internal drivers. Each of these two central themes comprises several subthemes (see Figure 5.2).

The external drivers incorporate the following subthemes: (a) need for quality accreditation, (b) Vision 2030 and NUL requirements, and (c) government and community trust. The internal drivers comprise: (a) promoting accountability and transparency, (b) desire for control and driving change, and (c) improving performance and quality outcomes. Subthemes identified under the external category were characterised as imperative factors that ‘have been enforced to promote acceptance of quality concepts and values in these public universities. Meanwhile, the subthemes classified as internal drivers are forces that have been developed internally within the universities, principally prompted by the leadership at the top and quality deanships for adherence to quality developments.

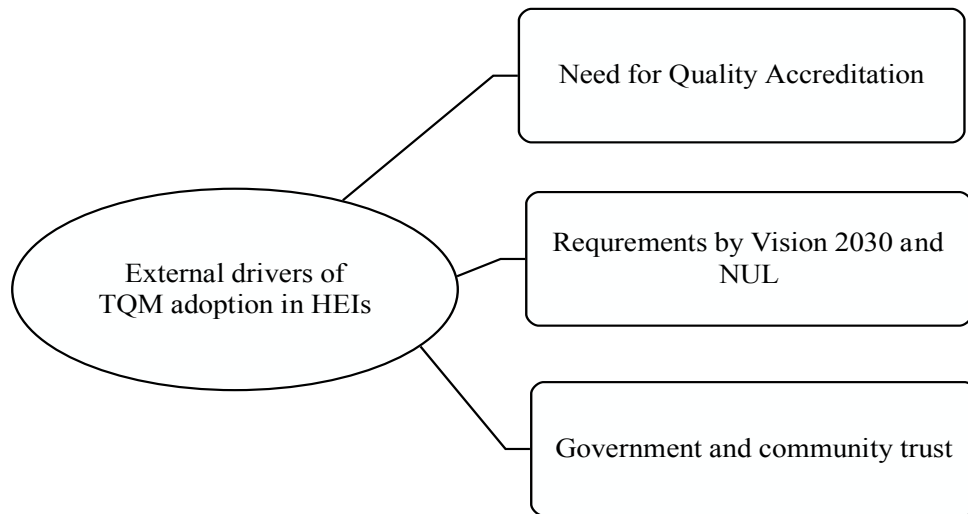


**Figure 5. 2 Key themes and subtheme drivers for adopting TQM in public universities**

Section 5.2.1 presents the two major themes and their associated subthemes that reinforced the level of acceptance of quality concepts and practices involving the adoption of TQM values in these public universities.

### **5.2.1 External Drivers (Imperative)**

Data analysis revealed that external forces have exerted a significant influence on increasing the level of quality practices for improvement and adherence to quality values in the Saudi Arabian public university context. As shown in Figure 5.3, three subthemes, namely, (a) need for quality accreditation, (b) Vision 2030 and NUL requirements, and (c) government and community trust, were found to be external forces for quality development in these public universities. The themes in this category are imperative, meaning that universities have no choice but to comply with the demands imposed externally. Consequently, these forces pressure universities to undertake initiatives, set plans and promote activities to satisfy external authoritative demands and ensure conformity to quality developments. This section presents the findings concerning these external forces that have promoted quality development in these public universities.



**Figure 5. 3 External drivers of TQM adoption in HEIs**

#### *5.2.1.1 Need for Quality Accreditation*

Accreditation was identified as one driver that compelled public universities to adopt more quality-related values and practices. Of the 29 participants, 24 (82.65%) shared views confirming that quality accreditations pushed for more adherence to quality standards and increased the number of quality-related activities in their universities. These views referenced the quality demands introduced by the NCAAA, which is the national quality agency in the country. According to Alaskar et al. (2019), HEIs worldwide actively pursue accreditation to ensure their programs comply with stringent quality standards. Thus, in the case of these universities, satisfying quality standards set by the NCAAA was found to be the major cause behind the prioritisation of quality improvements that increased the adoption of quality-related practices and values in these public universities. From University 1, P1, P3 and P7 provided views confirming that quality values and practices were enforced because of the need for the university to achieve recognition from well-known quality accreditation agencies. P1 stated:

Recognitions through the achievements of quality accreditations have become essential and a strategic objective for the university. To attain quality accreditations, we must provide

reports and relevant documents supported by evidence. Thus, the need for quality accreditations has increased the number of quality improvement activities in the university.

P3 and P7 articulated similar views, confirming that academic accreditation is one of the most influential factors that has led to an increased adoption of quality values for improvement, including TQM principles. They emphasised the changes imposed by the NCAAA as the most influential factor for developing quality at their university. P3 stated that the NCAAA was the primary motivator behind most initiatives established for quality improvement at this university. P7 also agreed that the need for quality accreditations, such as the one presented by the NCAAA, increased the university's commitment to improving quality through adherence to the NCAAA's development standards. P7 articulated:

This university has become more committed to satisfying quality standards to obtain quality accreditations. Collective efforts are now being made in a systematic manner to guarantee that requirements, particularly those imposed by the NCAAA, are met.

In University 2, participants confirmed that quality accreditations by quality agencies have driven the university to initiate quality improvement strategies. The respondents provided insights on how achieving quality recognition by national and international quality agencies was a vital matter for the university. For example, P13 mentioned that investment in quality development through the adoption of quality values in the university had increased for the purpose of improving the university's image:

Quality recognition through the achievement of quality accreditation has prompted the university to incorporate more quality values and tools to be recognised among those higher-ranked universities in the country.

In the same university, P15 agreed that increases in quality improvement efforts were framed on 'command' from relevant quality accreditation bodies to meet a certain quality standard. The respondent stated that the number of quality improvement plans and activities for quality development had increased in the university owing to the quality requirements introduced by



NCAAA and other international accreditation bodies. P19 and P21 shared that the current need for the university was to acquire a global reputation, attainable via international quality accreditations. In fact, P19 asserted that such accreditations were paving the way for the university to recheck its programs, procedures, and actions to identify strengths and weaknesses using objective data rather than speculation to ensure efficiency and good service provided to the community. Hence, the respondent shared that because accreditations have become compulsory, this results in a positive attitude by the university leadership to support the integration of more quality values and encourage more practices for quality improvement:

Besides the NCAAA, a quality acknowledgement from international quality agencies is vital for developing the university's reputation on the global stage, ensuring good services are provided, and helping us know our strengths and weaknesses. The leadership is motivated to support practices for quality improvement to meet standards set by those quality bodies. Thus, the scales of quality activities across the university's departments increased.

P21 reflected similar views and emphasised that the adoption of quality values has increased for the purpose of earning accreditation from reputable quality accreditation agencies. The respondent stated that strategic development for quality improvement was encouraged to achieve total involvement by employees. Similar views were captured in University 3, which were consistent with the findings from the previous two universities in which the requirements developed by quality accreditation bodies prompted an increased interest in integrating quality-related values and practices for the university's development. P25, P27, P28 and P29 from University 3 agreed that leadership recognised the need for meeting quality standards set out by quality accreditation bodies. Therefore, its quality management system ensured that quality developments were monitored. For example, P25 stated that the quality management system was established in the university, and centrally managed by the quality deanship department, to ensure the efficient planning of quality activities and the continual monitoring of quality standards:

For years, we've been putting a lot of effort into improving our quality management system, including putting in place quality improvement plans, providing quality training for our staff members, and keeping track of our progress towards accreditation. As a result, it has been possible to promote a quality culture and increase employee contributions to the university's quality development by maintaining the focus on accreditation.

Similarly, P27 and P28 demonstrated that accreditation requirements were a driving force that prompted an increased adoption of methods and values for quality improvement. P27 stated:

Quality improvement plans have been established, and more principles for improvements have been embraced to obtain quality accreditations.

According to P28, standards enforced by quality agencies influence the way the university operates because more plans have been developed to ensure compliance with the measures introduced by those bodies, which is vital for allowing the university to become competitive and (inter)nationally accredited. P29 from the same university echoed similar perspectives and explained that the university had no choice but to meet quality standards for the purposes of global recognition. Therefore, it was inevitable that it must integrate more of the quality improvement values and encourage practice to be accredited.

Aligned with these insights from the study participants, the statement by the NCAAA underscores the imperative nature of accreditation: "To be granted accreditation, it is necessary for an institution to provide evidence of good quality performance in relation to all the eleven general standards and with all of the subsections of those standards" (NCAAA 2023). This statement as expressed by the NCAAA, highlights accreditation as a mandatory requirement. As such, these institutions seek an alignment of their institutional efforts to seek quality accreditation with regulatory expectations which signals a significant shift in the context of these public universities towards securing quality accreditation, fostering transitioning with a dedicated effort to meet and exceed quality improvement standards. Therefore, the findings from these three public universities confirmed that quality accreditation requirements set by

the national quality (the NCAAA) and other international agencies have contributed to the accelerated adoption of quality values, increased practices for quality improvement and led to more investment to formalise activities associated with quality improvements. Now that the influence of quality accreditations has been considered, the subsequent section delves into the second external subtheme: the mandates outlined by the Saudi Government's Vision 2030 and the NUL.

#### *5.2.1.2 The National Vision 2030 and NUL Requirements*

The data analysis uncovered that the requirements specified in Vision 2030, coupled with the alterations implemented by the NUL to the existing regulatory framework, constituted an additional external factor that prompted public universities to establish a quality system and develop standards for improvement. This finding is framed on the shared perspectives of 21 participants (72.41%). For example, in University 1, P1, P5, P8 and P9 confirmed that since the NUL and Vision 2030 were introduced, quality development rose to the top of their university's agendas. This included a significant increase in the number of quality plans and activities in an effort to meet the expectations and cope with the changes brought into the sector by the National Vision 2030 and the NUL. According to P1, quality development was a central issue in the National Vision 2030 and NUL. As a result, the university experienced pressure to deal with quality expectations and experienced a surge in quality improvement planning and quality-related activities:

The NUL and Vision 2030 have caused unprecedented changes in higher education, exerting a huge pressure on the universities in sector and necessitating more plans and the integration of quality values for quality developments.

Similarly, P5 stated that their university is developing new strategies to adopt more quality values and tools for quality development to adjust its operations in accordance with the NUL and Vision 2030 requirements. Further, the respondent shared that, owing to the precedent

demands by the National Vision 2030 and the NUL, the university is now more interested than ever in gathering and analysing data from a broader range of stakeholders, including students, employees, government, employers and the community, to better understand and meet their diverse expectations. P8 reiterated similar views on the significant influences brought by the NUL and attributed substantial changes in the university's approaches towards quality developments to the NUL. According to P8, one shift towards quality development since the NUL was introduced was that the university now included a broader range of stakeholders in quality development meetings across department and colleges. According to P8, without the enforcement of NUL, it would have been impossible to include members of society in the development of plans and policies for quality improvement:

We realised we needed to revise our strategies to meet the demands of NUL and the National Vision 2030. As a result, we invite relevant stakeholders, such as potential employers and community members to meetings to develop strategic for quality improvements considering different needs and expectations. I think that wouldn't be possible without the enforcement of both the National Vision 2030 and NUL.

P9 noted that the introduction of Vision 2030 and the announcement of the NUL prompted the university to prioritise quality development, leading to the expansion and integration of quality values throughout the university system. The respondent elaborated on how quality became the focal point of all actions and plans.

The data analysis also revealed similar results from universities 2 and 3. For instance, in University 2, participants P13, P14, P16, P17, P18 and P20 shared a similar perspective concerning the increased interest by universities in meeting the National Vision 2030 and the NUL expectations. P14 and P17 argued that the NUL was altering the way quality was viewed and managed by their university. For example, P14 shared that their university was adopting strategies to integrate quality values for sustaining growth and to ensure quality development consistent with the changes imposed by NUL and the expectations of Vision 2030. The

respondent provided insight into how a potential reduction in government funding for public universities introduced by the NUL has led to increased uncertainty, which has compelled the university to alter its strategies and place a greater emphasis on quality development to sustain its growth:

The NUL indicates that the government's funds will be cut in half the near future which present uncertainty for the university. As a result, working on quality development and maintaining strong ties with stakeholders is no longer optional; it is a matter of survival for the university to remain in the sector and remain appealing to its stakeholders.

P17 noted that because of the NUL reforms, competition in the industry was likely to intensify, resulting in increased pressure on universities to build quality plans and establish more strategies to address their own quality development challenges. The response noted that the success of universities in the industry would eventually be highly dependent on the extent to which they have accomplished quality improvements. Likewise, P25's views from University 3 corroborated that NUL and Vision 2030 engendered increased emphasis on quality development across all domains. The respondent voiced concerns regarding the anticipated decrease in government funding for public universities and emphasised the significance of prioritising quality enhancement to tackle potential fiscal constraints:

In response to NUL imposed changes and concerns, such as reduced government funds, the university must prioritise quality through modifying policies and enhancing procedures for improvement to attract different segment of stakeholders and mitigate the impacts of general funds reduction.

P27 and P28 expressed similar perspectives, confirming that their institution made substantial efforts to deal with changing circumstances in the industry resulting from the NUL and the National Vision 2030. P27 stated that the university is focusing on quality advancements to ensure readjustment to rapid changes imposed by the National Vision 2030 and the NUL and improve the university competitive capability. According to the respondent, the university's

leadership has recognised the need to improve quality by supporting initiatives and incorporating quality values into the process to meet Vision 2030 expectations. P28 has also provided insights into the support for quality workshops led by quality experts from the quality deanship department and, occasionally, from other organisations to improve people's skills and encourage broad participation in quality developments. The expansion of these quality workshops is yet another way of enhancing the university's movement towards quality, meeting expectations and coping with changes enforced by Vision 2030 and the NUL. In summary, the study's findings indicate a significant increase in the integration of quality-related values and practices for improvement owing to the expectations outlined in Vision 2030 and the changes introduced by the NUL. Moreover, the results demonstrate that these two events have transformed the approach to quality in public universities, prioritising it as a critical factor for ensuring long-term growth and stability. Documentary evidence from official sources, such as the National Vision 2030 and the objectives outlined in the previous chapter on which NUL was founded, corroborate these findings. The National Vision 2030 clearly sets an ambitious target: to position at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 in international rankings (NCAAA 2021). This goal highlights a dedication to quality enhancement, establishing it as a central aim for attaining worldwide acclaim and excellence. Further cementing this pledge, the NUL, enacted in November 2019—three years after the Vision 2030 proclamation—has amplified the push for educational reform. It issues a definitive mandate to synchronize university reforms with the strategic goals of Vision 2030, aiming for universities to secure institutional and program accreditation from prestigious accrediting organisations. The subsequent section delves into the third subtheme identified within the external theme: government and community trust.

### *5.2.1.3 Government and Community Trust*

Findings revealed government and community trust as another driver that promoted quality developments in the context of public universities. The public's demand for reforms and the government's frequent concerns regarding quality issues have prompted institutions to prioritise improving quality (Quamar 2021; Aljanobi 2015). Of the 29 participants, 18 (62.06%) contributed to the identification of this subtheme. Insights from University 1 revealed that the university's pursuit of gaining trust from the community and government accelerated the adoption of quality values and intensified quality improvement activities throughout the institution.

For instance, from University 1, P1 stated:

The university's mission statement indicates that sustaining the government's trust and the community's confidence is among the institution's primary objectives. Therefore, we know that by ensuring the improvement of the quality level through the escalation of efforts across all the university's departments and adopting more quality values, we can meet that objective.

Similarly, P4 from the same institution demonstrated that the university strengthened its commitment to quality improvement to maintain community and government trust. With a focus on gaining public trust, the respondent stated that quality development had become essential, emphasising more quality concepts and activities for improvement to be integrated. P7 and P11 also shed light on the government's trust in the institutions as an essential component in preserving the annual financial fund. As a result, the university must exhibit high-quality performance and prove its methods and approaches for quality improvement as effective. According to P7, the government provides the university's funding; hence, the sponsoring government's financial support is crucial. As revealed by P7, the best method to obtain and maintain such trust is for the institution to demonstrate high-level performance in quality that result in national and worldwide recognitions 'achieving quality recognition.

Similarly, P11 argued that the university can sustain both the community and the government's trust by exhibiting excellence, attaining academic and institutional accreditations and ensuring continuous development:

Evidence of continuous development and the need to achieve academic and institutional quality accreditation from national and international quality agencies to gain and sustain the public and government's trust has significantly contributed to the escalation of quality values integration and the push for more quality improvement practices at the university.

A similar perspective was obtained from the responses from participants in University 2. For instance, P15 shared that the growing awareness among university leaders about the important relationship with the community and striving to promote a positive image of the university resulted in increased incorporation of quality values, some of which were inspired by TQM. The respondent mentioned the crucial aspects of promoting the link between the university and the community it serves, as it is an essential factor in securing and sustaining public funds. P18, for example, shared comments showing that the contemporary growing desire by the university to gain community trust, establish a positive reputation and maintain government funding increased the efforts involved in the adoption of quality values and the establishment of improvement plans in the university:

The need to sustain the government's financial support and the trust of society, to whom this university's services are provided, have collectively paved the way for more quality values to be incorporated into the university system and increased quality activities.

P20 and P21 also provided comparable insights, describing how the need to acquire the government and community's trust significantly increased the adoption of quality values and the application of strategies for improvement. For example, P20 stated that university leaders are now conscious of the importance of establishing quality plans and policies that would support the efforts to gain the trust of the wider community, which includes families and employers in the market. Therefore, quality management systems improved because of support



from top management in the university. The respondent mentioned that there are genuine efforts to improve the internal tendencies towards quality improvement and promote positive attitudes towards participating in and being part of the movement towards quality improvement, with an eye set on meeting government expectations and the community's trust.

P21 stated that the need for government financial funds pushed for the greater adoption of quality-related values and practices to demonstrate quality outcomes. Similar responses from participants from University 3 confirmed university leaders' growing desire to gain the confidence and trust of the community and the government. For example, P27 asserted that strategies were designed and aligned to gain the confidence of the community and government:

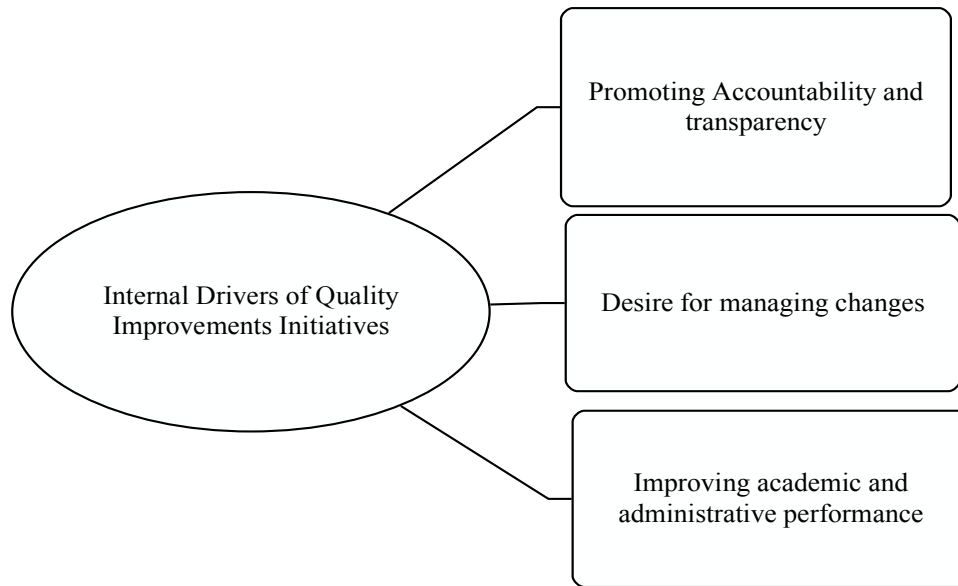
The quality improvement strategies and plans were established and aligned to assist the university in sustaining government support and community trust. The increase in the number of quality improvement plans necessitates securing the resources and human capital required to carry out the quality activities in order to meet the above objectives. Hence, more integration of quality values and the application of quality tools have increased to sustain public trust and support.

Similarly, P29 from the same university remarked that enhancing quality in the university became a strategic goal to satisfy the community and keep the government's support for the university. According to the participant, this goal increased quality-related activities at the university and raised awareness of the important of developing a quality culture among the university's academic and non-academic employees. The findings from the participants from the three Universities indicated a growing desire among these universities' leadership to obtain and at the same time sustain community trust and government support through the focus being on improving quality. With the focus on quality improvement as the means through which these objectives can be achieved, such tendencies have contributed to the increase in the number of quality plans, the integration of more quality values, and the implementation of more quality-related activities. The preceding findings indicate that public universities are experiencing

growing pressure and diverse demands from various external forces, including quality accreditation requirements, NUL and Vision 2030 and government and community trust. As a result, these universities strive to promote the integration of quality values and practices to satisfy these requirements and demands.

### **5.2.2 Internal Drivers**

Following the findings regarding external subthemes that promote initiatives for quality improvement in Saudi public universities, this section presents the findings regarding the identified internal drivers that similarly contribute to the promotion of initiatives for quality improvements, adoption of quality values and an increase in the activities related to quality improvement in these public universities. Data analysis led to the identification of a collection of subthemes classified as internal drivers owing to their characteristics of being originated and enforced internally. In other words, no external entity or authorities with official power (as the previous ones) have played a part in reinforcing the integration of quality values and practice, but rather developed and encouraged internally with the support of a quality leaderships and strategic direction by quality deanships at these universities. The subthemes under this category (internal drivers) are: (a) promoting accountability and transparency, (b) leadership's desire for control and making change, and (c) improving academic and administrative performance (see Figure 5.4). This section presents the findings concerning each subtheme of these internal forces, respectively.



**Figure 5. 4 Internal drivers of quality improvement in the public sector universities  
Promoting Accountability and Transparency**

The data analysis revealed that quality-related initiatives and plans for quality improvements have been internally encouraged and received support from the top hierarchies in these public institutions to promote more accountability and transparency, or full disclosure of practices carried out in these educational institutions. According to In'airat and Al-Kassem (2014), there is a concern for quality and to improve the sense of accountability. In particular, 19 (65.51%) of the 29 participants identified accountability and transparency as an internal key subtheme that contributed to an increase in the focus on promoting quality-related practices and adoption of quality values for improvements.

Respondents from University 1 shared the view that quality initiatives, such as the establishment of quality plans and the adoption of quality approaches, have been revived in the university to enhance the level of accountability and transparency. For example, P6 stated:

Strategically, in this university, quality development has been encouraged through the adoption of more producers for quality assurance to improve accountability and transparency.

P7, P10, P11 and P12, from the same university, echoed a similar statement. For instance, P7 reiterated that the goal to make their university a pioneer institution improved accountability and transparency. The respondent also shared that quality measures, such as the request for a self-study report (SSR), which was designed to scrutinise existing processes, were one step taken to improve levels of accountability and transparency in the university:

The request for conducting a SSR allows reviewers from the quality deanship to evaluate works done across departments and colleges against quality standards, resulting in an increased sense of accountability among employees and improved transparency.

P10 shared similar views, confirming the perspective provided by P6 and P7. P10 indicated that the task of quality improvement in the university had been an influential factor that improved the level of accountability among university staff and legitimised mentoring performances. Self-inspection, as well as the endorsement of more procedures for quality development, according to the respondent, developed a new internal culture that allows for a deeper sense of accountability among employees. Furthermore, wider disclosure and the sharing of reports documenting practice outcomes was also reported to be a contributing factor enhancing transparency across the university's sections. However, respondents P1, P8, P10 and P11 reported an existing sense of discomfort among academics, in particular, as a result of constant requests to share periodic performance reports for evaluation purposes. It was reported that the more emphases in continuous self-inspection, documenting practice outcomes against set standards and sharing reports for checking and assessments by the quality deanship has escalated tensions between academics and the quality reviewers in that deanship. P11 stated:

Although the constant evaluations for performance seem [an] essential requirement for quality developments, the assessment of performance and constant request for sharing reports have irritated academics and further caused more tensions with quality reviewers.

In the same vein, P12 stated that leadership knew that transparency and accountability could be managed by advancing the application of quality measures. The participant mentioned that the quality development criteria raised awareness that all performance outcomes would be assessed; thus, transparency and accountability would be improved. However, the respondent expressed similar concerns to those who noted a sense of discomfort among academics in the university regarding the increased emphasis on mentoring, assessing and widely shared documents. According to P12, academic personnel can be reluctant to fully cooperate with the quality deanship to meet the requirements for quality development:

Since quality development has become a strategic goal, employees have become aware that their performance will be evaluated against expectations and involved quality standards. For academics, in particular, this may seem inappropriate. As a result, there is a sense of unease and sometimes a lack of collaborations. Because there is this feeling that there is always someone who will have to evaluate your work, and you may be criticised.

Likewise, data analysis of the responses from the participants in University 2 revealed similar findings supporting the views shared by respondents from University 1. For instance, P14 described how the adoption of quality standards and procedures to measure conformity facilitated the development of accountability in the university:

Approaches such as adopting quality standard; applying measures in reviewing performance outcomes for checking the conformity and providing feedback for changes administrated by the quality deanship were mobilised in a way ... exerting more control and holding people accountable.

P15, P19, P20 and P21 from the same university also shared their viewpoints, which demonstrated that quality development through the adoption of quality values improved accountability. P15 mentioned the availability of a digital system that permitted the submission of quality reports by every department and college in the university for assessment purposes, which contributed to the improvement of accountability and transparency in the university:

Accountability has improved via the lens of quality development requirements because almost everyone is required to submit their reports for evaluation through an installed system that allows reviewers to assess performance and provide feedback.

The NCAAA mandates these views as its standards are placing a rigorous accountability framework where educational institutions are required to systematically submit detailed reports for evaluation (NCAAA 2021). P20 and P21 were similarly convinced that the implementation of quality standards and the acceptance of values for quality development aimed to increase transparency. For example, P20 stated:

The continued efforts to develop more understanding concerning quality concepts play a significant role in formalising transparency by disclosing quality reports for evaluations.

P21 also argued that it was previously difficult to establish control over accountability in a university context because of the privilege academics have, but that this is now attainable because of the adoption of quality standards and the implication of quality measures on performance. According to the respondent, accountability largely improved because of the allocation of quality activities assigned to individuals, and the role played by reviewers at the quality deanship in analysing performance outcomes; measuring the achievement of objectives associated with quality improvements; identifying gaps in performance, if any; and providing recommendations for change and development.

For University 3, the findings demonstrated similar views, confirming that focusing on quality training programs to prepare individuals to accept responsibilities and increasing transparency in performances across the university's sections has resulted in the integration of more quality values and an increase in practices for improvement. For instance, P26 stated:

In order to perform new quality tasks, there is a need to prepare employees to accept new responsibilities. This entails designing educating and training programs to raise awareness about the involved responsibilities. Therefore, the requirement for quality and establishment of education and training programs has levelled up the sense of accountability among

employees by accepting more responsibilities toward achieving quality development objectives.

According to P27, the university's established quality system enables a clearer structure of responsibilities distributed among staffers. According to the respondent, among the main reasons for the support for the quality management system from the top is that it prompts favourable responses among employees towards accountability and transparency. P29 stated:

The quality management system has enabled us here at the quality deanship to execute a central role in encouraging transparency through the shared documentation concerning performances and developing the sense of responsibility among people, through feedback, to improve the work done to meet quality standards.

These findings were in conformity with the statement echoed by the Education & Training Evaluation Commission's official website. Notably, the Commission emphasises the importance of implementing quality systems to improve transparency and accountability. It states, "the implementation of quality systems to achieve continuous improvement of the academic programs within the framework of integrity, transparency, fairness, and supportive organisational environment"(Education & Training Evaluation 2021). To conclude, levelling up the sense of accountability among employees and improving transparency in performance are forces that elicit support from the top levels of the hierarchy to escalate the integration of quality values into these public institutions and motivate the increase of quality-related practice for improvement. Section 5.2.2.2 explores the second internal driver: the desire to manage and enforce change.

#### *5.2.2.1 Desire for Control and Enforcing Change*

The findings revealed that the adoption of quality values and adherence to standards for improvement was promoted in these universities owing to the leadership's realisation that they could utilise quality requirements to exert more internal control and facilitate change

reinforcement in their institutions. According to Houston (2007), TQM has been utilised in the context of universities to give more legitimisation to control and facilitate the reinforcement of change in the sector. Of the 29 participants, 26 (89.65%) commented that quality-related activities had increased because leaders were more aware of using quality measures to exercise control and implement changes.

In University 1, participant statements demonstrated that the development of certain mechanisms for quality improvement in universities has enabled more control over processes, monitoring performance and enhancing the ability of top managers to have authority over the process and reinforce changes. P1 contended that the university's systematic approach to quality development, such as establishing official plans, task distribution and evaluations, paved the way for leaders to consolidate their authority over the process and have more control. P2 and P3, who are from the same university, shared similar beliefs, as can be observed from P2's statement:

Managers at the top are now able to govern the process and manage change more quickly than ever. All they need is to justify these practices (control and making changes) or relate them to the need for meeting the quality requirements for improvements in the university.

P3 concurred that the quality management system at the university played a vital role in facilitating the top management's involvement in implementing reforms and exercising more oversight over performance. The respondent noted that by establishing the university's quality system, officials gain more power to modify legislation and adjust policies and processes. In agreement with this perspective, P9 from the same university also offered insights into how enhancing quality procedures and standards gave top management greater authority to control and modify policies:



The increased adoption of quality standards and implementation of procedures for developments have given managers more control and legitimacy to intervene and create policies, as well as implement changes, within the university.

P12 noted that changes in a university are not an easy management task; according to the participant's perspective, individuals tend to be hesitant and suspicious of new ideas or concepts involving changes to the way they are doing their jobs. Nevertheless, they would be willing to embrace proposed change if they perceive them as necessary to meet quality requirements or as part of the efforts to obtain quality accreditations in the university:

People are more ready to accept changes requested from the top if they are perceived as vital for reaching a quality standard or justified as mandatory for the movement towards excellence.

Participants in University 2 demonstrated an awareness of this reality, in addition to the fact that their university's internal quality system increased the scope of top-down controlling methods, thus enhancing the leaders' ability to make changes. P13 highlighted the crucial role of gathering substantial amounts of data in pursuing quality improvements across the university. According to the respondent, leaders leveraged the amassed data to devise strategies for implementing change. Furthermore, P13 expounded that leaders advertised proposed changes through the quality deanship and utilised the available data to overcome anticipated obstacles and ensure wider acceptance of the proposed changes. Moreover, P14 and P17 shared the belief that leaders recognised the positive impact of promoting the quality system in facilitating effective mentorship. P14 stated:

The university's quality system development has gained the backing of top management, who anticipate that incorporating quality values and procedures will lead to more mentorship initiatives.

P17's responses agreed with the views mentioned earlier. However, the respondent also pointed out the obstacles that arise when trying to exert control and effect change, particularly when

dealing with academic staff at the college level. The respondent highlighted that the resistance from academic staff towards senior management's efforts to exercise more control and introduce change is still a significant challenge:

Quality initiatives were endorsed to improve managerial control and facilitate changes ... but when dealing with colleges, various issues arise regarding improving adherence to quality and assuring conformity to requirements ... academics are less compliant and not fully receptive to quality concepts promoting senior management control.

P18 from the same university stated that the quality deanship coordinated initiatives to lessen opposition to change. The respondent provided insight into the design of quality development workshops to familiarise employees, particularly academics, with the changes needed for quality requirements. The respondent argued that top management can now quickly convey change to individuals across departments and prepare the road for wider acceptability by motivating people to participate in quality development workshops and programs tailored to address and justify the proposed changes to meet contemporary or future needs. In University 3, P25 and P27 shared similar insights to those provided by respondents from Universities 1 and 2. For instance, P25 noted that the quality standard for quality development had extended administrative authority from the top and persuaded individuals to accept change, which was justified by the need for quality developments. The respondent referred to the strategies established to meet the quality requirements in the university as new enablers for leaders at the top to exercise control and introduce change:

Since meeting the quality standards is essential, people in charge have been able to take back control of the organisation's performance, enforcing changes and making adjustments as needed. Leaders at the top understand that in order to reduce resistance to change, there must be a connection made between the proposed changes and the need to improve quality.

P27 agreed with the previous statements, adding that currently in the university, there is an acknowledgement by the top authority that to have the appropriate credentials to introduce

initiatives, exercise control and execute change, quality must be at the centre. According to the respondent, since meeting the quality requirements for development in the university became strategic objectives, the scope of control from the top has increased and has been legitimised to ensure the achievement of quality improvement objectives:

Leaders can now create an appropriate environment for introducing changes and providing legitimacy by tying the changes to the need to meet quality requirements and strategic objectives for improvements. So, I think the quality requirements [and] established strategies for improvement have legitimised and facilitated top-down control.

P29 also agreed that the acceleration in integrating quality values and procedures into the university's system for quality improvement and strategising plans for developments had intensified control and facilitated interventions to reinforce change by top management.

In summary, the findings indicate a growing interest among the top hierarchies of universities in investing in quality systems, promoting awareness of quality requirements, enhancing the integration of quality values, adopting improvement procedures to drive change and maintaining control over performance. By establishing a link between quality improvement objectives and interventions from the top, leaders aim to reduce opposition to proposed change and increase endorsement of the expanded scope of control. The third and final internal driver that has contributed to promoting the adoption of quality-related values and increasing improvement activities is discussed in Section 5.2.2.3.

#### *5.2.2.2 Improving Academic and Administrative Performance*

All 29 participants (100%) echoed varied perspectives, indicating improved performance outcomes, including for academic and managerial activities, owing to the ongoing growth in the integration of quality values and the expansion of improvement efforts. Participants stated that a unity of quality objectives combined with an escalation in both the integration of quality values and efforts for development have yielded improvements across sections at these

universities. In University 1, for instance, P1 explained that using the quality matrix for course learning outcomes aided in collecting data and providing sufficient details to explore areas that need improvements. According to the respondent, these quality matrices included the necessary data and information to construct learning outcomes from learning objectives (actual v. forecasted). The participant noted that utilising quality matrices has proven beneficial in collecting data, organising information and designing strategies to improve course content to meet both present and future needs. Additionally, the respondent mentioned that employing these quality practices allows for a systematic alignment of different course content, ensuring that it contributes to the overall quality of learning outcomes for the entire program at the college:

Quality matrices have assisted the developers of course content and learning outcomes at the college in collecting relevant data, analysing it, and using it for quality improvements: these matrices have helped develop plans for future improvements to ensure that program outcomes meet current and future demands.

As per P2, utilising quality matrices, in conjunction with other activities that involve generating quality reports for academic and non-teaching activities at colleges, is a crucial step in planning for and ensuring quality performance outcomes. Despite the considerable amount of time and effort that faculty members must invest in completing these quality reports and matrices, the respondent emphasised that these quality activities remain indispensable tools in delivering high-quality education. The respondent provided a contrast between the way academic activities were carried out a few years ago and the current situation at the university with the focus now being more systematically guided by pre-instructions, quality developments plans and emphasis on meeting quality requirements when seeking accreditations:

Faculty members' activities were previously left to subjective interpretation with no systematic link to the program's learning objectives ... today, quality standards are at the

core of every activity prioritising alignment between teaching and non-teaching activities, with close monitoring to ensure they meet overall program objectives.

Insights from P3 and P4 revealed how implementing quality tools, such as matrices and key performance indicators (KPIs), has helped college decision-makers improve the quality of course content to meet specific learning objectives. P4, for example, mentioned:

Due to the imperative need for quality development, key performance indicators are utilised to ensure that quality improvement targets are met by breaking down essential components and providing key insights for performance improvement.

In the same vein, P5 offered:

The university's performance has significantly improved thanks to the systematic monitoring of objectives against specific KPIs. As part of this process, each college conducts an annual review to compare actual achievements with forecasted KPIs to identify and address performance gaps.

P6 highlighted how the emphasis on quality standards, the implementation of quality procedures, and the adoption of quality values to meet projected learning objectives have contributed to reducing variations in learning outcomes between male and female students. This improvement is particularly significant given the gender segregation in the university, with both genders studying the same courses:

Gender segregation policies at the university caused inconsistencies, overlaps, and communication issues that hindered clear directions and coordinated efforts to achieve unified learning objectives: the implementation of quality standards and values emphasising the need for meeting specific learning objectives in the context of segregated colleges (males and females) has helped to reduce variations and narrow gaps in learning outcomes of the same program taught at male and female college.

P7 similarly echoed that, although, ideally, variations in the delivery of the same course should be kept to a minimum across the male and female sections, this was feasible until the implementation of quality requirements as a strategic objective in the university. The

participant further argued that after it was made mandatory to meet the requirements of quality standards, there was an improvement in collaboration, not only between the college's department but across the broader university, including managerial departments and the university's hierarchies:

Adopting quality standards and values has strengthened communication between management departments and colleges, with a shared goal of fulfilling these quality requirements. As a result, administrative departments are now more in sync and able to assist colleges in the university towards unified quality improvement objectives.

P8 noted that the focus on meeting quality standards and requirements improved the distribution of resources, technology and physical equipment necessary to maintain quality education, reducing variations and improving equality so that both male and female students have access to equal opportunities and supportive environments to acquire knowledge and develop skills:

The requirement to meet quality standards has mitigated variations and led to an equitable distribution of resources and technology across the male and female colleges to ensure equal opportunities for all students to acquire knowledge and develop their skills, irrespective of gender.

The participant made an interesting point about a recent amendment in the top level of the university's hierarchy. The change involved appointing a female vice president in compliance with the national quality agency's requirements, which stipulate that a university should have a female vice president. According to the participant, the shift in leadership would promote equality at the strategic level, meaning that more female figures would be included in decision-making:

The leadership change involves appointing the university's first female vice president to promote women's involvement in decision-making, resulting in more equality and improving unity towards achieving shared objectives across all the university colleges and departments.

P9 noted that administrative activities at the institution have improved in response to student needs, particularly regarding the enrolment process for various university programs. The participant reported that admissions and enrolment conditions have become more efficient, with regular updates on the university website providing easy access to these services. As a result, students can now apply for acceptance and enrolment without physically visiting the campus. The respondent attributed these positive changes to quality standards requirements that emphasise efficacy and to striving to meet beneficiaries needs and expectations, for example, in student registration and enrolment processes:

The university continuously upgrades its services to meet national and international quality standards. For instance, students can conveniently browse available courses, check requirements and enrol themselves without physically visiting the campus.

The results obtained from universities 2 and 3 align with those from University 1, where the emphasis on meeting quality requirements, integrating more values and motivating activities for quality improvement are all intensified to improve academic and non-academic performance outcomes in the university. P4 from University 2 explained that the introduction of quality standards, requiring comprehensive proof of quality improvement, led the university's leadership to offer more support and motivation to colleges and departments to improve their performance outcomes and meet quality improvement objectives. According to the respondent, striving to meet the requirements of quality standards has generally improved the quality of performance outcomes and strengthened adherence to quality-related values across university departments:

The overall push to improve the quality performance outcomes of academic and non-academic departments was due to national and international quality standards requirements that have resulted in expanding quality initiatives and motivating the adoption of more quality values across the university.

Similarly, P16 and 17 provided insight into the advancements in communication to enhance joint efforts across sections to improve the total quality performance outcomes. P16, for instance, confirmed that collaboration across colleges and administrative departments to meet common quality improvement objectives resulted in more efforts to remove communication barriers, particularly those that resulted from hierarchical expansion owing to gender segregation:

Quality of teaching and managerial activities has improved dually as gender separation barriers have been reduced, facilitating better connections across university sections ... [T]he promotion of teamwork and the emphasis on active communication have helped eliminate communication hurdles in meeting quality requirements.

In line with these perspectives, P17 highlighted that the enhancements made to the communication system have led to a seamless flow of information and fostered a more collaborative culture within the university colleges:

Communication has been changed, and the scale of contacts between males and females' sections improved significantly to meet quality improvement requirements. Consequently, there are noticeable improvements in performance outcomes, both academic and administrative.

P19, P20 and P21, from the same university, expressed similar views. They confirmed that the promotion of quality value integration is intended to enhance the performance efficiency of both academic and non-academic departments and ensure the delivery of high-quality outputs. P19 stated that improving quality outcomes for academic performance has become more systemic as a result of careful planning in colleges, which involves ensuring that the learning objectives of each subject are well aligned with the course learning objectives and that they all contribute to the overall learning objectives of the programs in the colleges:



Plans are in place to improve quality performance, including academic and managerial practices. Colleges have aligned subject learning outcomes with course objectives to contribute to the main program's goals.

P20 attributed the increase in efficiency and reduced waste in administrative activities to the quality standards mandated by the university. The respondent highlighted the need, driven by quality requirements, to devise strategies to address performance deficiencies and issues such as process overlap, unclear responsibilities and lines of command within the university:

The need arising from meeting quality standards has pushed for strategies to tackle unintended outcomes, waste in managerial activities, process overlaps and duplication and unclear division of responsibilities ... now command overlaps are minimised, and the workflow and productivity have improved.

P21 further explained how the behaviour of non-academic employees in the workplace has transformed since the implementation of quality values and has resulted in increased participation in quality workshops throughout the university. The respondent noted that striving to meet quality improvement objectives has increased work efficiency among non-academic employees, both within departments and colleges:

The attitudes of non-academic staff have shifted as workplaces have increasingly embraced quality values and pursued quality improvement objectives. The shared focus on meeting quality improvement objectives has resulted in improved outcomes and reduced gaps in performance caused by inefficiencies.

Participants in University 3 made similar comments, stating that the university's adoption and integration of quality values and methods resulted in an overall increase in the performance quality outcomes. P25 remarked that the systematic integration of quality management values and techniques has consistently improved performance. Benchmarking, in particular, was noted by the respondent as a quality practice that yields significant development in outputs. P26 also provided insights into various quality surveys designed to collect data and information

from different stakeholders, including students, graduates, employees and employers, aiming to overcome challenges for improving academic and non-academic performance:

Quality practices involving surveys designed to gather feedback from various stakeholders, such as students, graduates, employees and employers, have helped enhance performance and better understand the underlying reasons behind unfulfilled quality objectives. However, handling the collected data for analysis remains a challenging task.

The perspectives shared by P27 and P28 from the same university further reinforce the positive impact of standardisation and measurement processes on teaching practice outcomes. Notably, academic staff now approach their teaching responsibilities with a clear understanding of the required learning objectives for each curriculum. As a result, there has been a noticeable improvement in the quality of academic outcomes. As per P27's insights, course descriptions now comprise outlines of the intended learning outcomes for each curriculum: this has been beneficial for teachers and especially for those with less experience, as it provides guidance and helps them carry out their teaching responsibilities with greater efficacy:

In order to meet quality standards requirements, course descriptions are designed to assist lecturers in understanding the learning outcomes and objectives of a specific subject beforehand, as well as how these learning objectives contribute to the program's overall objectives. This not only benefits experienced lecturers but also provides a clear guideline for those who may have less experience in teaching.

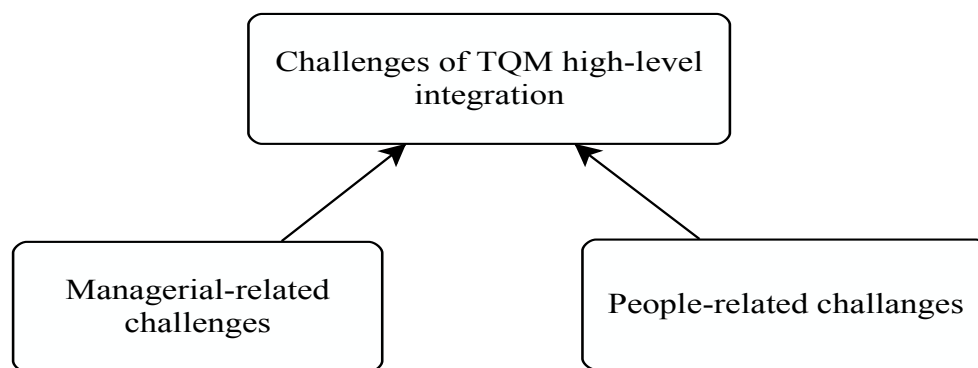
In a similar vein, P28 asserted that both the course description and the process of aligning outcomes with the overall objectives of the programs resulted in limiting variations, facilitated enhancements in courses deliveries, and ultimately led to high-quality learning outcomes:

By conducting frequent evaluations and closely monitoring the processes involved in designing and delivering courses as per quality standards requirements, greater control has been achieved, enabling adjustments to be made, variations to be limited and overall performance and learning outcomes improvements to be realised.

According to P29, the university's substantial investment in data collection through surveys and benchmarking is a crucial method for achieving overall quality improvement. The respondent emphasised that benchmarking activities, whether internal or external, with other institutions, have been instrumental in enhancing quality outcomes. Specifically, the respondent highlighted that many improvements in teaching processes and communication were attributable to the application of benchmarking tactics to improve performance quality. These findings which confirmed an increase in adherence to quality practices aimed at improving academic and administrative performance are corroborated by documentary evidence which supports this trend. The structured compilation of Annual Quality Reports serves as a concrete manifestation of the universities' commitment to raising academic and administrative standards. These reports embody a pursuit of excellence and ongoing improvement, consistent with the benchmarks set by the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA 2021). Additionally, the Ministry of Education's strategic objectives, particularly the goal to 'advance the university system in conjunction with educational and training institutions,' (Ministry of Education 2023) further corroborate a strategic shift in implementing practices and activities designed to enhance quality performance and outcomes of academic and managerial activities. Improving overall outcomes, including academic and non-academic performance, was identified as an internal subtheme that has motivated these public institutions to embrace quality-related values and employ more quality techniques. In summary, the above section presented the findings concerning the internal and external drivers that have prompted three Saudi public universities to adopt TQM values and techniques. The discussion presented two major themes: internal and external, each with its respective subthemes. Section 5.3 presents the findings linked to the challenges encountered by these Saudi Arabian public universities in pursuing high-level TQM integration.

### 5.3 Challenges In TQM Integration

Data findings reveal that public sector universities face inherent barriers preventing them from fully integrating TQM philosophy values for a well-functioning, quality-oriented culture. The data analysis process in this study resulted in the identification of two categories, into which the discovered challenges were classified: (a) managerial-related challenges and (b) people-related challenges (see Figure 5.5). Each category comprises several subthemes that emerged from an in-depth analysis of the data. Sections 5.3.1 to 5.3.2 present the findings related to the major themes and their associated subthemes concerning the challenges faced by the public universities in Saudi.

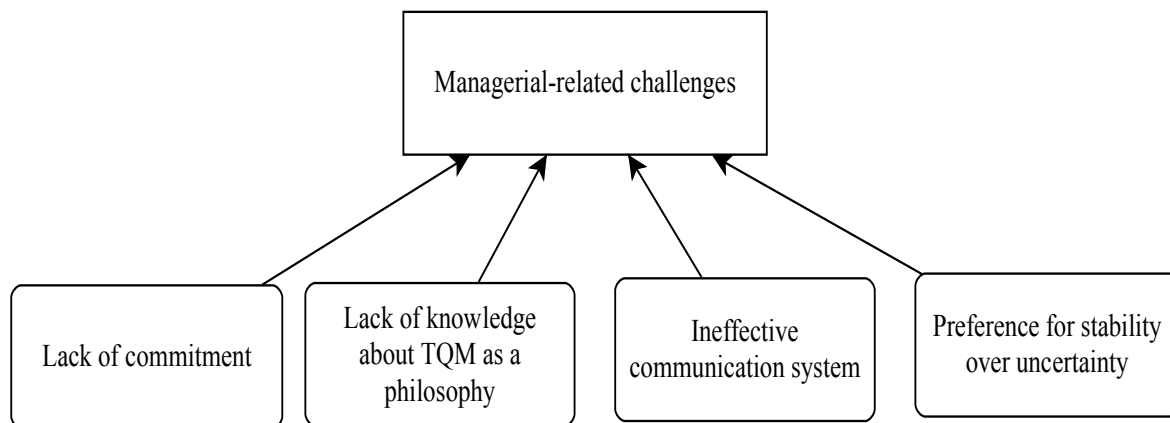


**Figure 5. 5 Major themes concerning the challenges of TQM high-level integration in public sector universities**

#### 5.3.1 Managerial-related Challenges

It is well known that management factors can inhibit the integration of TQM values for the purpose of developing quality markers. TQM adoption relies heavily on leaders' and managers' desire to accept its ideas and concepts, necessitating a broad commitment throughout an organisation, its departments, units and faculties. However, numerous hurdles to TQM initiatives have been ascribed to senior-level management's ineffectiveness in managing quality. The data analysis uncovered four subthemes that fall under managerial-related

challenges in these universities, and their difficulties in reaching the desired level of TQM value integration: lack of commitment, a lack of knowledge about TQM as a philosophy, ineffective communication and a preference for stability over uncertainty (see Figure 5.6). This section discusses each subtheme in more detail.



**Figure 5. 6 Managerial-related challenges**

### *5.3.1.1 Lack of Commitment*

The commitment shown by an organisation’s leaders, senior managers and employees has a significant effect on the overall management and deployment of quality parameters in organisations. Laurett and Mendes (2019) identified a strong commitment to TQM as a crucial factor in the successful implementation of the philosophy within educational institutions. Of the 29 respondents, 24 (82.75%) identified the lack of commitment as a challenging factor that prevents the high-level integration of various TQM values. The data analysis revealed an evident lack of commitment at both the top management level and among employees, including academic and non-academic staff. As a result, integrating TQM values into these universities proved to be a difficult task. For example, P4 from University 1 stated that the inability to implement TQM values was very much attributable to a lack of senior management commitment:

Leadership and middle management level commitments are at the heart of quality management, I believe there are insufficient commitments, which is why we are having difficulty fully integrating TQM values into the university system.

P1, P6, P7 and P10 from the same university revealed a lack of commitment at the employee level, which they believed added to the complexity of achieving the high-level integration of TQM values. P1 stated that academic and non-academic employees are becoming less committed owing to the preconceived notion that if they became more involved in quality improvement tasks, they would be burdened with these tasks in addition to the ones they already have. Furthermore, they perceived that activities associated with quality improvement tasks required an additional and significant effort that would result in shifting their priorities:

Unfortunately, some people believe that taking part in TQM will only burden them with more tasks besides the ones they already have. So, a person seems to think, 'Why should I be bothered?'. In my opinion, this has weakened people's overall commitment.

P6 noted that academics consider teaching their top priority, yet the intensity of satisfying quality requirements causes their focus to be disrupted and redirected away from such high-priority duties. This respondent stated that these prejudgements from staff, including academics and non-academics employees, contributed to the development of a culture that generates a tendency among people to avoid participating in quality activities as much as possible:

There is a feeling that TQM may only be a source of headaches for people in the university ... as some academics may see the escalation of its application as destruction to them from focusing on key tasks including teaching and researching ... which [leads] to fewer commitments and avoiding taking part in participating.

P7 and P10 both agreed there was a lack of commitment on the part of employees. However, they contended that the lack of commitment among employees was because of the complexity of dealing with quality requirements and the insufficiency of training programs designed to improve people's practical skills and theoretical knowledge about quality in general, and TQM

in particular, in their workplace. For instance, P7 mentioned that some employees fail to see justified connections between most of the work they are carrying out and the quality practices and procedures they must undertake to meet improvement requirements:

Most people still do not understand the connection between some quality standards and the work they are doing ... they have issues with technical skills dealing with quality ... like filling out quality reports and using quality measuring matrices.

According to the respondent, such issues have made employees sceptical about TQM integration at the university. The respondent emphasised that lower engagement by individuals was also attributable to the conception of TQM values and procedures as acceptable for non-educational, customer-driven organisations whose main interests are competition and profit maximisation:

The TQM applications in the university are seen simply as a managerial effort to imitate those organisations from the business industry ... with orientations and interests [focused] on competition, [and] attracting more customers to improve profits. Such beliefs have made some employees hesitant regarding participation in quality improvements practices.

P10 emphasised the complexity of working on quality requirements at the university, which the respondent specifically attributed to a lack of technical skills. According to the participant, the lack of technical skills required to deal with quality-related procedures and paperwork has resulted in a significant level of discomfort and tension among employees, which negatively influences their level of commitment:

People who lack the capabilities to deal with quality requirements, engaging the work on certain quality documents and producing related reports, feel overwhelmed and could consequently react in a way against values and practices associated with the quality improvement requirements.

Participants from University 2 revealed similar views to those from University 1. For instance, P14, P15, P17 and P20 noted a lack of commitment among senior managers and employees

created hurdles in achieving the high-level integration of TQM values. It was reported there were key figures at the university's top and middle management levels who were still unsure about TQM's suitability for quality improvement in the university; they remained sceptical and unwilling to invest significantly in TQM. Consequently, commitment declined, making it difficult, in the absence of full commitment by the top, to develop strategies to enable the university to achieve the high-level integration of TQM values for quality improvement.

According to P14:

Full integration of TQM values required strategies fully supported by leadership. However, a gap still exists in the scale of commitment towards quality development through TQM by seniors at the top and the middle levels of management.

P15 delved into greater detail about the reasons for the lack of commitment by the people at the top, stating that the cost and time involved in TQM value integration are to blame for the hesitancy towards TQM application in the university. The participant noted that university leaders knew that investing in TQM would cost the institution more money with the risk of no immediate results, as it could take years to see the desired outcomes of such implementations. Therefore, according to the respondent, leaders were hesitant to take the risk of fully investing in TQM, as they prefer to see the immediate effects of such commitments:

TQM is time- and money-consuming ... it demands considerable preparation of human capital and ensuring that adequate financial and physical resources are readily available ... [W]ith this understanding, leaders' commitments are low because they are aware of the lengthy process of engaging TQM applications, and they are interested in seeing immediate outcomes instead.

P17 and P20 from University 2 also stated that TQM values did not explicitly resonate in a university setting. These views are in line with an earlier comment from University 1, showing an existing complexity in understanding the fit between TQM values and practices and the university context, resulting in increased scepticism. The two respondents explained that this



incompatibility was thought to be the factor that hampered top and middle-level managements' support for TQM integration into the university's systems:

You may be aware that TQM is well known in the business and manufacturing sectors; however, university leaders and middle management may find it difficult to stomach concepts derived from TQM. For example, customer satisfaction and outcomes measurements. These concepts seem hard to apply, so they are less likely to support them. (P17)

TQM values include empowerment, teamwork outcome evaluations and customer satisfaction, which are resonant in industry organisations, but in educational institutions, these values are less relevant and do not explicitly address the needs of this public university; thus, leaders appear unconvinced about the fit of its values. (P20)

From the findings from participants in University 2, the inability to adjust TQM values in these universities' contexts was among the main reasons for a lower commitment from the top- and middle-management levels. Participants in University 3 expressed similar views to those articulated by participants in Universities 1 and 2. For instance, P25 mentioned that in addition to the difficulties associated with the lack of required technical skills, other obstacles were associated with the delegation of power. P25 addressed empowerment as one of those TQM values that was there to improve people's commitment and participation in quality development in an organisation, but in the university context, it seems that the low level of power delegation is hindering people's commitment to quality initiatives:

Empowerment is one of the TQM values impacting people's engagements and commitment to improvements; I think leaders are unwilling or have less desire to give up more power.

Similarly, P26 and P27 concluded that the limitation of empowerment as a result of hesitant leaders contributed to the lack of commitment to TQM. P26, for example, indicated that the top management level's commitment and obligation to improve quality primarily depends on how well those leaders support mass engagement with delegations of authority at the centre:

Quality improvement incorporating the adoption of TQM values necessitates, first and foremost, leadership support to increase total participation from the people. The role of effective empowerment undertaken by the leadership is fundamentally crucial to encourage engagement ... Empowerment can help increase commitment and improve the level of TQM integration in the university ... [T]his has yet to be realised in this university.

P27 revealed that the scale of empowerment had been limited because of the top-down, centralised approach of management. According to the respondent, the long-adopted top-down approach in managing the university with limitations in the process of authorisations has created a culture that distances people from taking part in the new initiatives and that has weakened their willingness to engage passionately with activities and processes involving quality development:

Because of the top-down management style at the university, empowerment is limited. The emphasis on centralisation has created an environment in which individuals are less excited about participating in new initiatives and taking responsibility for quality improvements.

Similarly, P29's statement demonstrated that individuals prefer to be appreciated and have their responsibilities expanded; the respondent said that leaders could promote such vital feelings and engagements by empowering them. According to P29, a lack of empowerment in the university has not resulted in the desired positive feelings, but rather in laziness towards quality improvements:

Individual attitudes towards the initiatives and plans set for quality development have not been adequately developed as a result of management centralisation and a lack of empowerment from the top in the university ... [P]roviding employees with new responsibilities and expanding the scale of recognition would increase people's commitment to quality improvement.

The guidelines and regulations established by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, which include comprehensive organisational structures and delineated job roles aimed at centralising the governance of public universities, reflect a top-down management approach (Ministry of

Education 2020 ). Consequently, within these public universities, a top-down governance style was evident, likely constraining the introduction of innovative ideas and values that foster consistent changes such as those promoted by TQM. Therefore, within these institutions, there is a tendency towards caution, if not outright resistance, to proposed changes, coupled with a notably restricted delegation of power. Section 5.3.1.2 considers the second managerial-related challenge relating to a lack of understanding.

#### *5.3.1.2 Lack of Knowledge*

An inadequate understanding of TQM's philosophical foundations was identified as the second subtheme within the context of managerial-related challenges. Findings revealed confusion about TQM philosophy among quality practitioners at these three public universities, and the lack of effort by top management to tackle awareness of TQM implications. Samsudin, Jalil and Ibrahim (2017) emphasised that a deficient understanding of the TQM philosophy presents challenges in effectively integrating its values and practices within organisations. Of the 29 respondents, 20 (68.96%) referenced an inadequate level of understanding as a barrier to TQM uptake and its implementation.

Participants in University 1 expressed their belief that there is still a lack of appropriate understanding of TQM as a philosophy, as it was only partially understood as a method of maintaining adherence to quality specifications through the increase of control. For example, P2 stated that within the university, a common view of TQM is that it is merely a managerial strategy to strengthen control and reduce variations in performance outcomes to meet pre-defined objectives:

Most employees who work on quality at the university see TQM as a controlling technique to enable more compliance and reduce variations in the process to prevent undesirable outcomes.

Similarly, P3 and P10 from the same university were convinced that the presence of non-specialised personnel was the reason for the scarcity of knowledge in TQM at the university, which, according to these respondents, has resulted in more difficulties in properly integrating TQM values. P3 stated:

I cannot think of anyone who has studied quality or has a background in quality management ... which is why there is still confusion regarding TQM and a non-existence of sufficient knowledge about its value implementation in the university.

P10 also stated:

The difficulty we have in achieving optimal utilisation of TQM in the university can be linked to a limited understanding of TQM application as a means for control; with this limitation in knowledge, there are always going to be hurdles in the way promoting quality value integration.

P5 demonstrated that people working in the university's quality deanship department learnt about quality mostly by doing the work when they were assigned to fulfil quality improvement tasks, but no quality theories were introduced or explained to them, so quality practitioners' efforts were driven by doing. The respondent referred to the lack of theoretical understanding as the cause of a lack of understanding and harsh criticisms of TQM when implementation for improvement becomes complex or fails:

I am not familiar with many quality management theories, notably TQM theory, but since being assigned to this task, I have learnt things about quality by working ... There were no attempts that I recall educating us (practitioners) on understanding quality [or] its theoretical aspects. I think that is why TQM gets criticised harshly when [faults] in implementations happened.

P9 similarly believes that quality improvement was not adequately introduced in its theoretical form, which, according to the respondent, has resulted in the abandonment of quality initiatives in the long run on many occasions. The respondent stated that, to sustain a long commitment

to improving quality continuously in the university, a theoretical understanding of the TQM concept is required to justify plans and initiatives for quality developments in the university:

People's beliefs and knowledge about the quality concepts, as the driving forces for all the required plans and related performance for improvements, must be improved to sustain long time commitments and justify all the actions required to be carried out by the people. Unfortunately, many of the problems we face today in quality development are associated with a lack of knowledge about the underpinning principle.

The same respondent also expressed concern that a lack of understanding of quality theories could lead to misalignment between the university's stated mission and objectives:

A comprehensive understanding of the TQM philosophy is crucial for achieving long-term quality improvement and sustaining motivation towards meeting the university's quality improvement objectives. However, we have not yet attained such an understanding ... there is still need for education on TQM principles to ensure that quality improvement efforts are grounded in a solid theoretical understanding.

P10 agreed that the university must include specialist individuals who work in the field of quality management and have the theoretical knowledge to lay the basis for the high-level integration of TQM values if the stated goals are to be achieved. P10 remarked on the challenges of achieving high-level TQM integration, especially owing to the scarcity of experts. The participant went into some detail about how the hiring process was conducted randomly, hiring people with no or limited quality-related experience, which, according to the respondent, has contributed to problems in quality values integration for improvement in the university:

Attempts to improve quality through the high-level integration of TQM have been difficult ... we do not have people with quality backgrounds ... and the hiring appears to be done randomly. For instance, I did not apply for the quality deanship nor [have] any previous expertise in quality but was chosen; so, in the same way, [were] most of my colleagues here.

P11 agreed that quality improvement through the high-level integration of TQM values requires specialised personnel who are armed with the skills, determination and knowledge to spearhead improvements and increase awareness of certain quality theories, but because of the absence of such capabilities to carry out the quality tasks professionally, problems and complexity exist in the adoption and implementation of quality values and procedures:

Hiring quality experts is necessary to help us understand what we should expect from the quality values and procedure implications. More progress is needed in developing people's knowledge of quality values in the university context to systematically approach and overcome quality problems.

Participants from Universities 2 and 3 provided similar evidence of the existing lack of understanding of TQM philosophy in the context of these two universities. Responses indicated that approaching quality improvements in these public sector universities was entirely based on activity or a practical ('doing', 'hands-on') approach. No evidence was found of a well-developed strategy that was designed to properly educate or train quality developers across departments to improve their theoretical knowledge concerning TQM values. For example, P16 from University 2 shared that there is a shortage in the number of quality management professionals, so it was impossible in the first place for the university to develop quality programs that could enhance the quality developers' understanding of TQM, stating:

Successful implementation of TQM heavily depends on the level of understanding of its concept by those leading it. It is difficult to imagine how we can expect to thrive in quality development without a grasp of the concepts and procedures driving the necessary changes and improvements. It is imperative that those leading quality development initiatives possess a deep understanding of the underlying principles of quality management in order to drive effective and sustainable improvement in the university context.

P18 stated that the official selection criteria for a position which involves working on quality were puzzling. The respondent commented on how it was unhelpful to select a person to work on quality solely on the basis of how well that person performed in his field, without further

wondering how far the chosen person could be from the field of management in general and from quality management in particular:

It is strange that people are chosen to work for quality development with no prior knowledge, nor do they have the necessary skills ... they are not even from the management field.

P21 stated that to implement TQM theory properly, a better understanding of the theory's core values was required. The respondent indicated an insufficient level of understanding that kept people stranded and complicated the processes for quality improvement when involving the values and procedures introduced by TQM. The respondent attributed challenges in implementation to a gap in understanding TQM philosophy:

I believe that one of the most significant workplace barriers when adopting TQM values for improvement is the lack of understanding [of] those values and what they entail. So, to ensure the proper adoption of these quality values, people's awareness needs to be improved.

P26 from University 3 expressed his belief that, when considering TQM as a theory for quality development in the university context, some contradictory aspects emerge, creating ambiguity around this theory and its suitability for quality improvement. The respondent specifically noted how TQM-related terminologies have not been properly matched in the university context:

Consider customer satisfaction as one of this theory's core values ... Essentially, this cannot be accepted in its entirety ... Our teaching methods, course design and delivery are not motivated by the desire to please our students ... As a result, I believe it is either our inability to comprehend this theory properly or that it does not fit.

P27 said that TQM works well for industries in developed countries, where its values and principles can assist companies to operate in very competitive environments. Those facets and values continue to make little sense for Saudi universities, as there is a great disconnect between what his university truly requires and what TQM can provide:

Yes, in principle TQM makes sense for those organisations operat[ing] in competitive environment[s]; however, for this public non-profit university we must be aware of what it takes to make TQM work and what differences it would be making to achieve the university objectives ... but I think awareness about it is still undeveloped in the university's context.

P29 expressed a similar viewpoint, claiming that a lack of knowledge regarding the concept of TQM has hindered the ability of the university's leadership and middle management to realise its benefits and, therefore, its integration has not been efficient. According to the respondent, in some cases, the complexity of dealing with its implementation could create contradictions with the university's stated objectives. The respondent provided the example of how documenting quality-related work includes planning, reports, activities, and assessment of outcomes, which considerably increases the paperwork required for such processes, causing a contradiction with the university's declared objective of being a paperless university:

We announced two years ago that this university will go paperless to contribute to environmental sustainability and pollution reduction; yet I observe the opposite ... There has been a rise in the volume of printing and paperwork related to documentation for quality improvement involving ... the implication of quality values and procedures for improvement seemed to be indirectly diminishing the objective of being paperless ... I believe the quality has yet to be adequately realised.

Excessive documentation accompanied by lack of knowledge and professionals, according to the respondent, has resulted in complexity of improvements and difficulties in the process of integration. To summarise, an inadequate understanding of the philosophical principles underpinning TQM theory has emerged as an issue preventing the high-level integration of TQM. The respondents across the three universities stressed the importance of increasing education about TQM values. Leaders and middle-management, in particular, must develop strategies to increase awareness of the TQM philosophy, which requires hiring individuals with both practical and theoretical knowledge of how to manage quality development to close the



gap between practice and theory. This section illustrates the findings regarding communication, as the third subtheme in reference to managerial-related challenges.

#### *5.3.1.3 Ineffective Communication*

Another subtheme illustrating a managerial-related issue that hampers the high-level integration of TQM is ineffective communication systems. Semi-structured interview questions were developed to elicit data pertinent to issues in the communication system that might affect quality development activities. Carothers (2018) and Latif et al. (2019) identified communication issues as potential threats to the success of quality initiatives within university contexts. The study findings revealed specific issues associated with a communication system that contributed to the complexity of achieving the higher-level TQM integration in the context of these public universities. Of the 29 participants, 27 (93.10%) identified communication issues as another managerial-related barrier affecting the level of TQM adoption in these universities. Issues associated with gender and quality terminology emerged as a main contributing factor that undermined the efficiency of the communication system. This section summarises the findings regarding these two factors affecting the efficacy of communication required for the proper adoption of quality values and tools for quality improvement.

##### *5.3.1.3.1 Gender Segregation Policies and Communication Issues*

The participants shared views confirming that the issues regarding segregation between the genders in these public universities resulted in difficulties in achieving efficiency in the internal communication systems. P2 from University 1 noted that maintaining effective communication was difficult because of gender segregation, indicating that the hesitancy to establish stronger and more active connections between male and female departments existed because cultural factors had hindered the achievement of proper communications. As a result, communication in the university was limited. Similarly, P4 from the same university noted that religion and

cultural considerations sometimes led men and women to limit mix-gendered communications. According to P6, the wait for responses required for quality improvement matters from the women's department could take days or weeks because of the segregation in the university, which made it harder to meet quality improvement objectives in a timely manner:

Sometimes it takes a long time to get responses from the female department and this could result in missing deadlines for submitting quality report tasks for quality audits.

P16 from University 2 supported the view that gender segregation had some effect on the efficacy of communication in the university, which, in return, influences the quality improvements undertaken. P16 shared the view that there was an implicit norm in the workplace in the university, resulting in limited communications between the two genders:

There is a norm that communication should be at a minimum between male and female members ... This [has] consequently brought challenges in the way to achieve quality improvements throughout the university's sections.

P14 from the same university also noted a gap in communication between the men's and women's sections. The respondent said that the failure to sustain effective communication between the male and female quality deanships was owing to cultural traditions. The respondent provided insights into how this communication breakdown undermined the project for quality improvement based on TQM values:

Quality improvement must be comprehensive. Thus, you need an effective communication mechanism to bring everyone on board to achieve the high-level integration of TQM. Without it, I think all we are trying to do [to] improve quality is going [to be] wasted. I think there are some cultural barriers affecting the effectiveness of communication like the hesitancy exist[ing] between the university's male and female employees.

P23 and P24 supported the view that gender segregation complicated the processes towards the achievement of the high-level integration of TQM values. For instance, P23 stated:

It seems hard to effectively unite the efforts across the university's sections, moving forward as one to achieve a common quality objective, such as those associate[d] with the proper integration of TQM values, because of the lack of effective communication in place between male[s] and females across the university's sections.

The respondents talked further about the annual comprehensive report produced at the quality deanship and how, quite often, they have to spend a great deal of time and effort reworking various technical errors and sorting mismatched content in the quality reports produced by the male and female departments. The respondent attributed deficiencies to the failure of the communication system to keep people alerted to these errors, stating:

Effective communication is still missing between male and female quality deanships which cause troubles in meeting quality objectives and [has] led to ... wasted time and effort, such as spending a significant amount of time on fixing errors for avoidable mistakes if effective communication to keep constant updates was in place.

P24 stated that most, if not all, the communications issues in the university were cultural, not technological:

To overcome communication barriers, the lack of advanced technology is not always the reason. Instead, the focus should be on cultural factors, such as promoting frequent and sufficient communication among all male and female employees, which is critical for achieving high-level TQM integration. However, the university is facing difficulties in overcoming this barrier.

The findings from University 3 also coincided with the findings reported from Universities 1 and 2. For example, P28 explained that the high-level integration of quality improvement values essentially requires a superior level of interaction between people in the university:

To achieve the high-level integration of quality values, everyone's commitment is required, which entails an effective communication mechanism ... With the current situation, I believe that greater thought should be given to improving the effectiveness of the communication to improve and maintain high-level engagement.

P29 suggested more intervention from senior management and leaders to fix issues in the communication channels in the university. The respondent highlighted how managers and leaders should focus on changing the mindsets of individuals to facilitate interactions and encourage widespread communication across all university departments, including those for males and females:

Leaders must focus on altering people's attitudes and improving their interaction through a well-designed communication system in order to overcome the problems caused by longstanding practices that impede quality improvement.

Although there have been advances in the empowerment of women in Saudi Arabia, the HE sector ruled by the Ministry of Education continues to implement policies that uphold gender segregation. According to the rules and regulations set forth by the Ministry of Education, public universities are required to maintain separate branches for male and female students (Ministry of Education 2019). This structure ensures adherence to the nation's traditional and religious values, maintaining distinct educational services for each gender across all public university campuses. According to the above findings, gender segregation has resulted in communication issues that have hindered quality improvement and prevented the attainment of high-level TQM integration in the workplace. Section 5.3.1.3.2 to 5.3.1.3.2 present the findings of the challenges associated with the utilisation of TQM language in the context of these universities.

#### 5.3.1.3.2 Complexity of the Use of Quality Terminologies in the University Context

The findings across the three universities revealed that quality terminology associated with the use of TQM has created confusion and complicated the way TQM is understood in these universities. According to Houston (2007), the effect of TQM language and its compatibility with organisational cultures is a prominent theme in the critique of its applicability in the university's context. Participants have shared views about language barriers that have resulted

from unfamiliar terminologies used while dealing with the TQM, which according to the participants' views, further contributed to the existing difficulties in integrating TQM values in the university systems. The respondents in University 1 believed there was a need to address the language-related issues associated with TQM implementation, as problems could lead to misinterpretation and a sense of confusion among quality practitioners. For instance, P4 stated:

There is unfit language (terminologies) when communicating TQM implementation across the university ... for instance, language emphasising outcome measurements and customer satisfaction may appear less relevant to academics focused on teaching and implicit outcomes. Certain terminologies may not be suitable to effectively convey TQM principles across academic settings.

Similarly, P10 explained that most of the languages used while adopting TQM are complex and not easy to comprehend for many people in the university. The respondent referred to a certain phrase, 'closing the loop', which was used when dealing with quality improvements in the university. The respondent shared how that phrase made him wonder about its meaning and how it was even related to the kind of work being carried out in the university:

I am still having trouble comprehending the meaning behind some of the quality terms like 'closing the loop', which we use here and [that] have been circulated while communicating; I am wondering what that even means or [how it] helps to improve quality ... [S]uch language seem more applicable to a manufacturing production line than an academic setting.

The respondent commented on the need for attention to the way that specific terminologies are being used and communicated, recommending more clarity of meaning behind them to eliminate concern and prevent misinterpretations as quality meanings in the university context differ from those in industrial sectors:

There is a need for a proper introduction of the language involved when working on quality improvements. More clarification through effective communication is needed to explain the meaning of the terminology being used when working on quality development initiatives in

the context of the university since the meaning of quality language may only make sense in manufacturing or organisations in sectors that operate differently.

Similarly, participants from Universities 2 and 3 indicated there was still ambiguity and vagueness in the quality language and related ‘jargon’ that appeared in their universities. P14 emphasised that for the high-level integration of TQM, formal and informal communication mechanisms should be used effectively to reinforce and promote people’s clear understanding of what certain jargon means, especially when used for quality improvement in the university:

It is not easy for people to comprehend the logic behind some quality terms and practices as these terminologies might make no sense in the university; therefore, quality terms and practices should be adequately explained to mitigate a lot of these concerns, particularly language that sounds unfamiliar in the educational sector.

The respondent referred to the language adopted from manufacturing industries that had not been readily accepted in the university because they made many people feel uncomfortable, especially when dealing with some of the more data-driven tasks that engage statistical tools and techniques when working on quality improvements:

The requirement of using statistical tools and techniques in conjunction with the quality standards framework and quality matrices has led to increased stress and unease among individuals. This, in turn, has made it challenging to communicate TQM values and tools within the university setting effectively.

P18 and P23 from the same university also shared their views on the issues associated with the terminologies used when adopting TQM in the university. For instance, P18 stated that terms such as ‘teamwork’ do not fit the university context well. The respondent provided an example of teaching processes at the university and how difficult it is to assume that quality factors such as teamwork tactics could possibly be applied, although such language is widespread in the university:

Just think about the widely used term ‘teamwork’ as an ideal method for enhancing quality within the university ... I think about the teaching processes, and I find it challenging to see teamwork possibly fitting in that aspect because teaching tasks are often performed individually ... a lecturer is delivering a lecture in class, and students are the recipients ... so I do not know why the emphasis is on teamwork, as if it fits everywhere in the university?

P18 further explained that communication methods used in relation to quality activities lack a strategic basis and have not received special attention in terms of improving the meaning of quality in the university, attributing challenges in quality value integration to the inability to define the meaning of quality for the university:

Quality terminologies are still confusing and lack efficiency in matching the university context ... [W]e need to enhance the upward and downward approaches to communicate the meaning of quality and minimise dilemmas that could result from difficulties in grasping some of its languages.

P23 agreed that there was a dire need to improve the communication system that is currently in place, and properly convey the rationale behind TQM in such a way that people understand its meaning and what its values actually are:

Look, most people cannot make sense of many of TQM’s terminologies used, so for quality improvement, I think we need effective communication to promote positive responses from people in relation to TQM core values and tackle any problem with the language use in working on quality developments.

Participants in University 3 expressed similar sentiments, demonstrating that the unfamiliar terminology connected with TQM implementation in the institution present hurdles that make it difficult to successfully integrate quality values for improvement. P25, for example, stated that for the successful integration of TQM in a university, it is necessary for those who carry it out to make sense of it; thus, the use of unmatched terminologies that do not easily fit the university context is one of the problems that must be addressed to improve employee engagement:

It is impossible to get the total participation of people when using TQM for quality improvement if those involved are sceptical of its meaning and confused around certain terminologies ... Consider concepts such as 'controlling the processes to ensure quality outcomes' and 'quality circle'; these concepts do not pertain to the university's operational system because the relationship between inputs, processes, and outcomes is more complex, and you cannot simply perform controlling and checking to ensure quality outcomes.

P26 commented on the important role played by senior managers' in familiarising university employees with quality terms. The respondent argued that individuals may resist participation because they are struggling to understand its meaning or the direct benefits it has for their work:

Quality must be introduced to employees as something that is helpful to them and has a direct impact on the efficiency of methods to performing tasks in the workplace ... [It] necessitates [an] efficient communication system in which quality terminology and concepts are defined, and their applicability to workplaces is proved.

To conclude, using certain terminologies and jargon simply created confusion and affected the level of participation in quality development involving TQM values and procedures in these public universities. Consequently, achieving the high-level integration of TQM values has proven difficult in these public university contexts. The inability to make sense of or match some of the TQM's employed language and the nature of the work being conducted was cited as a barrier encountered in these public universities when attempting to enhance quality. The next section covers the results pertaining to the fourth theme, 'preference for stability over uncertainty', as managerial-related challenges.

#### *5.3.1.4 Preference for Stability over Uncertainty*

Another managerial issue that has resulted in a low level of integration of TQM values in these three public universities is a preference by leadership and middle management to ensure stability and avoid disruption. The findings revealed that a desire for stability and fear of change at the top and middle levels of management were factors that have affected TQM



implementation in these universities. A total of 26 (89.65%) of the 29 participants identified the preference for stability over uncertainty as a subtheme. The findings from the thematic analysis found that empowerment, failure to meet objectives and fear of change were all interconnected forces that influenced leaders' and middle administration's desires and support for TQM in relation to quality improvement in these universities.

Participants from University 1 noted that there had been unresolved difficulties concerning TQM since the objectives for quality development were established. As a result, according to P2, TQM had not gained widespread support. P3 shared that TQM was viewed as a quality improvement technique that requires comprehensive employees' involvements, suggesting that the additional delegation of authority from top management was required. The need to delegate resulted in more ambiguity among leaders at the top level of management regarding how to regulate empowerments, and created fear that such empowerment might result in a loss of control over management:

When considering TQM adoption for total improvement, empowerment is required, but leaders are still confused and unclear about how to manage empowerment and responsibilities in such a centralised system.

P9 and P11 shared similar views, which indicated that support from leaders and senior managers for TQM was inadequate because of issues of power delegation. P9 attributed the failure of high-level integration of TQM values to the lack of delegation of power to the lower levels of management and to over-reliance on centralisation as a strategy for securing stability:

Leadership and managers still see central management as the best approach for providing more security in workplaces and maintain stability; this has not helped the efforts in making substantial quality improvements.

P11, from the same university, shed light on a fascinating aspect of the delegation of power, revealing that both leaders and those who were to be empowered had concerns about the

potential consequences of empowerment. Leaders worried that empowering others would lead to a loss of influence over staff, undermining their authority and command. Meanwhile, employees who were to be empowered faced increased pressure and anxiety because of the complexity of handling quality development, as they feared failure and punishment if they did not meet certain goals:

For leaders, delegations of powers could mean losing their influence, and for employees, more responsibilities and subjecting oneself to consequences if quality objectives have not been met. Thus, those at the top, middle lower levels in the university are equally [hesitant] when it comes to delegation and assigning responsibility.

Participants also admitted a fear of the change that may be brought by the introduction of the TQM philosophy, especially among the top and middle levels of management. For instance, P13 explained that one of the main reasons TQM received inadequate support from leaders and managers is that it called for a shift in existing conditions and created new ones:

TQM is quite often introducing changes and involves establishing new objectives to be met; this is more likely to create disruptions to the way work is carried out and result in a feeling of discomfort among those at the top and uncertainty.

Participants from Universities 2 and 3 revealed similar perspectives relating to the uncertainties involved with TQM implementation in these public universities. For example, P14 in University 2 explained that working on quality exposes one to criticism and creates unnecessary pressure and fear of failure. The respondent explained that those who worked in the quality deanship department were the first to be blamed when something went wrong. The implication, according to the respondent, is that those who work in the quality deanship department will become solely responsible for quality in the university, whereas failure was actually a cumulative outcome of the entire system:

The problem with being here in the quality deanship and working on such complex tasks and environments creates a sense of uncertainty and puts a lot of pressure on us since we are the

first to blame for any errors that occur because working on quality development involving TQM has a high risk of mistakes ... As a result, we tend to prioritise stability and limit risk-taking which may restrict quality improvements.

P21 stated that TQM required a high level of ability to meet its requirements. For instance, planning, dealing with data analysis and leading team members requires individuals with acute skills and capabilities. Therefore, leaders and top managers may fear that they appear unfit for these responsibilities, which could lead them to diminish or downplay the importance of quality values and practices. They may even tend to neglect the need to acquire the necessary capabilities and skills to avoid embarrassment and save face:

Implementing TQM in organisations requires skilled individuals to handle various aspects such as planning, data analysis, process and people management. However, in the university context, leaders may feel threatened as their competencies and capabilities will be evaluated, which could lead them to avoid or downplay the importance of TQM practices, given that TQM practices in universities are still relatively new and surrounded by ambiguity.

P22, who is also from the same university, shared a similar perspective. The respondent expressed how working on TQM could create self-doubt, making leaders and managers hesitant to fully engage in TQM practices:

Dealing with quality tasks can be concerning due to their complex nature ... [T]here is a constant feeling that one's abilities will be judged based on how well one handles these tasks and meet quality standards targets. However, such concerns can discourage engagement in TQM implementation and lead to negative perceptions about it in the workplace.

Respondents from University 3 shared that leaders feared individuals in middle management who sought power by engaging in quality activities, as the former perceived TQM as a tool for the latter in seeking higher positions to undermine the authority and control of the university's leadership. P28 and P29 both believed that leaders could challenge the idea of TQM in the university to maintain control and prevent middle managers from advancing their agendas and claiming higher positions on the hierarchy ladder. For example, P28 stated:

The rise of managers from middle management to higher positions through their involvement in quality development can cause leaders to experience a sense of uncertainty. TQM may be viewed as a path through which low-level managers can advance their careers and seek more power. As a result, leaders may attempt to limit such advancements by adopting a cautious approach and carefully considering their support for TQM activities in the university.

Similarly, P29 offered:

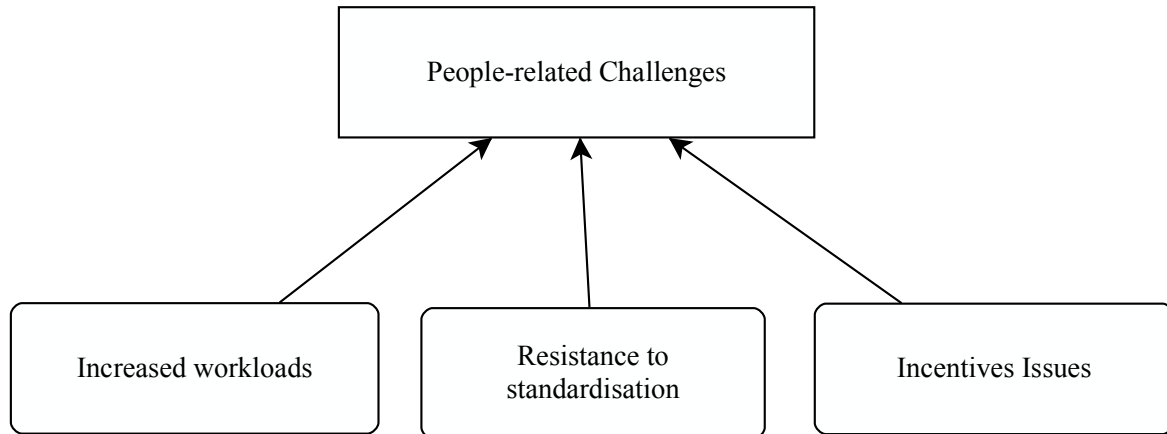
The fear of losing power owing to increased power delegation required for TQM implementation made university leaders very cautious about supporting its concept to prevent those trying to take advantage of it from gaining control and occupying new positions.

In summary, the concept of TQM in the context of these universities has generated a sense of fear regarding stability and a loss of control. First, leaders fear being perceived as inadequate in terms of the required skills and capabilities for handling TQM tasks. Another source of uncertainty is the top leadership's concern that middle managers may use TQM to gain power and undermine their authority, encouraging leaders to be cautious in supporting TQM implementation. Second, since TQM requires an increased delegation of power, it is often perceived as having the potential to lead to a loss of influence in a centralised approach to university management. Leaders in these public universities tend to reduce the uncertainty associated with TQM adoption to maintain stability, resulting in careful engagement and less support for its implementation in these settings. Section 5.3.2 outlines the identified challenges associated with people-related challenges in adopting TQM.

### **5.3.2 People-related Challenges**

In addition to the management-related challenges, the data revealed another challenge that exists among people with non-managerial roles, which also functioned as a barrier to the high-level integration of TQM in universities. These people-related challenges which affected the level of participation in quality development, and consequently the adoption of TQM values,

include (a) increased workloads, (b) resistance to standardisation and (c) lack of incentives. Each subtheme is discussed below (see Figure 5.7).



**Figure 5. 7 People-related challenges**

#### *5.3.2.1 Increased Workloads*

Data across the three universities revealed that quality-related tasks were considered to significantly increase the workloads of non-managerial staff, including academic and non-academic staff. In the study conducted by Bertillo, Julius and Lacambra (2017), it was highlighted that activities linked to quality improvements have increased workloads and negatively affected attitudes towards involvement. Of the participants, 25 (86.20%) identified increased workloads resulting from quality development, which affected the achievement of the high-level integration of TQM values. Respondents across these three universities reported their concerns regarding the feeling of pressure among employees owing to the increased workloads resulting from the increase in quality improvement requirements and initiatives. Participants from University 1 shared that since quality improvements were introduced as an essential part of their daily work, the workloads had increased significantly. P4 remarked on how working on quality development tasks to satisfy quality requirements resulted in both

academic and non-academic staff allocating more effort and additional time that even exceeded the expected working hours for their original tasks:

Quality work requires additional hours and effort to meet the required quality standards ... these increases in workloads result in individuals working beyond their expected hours.

The same respondent further expressed a concern regarding the pressure felt among employees owing to the increase in workloads as result of the rise in the number of quality requirements, making them a part of everyday work. P6 reported negative attitudes among staff in the university as they become irritated by increased workloads owing to quality-related activities:

The increased quality activities for improvement have been received negatively by people with non-managerial roles and affect the total involvement in quality ... [E]mployees started to experience growing increases in the amount of work.

P7, P8 and P11 from the same university also shared a similar view on how increases in the workload affected the level of engagement by people in non-managerial roles, and specifically, of academic staff. Respondents shared valuable insights about their experiences as lecturers before joining the quality deanship department. They detailed the pressures they encountered while working on quality-related tasks in addition to their full-time teaching roles at their respective colleges. For instance, P7 mentioned that since quality-related tasks became compulsory, a significant amount of time was spent working on quality-related activities and attending quality meetings, thus adding more pressure on top of the existing academic duties:

Initially, I knew that certain administrative tasks would require additional hours besides my teaching activities ... however, since quality requirements have become an integral part of our daily work, the time devoted to these non-teaching tasks has nearly doubled.

Similarly, P8 reported that academics faced difficulties balancing teaching tasks and working on quality-related tasks. The respondent further pointed out how quality activities became an

essential part of everyday work, which came at the expense of their time for developing an academic career:

Academics struggle to balance their academic commitments, such as teaching, tutoring, attending workshops to develop their teaching skills, working on publications and allocating time for quality-related tasks. Juggling these tasks often makes academics feel overwhelmed and they struggle to find enough time to meet these responsibilities.

P11 stated that academics at the institution were not necessarily opposed to TQM because of doubts about its effectiveness but rather because it demanded a substantial amount of time and additional work to meet its criteria. According to the respondent, academics in non-management professions would benefit more from dedicating their valuable time to relevant work activities that enhance their teaching skills and advance their academic careers. The participant ascribed academics' reluctance to support TQM integration to the limited time they have because of their academic duties, which include teaching tasks, searching and publishing papers, and developing their academic skill which is necessary for their future academic career:

I used to teach and carry out some administrative responsibilities to meet the allocated workload hours in my timetable ... but since meeting quality standards has become an essential part of my daily work, I felt enormous pressure and a lack of time, making it hard for me to continue sustaining the same level of concentration on teaching, searching and developing new skills needed the most ... and at the same time, working in quality requirements.

Respondents from Universities 2 and 3 expressed similar views that TQM had increased workloads, causing academic and non-academic staff to resent the concept of TQM in their universities. Participants P15, P19 and P20 from University 2 reported that most staff complaints were about feeling overwhelmed by quality-related tasks. P15 stated that an increase in workload was expected, with quality becoming a part of everyone's work, but for most employees, this workload exceeded the normal level, especially in understaffed departments. P19 shared a similar view and emphasised that existing shortages in HR, coupled

with an increase in activities for meeting quality development requirements, had placed additional pressure on the staff:

The employees working in various departments and faculties of the university are currently experiencing significant pressure due to a surge in their workload ... the increased workload is primarily caused by the growing need to meet quality standards requirements, which is compounded by a shortage of personnel ... therefore, employees feel resentful towards TQM initiatives.

Female respondents across the three public universities highlighted that female colleges and departments, in particular, face more difficulties in meeting quality requirements and experience more significant pressure than male departments because of shortages in human resources capital. For example, P9 from University 1 stated that female staff numbers were far lower than their male counterparts across the university departments. At the same time, female sections had to meet the same quality standards and perform almost the same amount of work to meet the quality standards requirements. Similarly, P12 indicated that the amount of work for female staff had become significantly overwhelming owing to the lack of female workforce available to handle the increasing demands to meet varied quality requirements. Participants from University 1 made the following statements expressing their concern about the increase in quality requirements and the rise in the workloads, accompanied by shortages in the female workforce in that university:

Despite being subject to the same quality standards as their male counterparts, female departments face a significant shortfall in staffing compared with the male division ... [C]onsequently, as female employees are forced to deal with rising quality requirements, workloads significantly increased, and more pressures were felt at these colleges and department. (P9)

The pursuit of meeting quality requirements has taken a toll on female employees, who strive to match the performance of their male colleagues and meet the same quality development requirements ... [U]nfortunately, female divisions often fall short in satisfying the quality



requirements due to lack of a sufficient number of employees available to handle quality works. (P12)

In University 2, P21 and P22 highlighted the importance of recruiting more women to address the issue of understaffing in female divisions and enable those divisions to meet the required quality standards. P21 stated the following:

To bridge the gap in meeting the quality standards across the university's divisions and to enhance the capabilities of the female divisions in dealing with quality development requirements, it is imperative to increase the number of employees by hiring more female employees.

P22 stressed the significance of hiring more female employee and providing them with sufficient training opportunities across the university to overcome the difficulties in meeting quality improvement requirements and ease the pressure. The respondent believed that having an adequate number of female employees and offering them training programs would boost their capabilities in handling quality improvement tasks and alleviate the pressure caused by workload increments to meet the quality improvement requirements:

Insufficient training programs coupled with a lack of an adequate number of employees in the female divisions have increased workloads and placed more pressure, leaving women in these divisions ill-equipped to meet the increasing demands for quality improvement ... [T]o address this issue, hiring more female employees and providing them with adequate training programs in quality seems imperative to overcoming hurdles in meeting quality standards requirements at the women's division in the university.

The participants from University 3 raised similar concerns regarding the experiences of female employees in the division. These employees were found to be facing high work intensity and increased pressure to meet quality standards owing to understaffing. P27 pointed out that academic and non-academic female employees face unequal pressure compared with their male colleagues, because they are expected to meet the same quality standards as men, despite a lack of adequate representation of women in the workforce and limited training opportunities:

I understand that everyone is overwhelmed by the increasing workloads due to rising quality standards requirements ... but it is important to note that female employees at this university are fewer and, therefore, experience significant increases in workloads and face more pressure compared with male employees ... yet, we are still expected to meet the same quality requirements.

Evidence from the review of NCAAA documents underscores the mandate for strict adherence to quality assurance practices by faculty members, which has led to a significant increase in the volume of required documentation. Instances include the so-called Course Specifications and Reports, the aggregation of Student Evaluation Survey Results, the establishment of Program KPIs and Benchmarks, and the Self-Study Report (SSRP); these collectively require a significant amount of time and effort to address (NCAAA 2023; Education & Training Evaluation Commission, 2021). Although all these activities are designed to improve educational quality, they have markedly increased the workload for university staff, thereby escalating the pressure and the investment of time necessary to meet these stringent obligations. In summary, engaging in quality-related activities within public universities was found to be widely perceived as primary cause for workloads being increased, which leads to negative attitudes among non-managerial staff, including academic and non-academic employees, in relation to the adoption of TQM's values and practices. The data analysis revealed that academic and non-academic staff across these three public universities were experiencing more pressure owing to the content demands to meet quality standards requirements. The intensity of pressure was found to be even greater in the female divisions at these universities because of a shortage of adequate workforces for handling the required quality tasks and a lack of opportunities to join training programs. In the context of these public universities, a high level of hesitation was found among academics, in particular, to engage in TQM implementation, as the academics perceived that adhering to the TQM application would distract their attention from essential academic tasks, such as teaching, researching, publishing and working on the

development of related skills, which was crucial for their careers. The following section presents the results associated with the second theme under the people-related challenges cluster labelled resistance to standardisation.

#### *5.3.2.2 Resistance to Standardisations*

Employees, particularly academics in non-management roles, resented TQM's standardised processes. Studies by Lucas (2017), Tight (2020) and Kota (2021) highlighted the challenges associated with TQM implementation, specifically the resistance towards heightened work standardisations, as TQM is often perceived as introducing additional standards in the workplace. Of the 29 participants, responses from 22 (75.86%) contributed to the identification of resistance to standardisation as a challenging theme. The data analysis revealed that establishing high-level TQM integration remains a difficult task in these three public universities, owing to academics' resistance to the notion of standardisation. P1 from University 1 stated that academics are often not quite in line with the quality development proposed by TQM through standardisation. The respondent stated that academics likely considered that quality standardisation was designed to enable more administrative monitoring and control over their academic performance:

Academics have consistently expressed concern about the objective behind the policies and standards created for quality development at the university ... they see equality standardisation as a technique used by those at the top to gain more control ... academics thereby, are feeling uneasy as they perceive quality standards as a tool that has been brought in by managers to reinforce more control and monitoring over academic performance.

P2, P9 and P12 expressed similar views that academics perceive standardisation for quality development as a threat to their autonomy, privilege and freedom; therefore, they resist the idea of TQM as an approach through which standardisations for quality development can be reinforced in workplaces in these universities. For instance, P2 explained that academics are

often reluctant to subject their academic performance to evaluation by quality audits, involving a full disclosure of work outcomes as per the quality standards requirements. The respondent shared that attempts to strengthen adherence to quality standards would be viewed as efforts to facilitate more managerial interventions to exercise control and undermine academic autonomy:

Academics are often uneasy with the function of quality reviewers who hold performance in check against quality standards ... academics may interpret this as a managerial action to limit the autonomy of those academics and exercise more control ... academics oppose standardisation protocol and take a less cooperative approach towards TQM implementation at the university to safeguard their autonomies.

Similarly, P9 noted that academics were still reluctant and not fully convinced about the practicality of quality standards. Academics, according to the respondent, may fail to recognise how quality standards could establish or drive an authentic change in their work; instead, they believe that one of the underlying agendas of standardisations is to deprive them of their privilege as an academics, and create more managerial authorities at the university:

Academics view standards adopted to ensure quality as less meaningful and lack strong association with the nature of academic works ... they see the excess of standardisation in workplace as a tool mainly used to deprive them of the privileges they enjoy in the university and instead grant more authoritarian power to managers to exercise monitoring ... academics tend to be less supportive of the notions promoted by TQM, including reinforcing adherence to quality standards in the university workplace.

P12, from the same university, commented on the difficulties related to the adoption of quality standards. The respondent attributed such difficulties to the working environment, as academics have long cherished their independence and protest against any threats that could deprive them of this privilege; hence, in this context, promoting adherence to quality standards can be viewed as inappropriate. According to the respondent, promoting adherence to quality

standards in such a working environment can be viewed as inappropriate and will most likely be challenged:

When accepting quality standards, the mandates [of] quality standards may not be seen as suitable for academic tasks such as teaching and research tasks ... Academics may view attempts to impose standards as a move that undermines their independence in the workplace, making them more subservient to management. From their perspective, reinforcing more standardisations in the workplace will lead to greater abdication of academic independence.

Regarding accepting quality standards, academics and administrative personnel are not alike ... the mandates prescribed by quality standards may not resonate well with academic tasks such as teaching and research ... academics may instead see imposing standards as an attempt to undermine their independence in the workplace, making them more subservient to management ... [F]rom their perspective, reinforcing more standardisations in the workplace will most likely lead to a greater abdication of academic independence.

Participants from Universities 2 and 3 expressed doubts about the increased emphasis on quality standards in these public institutions. Findings from these two universities uncovered more evidence validating the earlier findings from University 1, regarding academics and non-managerial staff's opposition to the escalation of quality standardisation. For example, P13, P18 and P24 from University 2 suggested that academics have consistently resisted standards introduced for quality development since compliance with these standards means that staff with quality responsibilities (managerial level) will have more authoritative control over academics' performance, of which the latter do not approve. According to P13, there is a developed perception among academic staff that the growing emphasis on promoting adherence to quality standards requirements is mostly to achieve management goals, such as maximising control and ensuring conformity in the university, while giving less attention to academics' special interests:

Academics often hold the belief that quality standards are predominantly established to encourage conformity and restrict their autonomy ... the prevailing perception among many academics is that quality standards are a means to enhance administrative control as

regulations and standards related to quality initiatives and plans are perceived as means to justify more administrative interventions, which prioritise conformity over the particular needs of academics.

In line with this perspective, P18 corroborates that academics maintain the view that quality standards serve to promote greater centralisation and control in universities, endowing those in managerial positions with more authority:

Academics understand that reinforcing more quality standards and stressing the need for complying would sustain control by giving those with managerial roles more.

The same respondent expressed concern about a potential conflict between academics and university quality management staff owing to the execution of quality standards, as, in an increasingly regulated environment in which more standards are being imposed in day-to-day work, the former may perceive their academic autonomy as being eroded. P24 maintains that academics continually resist increases in the number of quality standards in their workplaces. The respondent attributes this resistance to the lack of evidence regarding the benefits of adhering to these standards, stating that the dominant belief among academics is that the promotion of standardisation is intended only to benefit those in positions of power:

Academics are still uncertain about the direct benefits of adhering to quality standards, particularly with regard to their careers ... they view quality standards primarily as a tool to assist managers in achieving their objectives, advancing their positions and enhancing their image within the university.

The results from University 3 align with the findings mentioned earlier. P27's and P29's comments shed light on the growing tension between academic staff without managerial responsibilities and those who hold managerial positions and are involved in planning, executing and monitoring strategies for meeting quality standards requirements for improvement at the university. P27 remarked:

The level of tension between academics without managerial roles and quality developers has increased, and this intensity has grown with the introduction of more standardisation measures to ensure conformity.

P29 similarly echoed:

Academics still believe that policies and standards for quality improvement were primarily designed to enhance managerial performance and have little to do with academic activities such as teaching and research ... they, therefore, resist the escalation of quality standards in workplaces.

In summary, resistance to the rise of quality standardisation practices in the workplaces in these three universities has resulted in obstacles to achieving the seamless integration of TQM values and practices. Academic staff, in particular, have demonstrated a tendency to oppose attempts to escalate quality standards to safeguard their academic independence and avoid the conformity imposed by such standards. Moreover, of those academic staff with non-managerial positions, there is a popular belief that increasing quality standards in the workplace will lead to more managerial interventions and greater monitoring of academic performance. Consequently, academics are lobbying to resist the notion of increasing quality standards in workplaces, which creates challenges. The following section addresses the findings related to the challenges arising from incentives that hinder the high-level integration of TQM values in the context of these public universities.

#### *5.3.2.3 Incentive Issues and an Inefficient Rewarding System*

The data analysis has produced insightful findings that cast light on the issues surrounding the university reward system. In the context of these public universities, incentive-related issues have been identified as contributing factors that hinder TQM's integration efficacy. According to Agrawal (2019) and Haffar et al. (2019), establishing a fair incentive scheme and rewarding successful performance are crucial prerequisites for fostering higher levels of involvement in the execution of TQM. Of the 29 participants, 19 (65.51%) expressed concerns regarding the

administration of incentives and the overall handling of the reward system. The respondents reported that the presence of insufficient incentives and inefficient mechanisms within the reward systems has created difficulties in achieving enough engagement to promote a high-level integration of TQM values and practice for quality development in these universities. P3, P5, P9 and P11 in University 1 collectively reported a need for reforms in the university's reward system to encourage greater employee engagement, which is essential for quality development. P3 and P5 emphasised the need for more inclusive reforms to the reward system to enhance overall contributions made by those who play an integral role in demonstrating outstanding performance across university departments and colleges. P3 stated:

Employees at the quality deanship and individuals across all sections who are devoting significant efforts and time to quality developments should be appropriately and adequately rewarded ... special consideration should be given to rewarding those who have demonstrated excellence and made a significant contribution to the university's quality development.

The participant further emphasised the importance of reforming the reward system to promote greater incorporation of TQM values at the university, suggesting that the reward system should include more than just monetary incentives. The participant proposed that the current reward system be redesigned and extended to encompass a wider range of reward strategies besides the monetary incentives such as public recognition and appreciation, and training support for career development for those who make exceptional contributions to the university's quality development. P5 echoed a similar perspective, emphasising the need to incorporate diverse incentives into the reward system and effectively utilise them to motivate employees across all university colleges and departments. The respondent highlighted that individuals in the university possess varying needs, thereby incorporating a wide range of motives, including monetary and non-monetary incentives, is essential to positively influence behaviour and promote commitment to TQM values. The participant pointed out that, with the



varying needs of employees, solely focusing on a narrow range of incentives could potentially lead to lack of commitment and less motivated employees:

Individuals possess unique and diverse needs ... [T]o effectively influence their behaviour; a broad range of incentives should be utilised to encourage participation and stimulate optimal performance towards quality improvement ... [D]iversifying the reward system will help sustain commitment and keep employees motivated ... leading even further to inspire others to engage in achieving the university's objectives for quality development.

The respondent specifically mentioned utilising increased payment, recognition by leadership and providing specialised training programs as rewards that could be employed to address the diverse needs of employees and improve commitment in workplace:

A diverse range of incentives tailored to individual needs is key to an effective, rewarding system ... [N]on-financial rewards like leadership recognition or nomination for specialised training programs can be more impactful than monetary rewards for some employees ... [T]hus, diversifying the mechanisms of rewarding employees will ensure that our employees feel appreciated and recognised in a way that resonates with their needs which will lead to greater engagement and long-term commitment towards meeting quality development objectives.

P9 and P11 both stressed the importance of establishing appropriate and attractive incentive programs to achieve a high level of TQM value integration at the university. For instance, P9 highlighted the need to establish a transparent reward system with sufficient incentives as a crucial reform to encourage and maintain people's participation in quality development. The respondent believed that these measures were necessary to bring about positive changes in individual behaviour and actively meet quality development objectives. While acknowledging the importance of a rewarding system that outlines incentives to attract excellence, the respondent also emphasised that clear articulation of consequences (punishments) for poor performance should not be overlooked when using a reward system to influence behaviours and ensure consistency among the overall participation by employees:

Transparency is crucial as it reinforces fairness and trust in the reward systems ... the reward system must also encompass appropriate disciplinary measures to rectify poor performance and encourage participation in quality development.

P11 similarly emphasised the need to improve the functionality of the university's reward system to boost morale among individuals and increase their contributions towards attaining quality excellence in the institution. The respondent provided a noteworthy perspective on employee incentives, highlighting the importance of celebrating achievements made to meet quality objectives. The respondent asserted that such celebrations could create a sense of fulfilment and promote a collaborative spirit within the workplace. Celebrating successes in achieving quality objectives, according to the respondent, should be incorporated into the overall reward system and be utilised as a rewarding tool:

Celebrating every accomplishment publicly and sharing these celebrations with employees who have contributed to the success in meeting quality objectives is essential for sustaining excellence in performance ... [E]ven minor quality objectives that have been attained should be celebrated to create a sense of accomplishment and promote the spirit of collective efforts ... [C]elebrations should be viewed as reward tools.

P12 emphasised the need for generous financial support to finance these celebrations and confirmed the previous recommendation about integrating celebrations into the reward system. According to the respondent, incorporating celebrations and making them visible throughout the university's colleges and departments will attract the attention of less-engaged employees and encourage them to participate actively in achieving the university's quality development goals:

Celebrating the achieved quality objectives publicly is critical for demonstrating appreciation and maintaining the commitments of those who actively engaged and contributed to the achievement of quality objectives ... [I]ncorporating this technique (celebrations) into the reward system will motivate those who had less involvement to become more involved in meeting quality objectives.

The data analysis of the responses of participants from Universities 2 and 3 yielded results consistent to those of University 1. The responses by P14, P16, P19 and P20 in University 2 similarly underlined the need for an improvement of the reward system of their university by increasing financial incentives to encourage more effort and engagement in the quality developments in that university. P14 and P16 highlighted that the current financial incentives were insufficient to ensure full and active participation in process-related quality developments within the university. Employee long-term commitments and performance in fulfilling quality improvement targets were mentioned as areas where financial incentives may play an important role in driving efforts towards meeting these quality objectives at the university. According to P14:

It is critical to provide enough financial incentives for those who dedicated a significant amount of their time and efforts to help reach quality targets ... [T]o keep them motivated and feel valued for the contributions they made monetary incentive is crucial.

Likewise, P16 noted that the decline in sustaining long-term commitment towards quality improvement tasks within the university was a primary challenge in achieving a high level of integration of TQM values. The respondent explained that when financial incentives are scarce, employees are less committed and most likely inclined to complete quality tasks with minimal effort. The respondent emphasised the need to ensure the adequacy of financial funds allocated to support the reward system in the university to ensure the employees' long-term commitment and promote excellence in performance. Similarly, but with more focus on promoting a sense of competition, P19 emphasised the significance of incentives to create a sense of competition in the workplace encouraging employees to strive for excellence. According to the respondent, the utilisation of monetary incentives can result in creating a sense of competition and encouraging employees to give their best effort and continuously strive for excellence in their performance:

Incentives need to be repurposed to establish internal competition between employees, influencing behaviour and creating a positive reaction towards excellence ... [M]ore monetary incentives can create a competitive environment in workplace and drive employees towards excellence.

P20, from the same university, recommended increasing financial incentives for those who demonstrate exceptional dedication and accountability towards the meeting of quality objectives at the university. The respondent stated that by rewarding those who demonstrated a high level of commitment and by making the rewards visible across the university, other individuals in various sections of the university would be encouraged to follow suit, thereby contributing to meeting the university's quality improvement objectives. Findings from University 3 confirmed similar results. For example, P25 and 28 called for the need to include various forms of rewards to motivate accountability and sustain continued commitment to quality development. Insights about rewarding people by sponsoring them to join more specialised training programs to improve their skills were echoed. For instance, P25 stated that:

By incorporating training program packages for skill development, the reward system becomes more effective in motivating and sustaining commitment ... [E]mployees will seek to join these training programs to improve their skills and professional capabilities ... Offering these training opportunities as rewards will increase overall involvements in achieving quality development in the university.

P28 highlighted that quality development could be improved by making more opportunities available for skill developments through specialised courses and training programs. The respondent suggested that there should be more training programs, especially on quality. The respondent's comments aligned with the previous views, emphasising the importance of providing more opportunities for skills development through participation in training programs. The participant suggested that these training opportunities should be integrated into the reward system as a means of engaging employees in quality development and expressing

appreciation for their contributions. Hence, the respondent proposed the integration of additional training opportunities into the university reward system:

I believe that integrating training programs into the reward system will enhance employees' focus on quality and increase their interest in participating in quality improvements ... [I]t seems important to consider and incorporate more training programs into the reward system to maximise the positive impact of the system on employees' behaviour.

P29 agreed that individuals involved in quality development would greatly value the university's initiatives to enhance their skills by nominating them to participate in specialised quality training programs. The respondent further suggested that the university could offer such training programs by partnering with national or international quality agencies that provide a wide range of quality training opportunities:

National and international quality agencies provide quality training programs ... [R]ewarding employees who make a great effort in meeting quality objectives by joining them in these training programs will certainly have positive impacts on their behaviour and work dedication towards meeting quality improvement objectives.

In conclusion, the aforementioned findings have confirmed issues associated with the administration of incentives and the limited effectiveness of reward systems in place in these public universities. The existing issues have hindered employee engagement and posed difficulties in integrating TQM values to improve quality. Issues such as inadequate financial incentives and a lack of diverse rewards were identified as contributing factors to the inefficacies of reward systems in these universities.

## **5.4 Summary**

This chapter has extensively analysed the findings, revealing major themes and subthemes derived from the thematic analysis of the collected data. Regarding the drivers that have contributed to increased quality adoption, both external and internal forces were identified.

Under the category of external drivers, the subthemes included: (a) need for quality accreditation, (b) Vision 2030 and NUL requirements and (c) government and community trust. These external drivers were found to exert pressure on public universities to embrace quality values and implement development-oriented practices. Internal drivers encompassed the following subthemes: (a) increasing accountability and transparency, (b) the need for control and driving change and (c) enhancing performance and service outcomes. These were also found to be developed and nurtured within the universities themselves to ensure compliance with quality standards requirements. Furthermore, the chapter uncovered challenges associated with the implementation of TQM values and practices in public universities. These challenges were broadly categorised into two groups: managerial and people-related challenges. Managerial-related challenges encompassed the subthemes of (a) a lack of commitment, (b) limited knowledge about TQM as a philosophy, (c) ineffective communication and (d) a preference for stability over uncertainty. People-related challenges included (a) increased workloads, (b) resistance to standardisation and (c) a lack of incentives. Each of these categories of challenges was presented in depth in this chapter. Having provided an overview of the findings, Chapter 6 will thoroughly discuss these reported primary findings in relation to the study's objectives and research questions.

## Chapter 6: Discussion

The primary objective of the present study is to investigate the inherent challenges that public universities encounter and opportunities to achieve a high level of integration of TQM CSFs to promote a quality-oriented culture within the context of the Saudi Arabian public universities. The study involves collecting qualitative data engaging the views and perspectives of quality deanship personnel, encompassing both males and females, from three public universities. Thematic analysis was then applied, leading to the identification of key findings underlining challenges faced by those public universities and furthermore uncovering a type of drivers that stimulate more tendencies towards exploring TQM advantages in the context of these Saudi Arabian universities. The key findings including major themes and subthemes were presented in the proceeding chapter. In this discussion chapter, however, the focus is on discussing the significance of the findings that were generated by the current research study in connection to the objectives and research question (s) stated in Chapter 1.

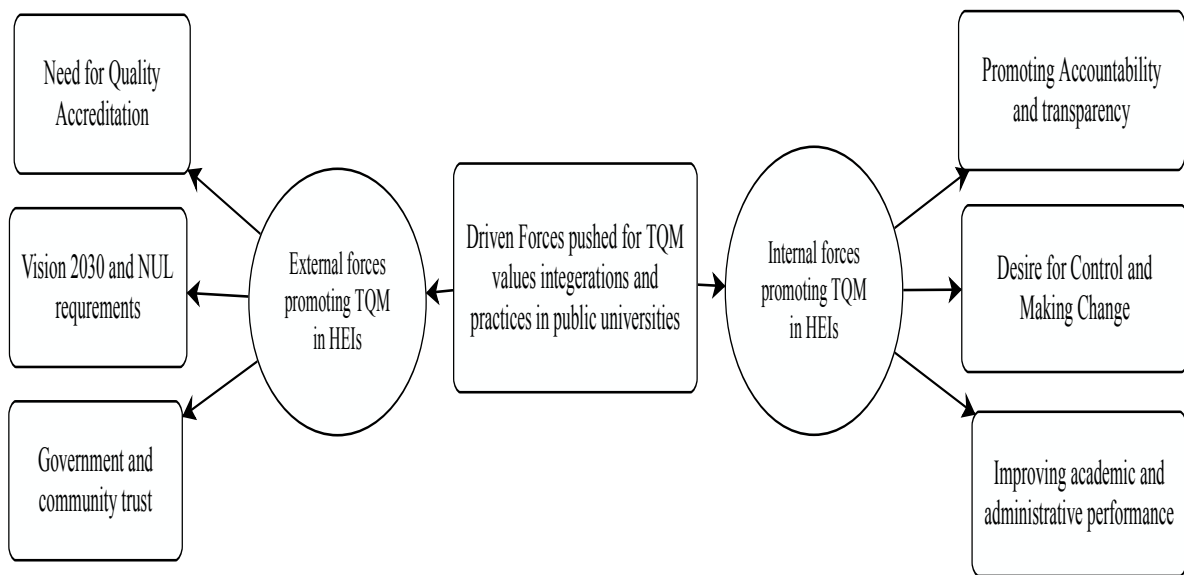
In the upcoming subsections, the findings related to the identified quality drivers that have reinforced more interest in quality development values and the explored challenges that the Saudi Arabian public universities encountered while attempting to embrace TQM's values are discussed. The present study's findings, as presented in Chapter 5, have unveiled two distinct categories of drivers: internal and external. These drivers play a crucial role in motivating the adoption of quality values, fostering an intensified interest in implementing improvement initiatives and creating a growing inclination towards expanding the scope of activities with a specific emphasis on enhancing the quality outcomes of processes within public universities. Additionally, the obstacles which were encountered, both managerial- and people-related challenges, were explored and reported as barriers that impede the achievement of the high-level integration of TQM core values and practices in these Saudi Arabian public universities.

The significance of these specific findings is discussed, considering the relevant literature highlighting similarities and differences with the discoveries made by the current study in relation to the study topic. In this discussion chapter, the first section covers the findings related to the external and internal driving forces that have contributed to the increased importance given to quality values and improvement activities in these public universities. The second section of this chapter discusses the major findings regarding the challenges encountered in achieving a higher-level integration of TQM values, with a particular focus on managerial and people-related issues.

## **6.1 Forces Incorporating TQM in Saudi Arabian Public Universities**

The thematic analysis conducted in this study has uncovered various drivers that have contributed to the expansion of activities and the adoption of quality values in Saudi Arabian public universities. The findings identified two primary clusters of drivers, namely external and internal drivers, as depicted in Figure 6.1. Understanding the nature of these drivers is advantageous for decisions-makers and quality developers, as it allows them to leverage these factors to enhance quality in their respective universities and make appropriate preparations for addressing improvements objectives. The subsequent section discusses the results pertaining to the external and internal drivers which have spurred initiatives, generated interest and prompted the formulation of quality development plans in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities.



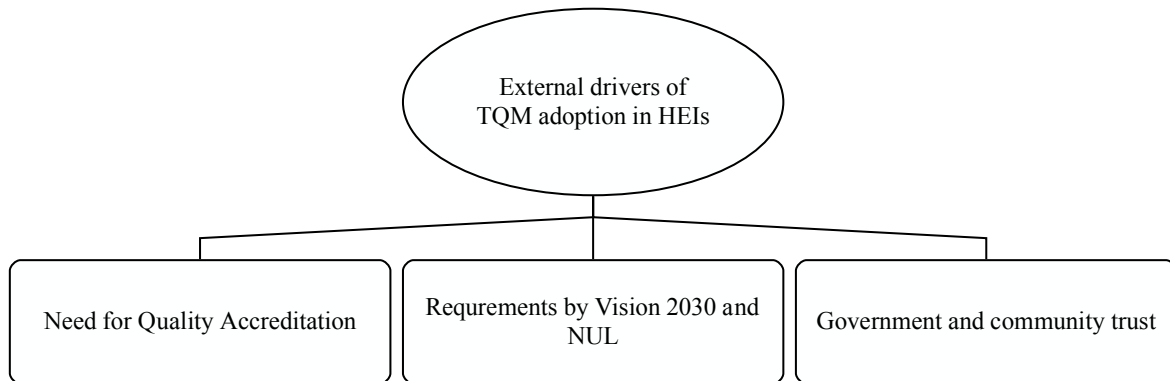


**Figure 6. 1 External and internal drivers promoting TQM value integration in Saudi Arabian public universities**

## **6.2 External Drivers for Promoting TQM Adoption in Saudi Arabian Universities**

The current research study has uncovered a notable surge in Saudi Arabian public universities' interest in adopting quality values and practices for improvement, including those values derived from TQM philosophy. The increase in this interest is caused by external drivers that have exerted pressure on these universities, compelling them to prioritise and enhance their focus on quality development. The following discusses the findings related to three specific external drivers that this research study has explored as contributors to the increased interest in adopting quality values and practices, including those of TQM philosophy in the country's university system. In the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities, the explored drivers stemmed from external influences and revolved primarily around meeting the requirements set by quality accreditation agencies, fulfilling the expectations outlined in the government's Vision 2030 economic plan and the NUL, and maintaining the trust and

confidence of the government and the Saudi community in these universities' delivery outcomes (see Figure 6.2).



**Figure 6. 2 External drivers promoting interest in TQM philosophy in Saudi Arabian public universities**

### **6.2.1 The Need to Satisfy Reinforced Quality Standards and Obtain Quality Recognition**

The study's findings confirmed the growing importance of quality accreditation in motivating Saudi Arabian public universities to explore the benefits of adopting values from the TQM philosophy and implementing recommended practices to enhance quality. Pursuing quality accreditations has prompted a shift in mindset, with universities actively seeking new methods and creating strategies to meet quality standards requirements, including those mandated by the NCAAA. The government has made NCAAA accreditation mandatory for all universities in the sector to bolster the international reputation of Saudi graduates and ensure the implementation of quality improvement measures across the university system. The current study identifies NCAAA accreditations, which encompass both institutional and program accreditation, as a key driver that has placed increased pressure on public universities to enhance their quality management practices resulting in these universities developing a curiosity to explore various aspects of TQM philosophy, including quality values, models, approaches and new practices for improvement. Laurret and Mendes (2019) similarly

highlighted that the the increase in the requirement for quality accreditation within the HE sector has popularised a key principle of TQM and promoted its utilisation in university contexts.

The current study's findings demonstrated that accreditation demands have accelerated the adoption of quality values and increased activities related to developing plans and strategies to meet quality standards requirements. This fact was reflected in the results (see Chapter 4), in which 24 participants (82.65%) confirmed that accreditation has a big impact on creating tendencies to adopt quality values and increased in the number of activities for the development of plans and strategies to satisfy quality standards requirements. The accreditation provided by NCAAA specifically has been perceived as an essential and vital cause for advancing acceptance of quality values and practices in public universities. It was regarded as a necessary motivator for quality improvement initiatives, leaving quality practitioners and leaders with no choice but to adhere to the NCAAA's quality standards. These findings are similar to the ones reported in the study conducted by Albaqami (2015) Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014). These studies highlight that emphasis on global reputation through obtaining recognition has pushed for more focus on quality improvements and improved the level of interest in exploring different quality approaches in these educational institutions. The results by the current study were also found to be in line with other studies from the literature, such as Alaskar et al. (2019); Jasti, Venkateswaran, and Kota (2021), Ab Wahid (2019); Rodriguez, Valenzuela and Ayuyao (2018), who highlighted the significance of accreditation as a mechanism that institutionalises quality standards in the workplace and improves the scale of quality initiatives, practices and involvement in processes.

Hanh (2020) similarly echoed that seeking recognition through accreditation has a positive impact on enhancing quality initiatives and promoting development in universities setting. The

findings by Hanh (2020) aligned with similar experiences discovered by the current study in Saudi Arabian public universities, where recent increases in quality-related activities and improvement plans have been observed because of efforts made in these universities to obtain quality accreditations. Jasti, Venkateswaran and Kota (2021) carried out a meta-analysis that encompassed 137 articles published in 55 journals on the evolution of TQM in higher education over the last three decades and has similarly confirmed that there is a positive correlation between accreditations and an increase in TQM attainment in HE institutions. In the case of Saudi Arabian public universities, the present study has similarly found that there is a growing inclination to embrace the values and practices of the TQM philosophy because of the heightened urgency to obtain national and international accreditations, which necessitate more emphasis on the importance of quality-related initiatives and activities.

Therefore, evidence provided by the current study's findings in relation to quality accreditations in the context of the university sector backs an existing argument in the literature which supports a positive correlation between the focus on meeting quality accreditation requirements and the increased integration of quality values and practices such as those driven by TQM philosophy. In the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities, the mandatory nature of NCAAA accreditation and the desire to obtain other international recognition have motivated universities to enhance their quality management practices, focusing more on quality developments with increased interest in exploring the benefits of TQM. These findings are consistent with the literature that highlights the importance of accreditation in driving more quality improvement initiatives and the integration of TQM practices in the context of universities. The following is a discussion of the findings linked to the second external driver, the National Vision 2030 and the NUL, which intensified the adoption of quality values and practices, including those derived from the TQM philosophy in those public and non-profit universities.

### **6.2.2 Vision 2030 and NUL: Raising the Bar for Quality in the Context of the Country's Public Universities.**

The introduction of the government's National Vision 2030 in 2016 and the enactment of the NUL in 2019 have had a profound impact on the public university sector. These two initiatives have been influential forces, compelling public universities to focus more on enhancing their development practices and integrating more quality values. The National Vision 2030 and the NUL have created a pressing need for universities to adapt new strategies and plans that prioritise quality improvement to meet these initiatives' evolving demands and expectations. Consequently, Saudi Arabian universities have embarked on a journey of continuous quality improvement, striving to meet new demands and expectations by integrating quality values into their systems and promoting quality practices. The study's findings demonstrate a significant paradigm shift towards quality development within the realm of public universities in Saudi Arabia. Through the analysis of the study data, which included responses from 72% of the participants, there was a notable transformation characterised by a heightened interest in quality development and the incorporation of more quality values and practices to align with the evolving demands and expectations of the National Vision 2030 and the NUL.

The present study has revealed that introducing the National Vision 2030 has made quality development a significant concern in the context of these public universities. Therefore, strategies have undergone changes, and more focus is placed on designing plans and increasing quality-related practices in these public universities for quality development. A common strategic aim now is to encourage the adoption of quality values and facilitate widespread participation to achieve quality objectives in these universities. These findings align with previous research studies in the literature, such as those conducted by Allmnakrah and Evers (2020), Ghulam and Mousa (2019), Pavan (2017), and Quamar (2021). These studies have highlighted a shift within Saudi Arabian HEIs, indicating a heightened focus on quality as a

result of the demands made by the National Vision 2030. For instance, Quamar (2021) highlighted that the Saudi Government's National Vision 2030 not only influenced economic goals but also significantly affected the perception of quality within the HE sector in the country, and as a result, there has been a notable increase in interest and emphasis on quality, accompanied by the formulation of strategies to enhance quality within the sector. The current study's similar results highlight the significance of the National Vision 2030 in promoting the adoption of quality values and increased practices for improvement in the context of these public universities as they seek to ensure a better alignment with the country's Vision 2030. Allmnakrah and Evers (2020) reported that following the introduction of the National Vision 2030, the focus has shifted towards quality developments with practices involving a constant self-assessment in an endeavour to narrow the gap between the expectations outlined in the National Vision and the actual outputs of a university. A key objective of the National Vision 2030 is to have at least five Saudi universities ranked among the top 200 international universities (Saudi Vision 2030). The current study has found that this ambitious goal is the major cause for the considerable emphasis on the importance of continuous quality development, increased quality initiatives and the adoption of practices including regular self-assessments, to ensure that university performance and outcomes serve the objectives set forth by the National Vision 2030.

The studies by Ghulam and Mousa (2019) and Pavan (2016 2017) revealed the significant impact of the National Vision 2030 on the perception and management of quality in universities. These studies also highlighted, however, a growing concern among universities and an increased effort to improve quality standards. The current study's findings agreed with this earlier research as the findings similarly confirmed the existence of increased concerns among public universities owing to the new demands and expectations outlined by National Vision 2030. However, we found steps had been taken by these public universities to address

these concerns, including the establishment of quality units across departments and colleges for the internal management and monitoring of processes to ensure compliance with the objectives of the National Vision 2030. Additionally, strategies have been implemented to facilitate the adoption of various quality approaches for overall improvement, with a noticeable trend towards quality advancements as the current study findings have revealed. Therefore, the demands and expectations set by the National Vision 2030 was considered a quality driver as it prompted public universities in the country to critically assess their approaches to enhancing quality, with a stronger focus on addressing quality issues, ensuring development, and endeavouring to enhance alignment between these universities' outcomes and expectations outlined by the National Vision 2030.

In 2016, the launch of the National Vision 2030 set the stage for strategic objectives in HE, and in 2019, the NUL was established to support the realisation of these objectives. The present study's findings highlighted the significant impact of the NUL on reshaping the focus towards quality in public universities. As the Ministry of Education (2019) stated, the NUL aims to implement a modern regulatory system that strengthens the country's scientific research capabilities, enhances universities' competitive advantage, and improves their global reputation. The work of Al-Olayani, El Emary and Aqili (2021) emphasised that one of the primary goals of the NUL is to elevate the ranking of educational institutions with an emphasis on improving the reputation of Saudi Arabian public universities worldwide. The current study's findings provide further evidence that the introduction of the NUL has placed quality at the forefront of discussions in public universities and intensified the focus on quality improvement in the sector. There is a growing belief that achieving national and international competitiveness necessitates a strong emphasis on quality and developing managerial capabilities to meet and address national and international quality standards. Consequently, these public universities are seeking to explore various quality values and promote

improvement practices, with increased attention currently materialised towards understanding the TQM philosophy in the sector.

The findings of this current study, in relation to the role of the NUL as a driver of quality in the sector, have also brought to light concerns associated with the changes introduced by the NUL encompassing a reduction in annual government funding to universities and more competition in the form of international universities setting up their own campuses in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, universities have begun embracing a new mindset that places more attention and emphasis on quality-related activities and underscores the importance of establishing plans and developing strategies to address quality issues. These findings are consistent with the results outlined by studies such as (Alruwaili 2020; Alsharif 2019, PwC 2019; Ministry of Education 2019). These studies have revealed that, as a result of the NUL, there is now a widespread adoption of quality values in the country's universities to ensure sustainable growth, compete well with new entrants in the sector, and deal with the issue of upcoming government funding cuts and more dependency issues. Alsharif (2019), the Ministry of Education (2020) and Alruwaili (2020) have similarly asserted that the NUL is intended to reposition quality at the core of processes in these public universities, reinforcing a greater adherence to national and international standards. The findings of the current study also agree with a recent study conducted by Aburizaizah (2022), which found that universities in the country strive to improve quality in accordance with the changes stipulated in the NUL. However, the current study further confirms that speculations exist among those quality developers about the readiness of these public universities to embark on such changes and become progressively more independent, but, notably, public universities in the country have begun adjusting their strategies, prioritising the adoption of new approaches to enhance quality and increase competitiveness with a focus on addressing their diverse needs and expectations, including those outlined by the National Vision 2030 and the NUL. Furthermore, the current



study highlights a shift which signifies a desire to departure from the traditional managerial style and adopt more quality-driven approaches reflecting a proactive effort to cater to the evolving demands and expectations in the sector. In the context of public universities, ensuring the confidence of stakeholders, specifically the government and the community, has also emerged as a significant driver that has contributed further to the seeking of quality in the context of these public universities. The next section discusses the findings underscoring government and community trust as external drivers that have created momentum towards adopting quality values and practices in the sector.

### **6.2.3 Advancing TQM for Building Trust and Creating Confidence in Public Universities**

Responses from 19 interviews (62%) revealed the significance of sustaining confidence as a driving force to strengthen the emphasis on quality initiatives and values in the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities. The growing interest in improving credibility and maintaining government and community trust has become a key factor in promoting more quality value integration and initiating activities to meet stakeholders' expectations. Therefore, the findings by the current study highlight that quality is viewed as a mechanism through which both the government's confidence and community trust can be built. Similar findings were highlighted by Octavianus et al. (2021), who carried out a study to explore the role of TQM. The study confirmed the universities' endeavours to address the expectations and meet the varied needs of external stakeholders, including the government and communities. In the context of these Saudi Arabian universities, similar attention was directed towards exploring values and practices such as those derived from the TQM philosophy which promote culture and focus on stakeholders' satisfaction and continuous improvement. These Saudi Arabian public universities have similarly begun recognising the significance of the values and practices stemming from TQM philosophy with regard to securing the government's confidence and sustaining its financial funding, as well as establishing trust in the services provided to the

community. The pursuit of confidence from the government and trust in the quality outcomes deliveries have indeed prompted a focus on enhancing the efficiency of management systems, fostering widespread acceptance of quality values, with particular attention on those that focus on stakeholders needs and expectations, encouraging broad participation to institutionalise trust and confidence and enhance the reputation of universities regionally and globally.

Traditionally, public universities in Saudi Arabia have relied heavily on government funding to sustain their operations. Quamar (2021) emphasises that without the annual financial support from the state, these universities would struggle to function effectively. In light of this dependency, the current study reveals that universities are now placing increased emphasis on quality development to secure ongoing government funding. By striving to attain national and international quality recognition, universities aim to demonstrate their efficiencies in serving governmental objectives and the community at large. Consequently, a strong connection is evident between the efforts to improve quality and the need to maintain government confidence and financial support. These findings were found to in line with Antony et al. (2018) and Alzafari and Kratzer (2019), who also identified a favourable relationship between government funding and the enhancement of quality in the HE sector. A study carried out by Wolfe (2020) analysed the management strategies British HEIs employed to overcome disruptions and challenges encountered over the past two decades and had similarly highlighted the government's significant influence in driving quality improvement in the sector. The current study's findings agree with the above realisations of the significance of seeking to obtain government confidence and addressing its expectations in increasing the range of quality approaches adopted for improvement with more concentration on addressing expectations and maintaining the government's confidence and continued support.

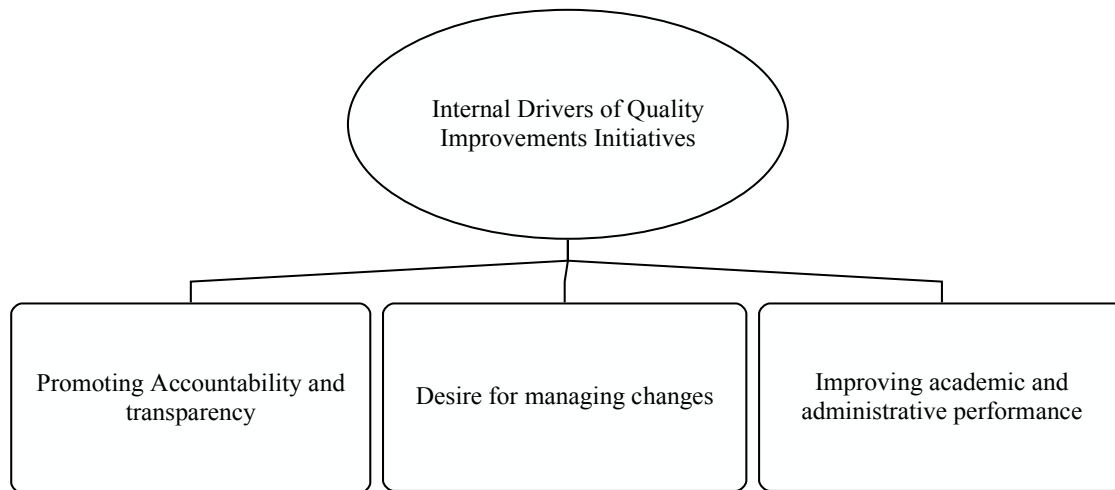
A recent study by Dirkse van Schalkwyk, Maritz and Steenkamp (2021) highlighted the various factors contributing to the enhancement of quality in universities in South Africa, but their study underlined the absence of government support and the need to maintain competitiveness and ensure survival as emerging forces behind the increased adoption of quality concepts in the country's university sector. Conversely, in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities, the current study has revealed a different dynamic in the sector, where a notable surge in quality development initiatives within the sector was attributed to a direct governmental intervention involving a direct mandate of specific quality standards and the needs to sustain f government support, making the government play a proactive role in ensuring quality in the sector. Although, the two countries can be considered as developing countries, the drivers for quality in the sector differ. The current study also revealed another cause for more quality initiatives which directly involved leaders having a strong desire to promote the adoption of quality values and practices to enhance the community's trust in these their universities. By prioritising quality, the aim is to present these universities as more reliable and trustworthy in delivering their services. These findings are consistent with Al-Tasheh (2013), who reported the significance of community trust and confidence in driving more focus on quality practices, and further highlighted the role played by both national and international accreditations in instilling the quality values and practices in the university context.

Aburizaizah (2022) emphasised the significance of quality accreditations in maintaining community confidence and trust in university programs and services. Similarly, Aljanobi (2015) found that Saudi Arabian universities have witnessed an increase in the adoption and application of quality values and tools to maintain trust in their services and instil confidence in the quality of their teaching and programs. The current study's findings align with those of Aburizaizah (2022) and Aljanobi (2015), as the findings of the current study have uncovered the significant role of quality accreditations in upholding community confidence and trust in

university programs and services of these universities. The current study confirmed this link and unveiled a rise in the adoption of quality values and practices to obtain quality accreditations owing to the importance of ensuring community confidence and maintaining trust in the programs and offered services provided by these universities to the communities they serve. The current study provides evidence of the influence of these three external drivers on the proliferation of quality improvement initiatives and the growing interest in adopting values and practices including those derived from TQM philosophy in these Saudi Arabian public universities. The next section discusses the findings concerning the identified internal drivers that have further reinforced the adoption of quality values in Saudi Arabian public universities and contributed to more internal awareness about quality values and practices for quality improvement.

### **6.3 Internal Drivers for Promoting TQM adoption in Saudi Arabian Public Universities**

This study's findings indicate that, alongside the external driver cluster, an internal driver cluster also played a significant role in fostering an increased emphasis on integrating quality values and improvement practices. The results demonstrate a growing inclination among the leadership of public universities to explore the values of TQM to enhance accountability and transparency, manage change, and improve academic and administrative staff members' performance. Figure 6.3 illustrates the internal drivers identified in this study. This section discusses the key findings concerning these three internal drivers that have increased interest in TQM values and practices.



**Figure 6. 3 Internal forces that encourage the incorporation of TQM values in Saudi Arabian public universities**

### **6.3.1 Advancing the Adoption of Quality Values for Greater Transparency in Saudi Universities**

The findings of this study revealed a growing awareness among top-level personnel in Saudi Arabian public universities regarding the significance of adhering to quality values as a means to enhance transparency and instil a sense of responsibility. This awareness has motivated these universities to consider the integration of TQM values within their settings. Of the participants, 65.51% expressed views confirming a consistent emphasis on adopting more TQM values and applications of certain quality measures, resulting in acknowledged responsibilities and transparency. These findings by the current study were corroborated by research studies from the literature such as Iqbal and Asrar-ul-Haq (2018), Oluwafemi and Laseinde (2020), Bendermacher et al. (2019), and Muhammad Din et al. (2021). For instance, Iqbal and Asrar-ul-Haq (2018) and In'airat & Al-Kassem (2014) reported that TQM implementation created a sense of responsibility and enhanced loyalty in workplaces. In a similar fashion, Oluwafemi and Laseinde (2020) postulated that, in the HE sector, developing accountability can be achieved through TQM adoption. Thus, applying TQM concepts in universities can go a long way by reviving the levels of responsibility and enhancing everyday activities. Leaders and

quality developers at the middle-management level (e.g., quality deanships) were aware that through TQM implementation, accountability among academics and non-academic personnel can be advanced. In other words, in addition to perceiving TQM as an approach for enhancing daily activities, the TQM concepts and values philosophy were viewed as a means to revive a sense of responsibility and the level of transparency.

TQM is a managerial approach that emphasises individual empowerment and taking on extra tasks. The current study's findings agree with the findings of Bendermacher et al. (2019), who identified TQM as a reinforcing pillar for increasing employee accountability. The study highlighted that mandating TQM would lead to an increasing number of staff members being entrusted with more responsibilities. The current study further confirms that a big contributor to the advancement of responsibilities in these public universities includes quality-related activities involving the sharing of a wide range of documents combined with the extended disclosure of performance outcomes. Activities such as those involved in generating an SSR, benchmarking and involvement of external assessment such as quality edits were among the quality practices that led to better accountability among staff. Ideally, the SSR document ensured adherence to quality standards as required in the Saudi Arabian HE sector (Education & Training Evaluation 2021). The results of the present study agreed with Aburizaizah (2022), who stated that the SSR is the primary document used to confirm the institution's compliance with certain quality criteria and policies. Further uncovered is a positive correlation between quality practices involved in generating and sharing quality reports, including the SSR and accountability and transparency. Regarding the context of the Saudi HE sector, no study yet has reported a positive correlation between practices involved in generating and sharing quality reports and responsibilities as the current study does.

Quality improvement necessitates the internal sharing of relevant documents between sections across a university for the purpose of checking performance tasks and outcomes against quality standards. According to the findings of the current study, practices involving the sharing and disclosure of performance outcomes have resulted in improving transparency. Khurshid, Amin and Ismail (2018) and Muhammad Din et al. (2021) agree that TQM implementation enhances clarity and full disclosure. Muhammad Din et al. (2021) found the deployment of TQM principles will result in ethical and full disclosure improvements. The training programs on TQM implementation in these universities have improved people's engagement and given them more responsibility to complete quality tasks. Training as a tool for taking responsibility for high-order tasks while implementing TQM was reported by Oluwafemi and Laseinde (2020), Bouranta et al. (2019), and Sadikoglu and Olcay (2014). According to Oluwafemi and Laseinde (2020), staff need more training prior to embarking on TQM implementation because the responsibilities are greater. Sadikoglu and Olcay (2014) similarly stated that the benefits of effective quality training improved a sense of responsibility.

It should be noted that quality designed training, rather than just training, is required to improve the calibre of the workforce in these public universities and advances the sense of responsibility among staff. Attempts are being made internally with support for more quality values and increased quality-related activities to enhance the level of accountability and transparency in these public universities. The next section discusses the findings reported for second internal drivers, the desire for control and enforcing changes.

### **6.3.2 Steering TQM: Consolidating Upper Management Control and Enabling Change**

Although exercising control is not an easy undertaking in a university, the findings showed a rising awareness among these universities' leaders that incorporating more quality standards involving the values of TQM will assist in better rationalisation for exerting control and

legitimising changes. The findings provide evidence that TQM values and initiatives were supported by top management because of the perceived advantages of ‘the establishment of control over process’, ‘facilitating orders acceptance’ and ‘reducing staff’s resistance towards proposed changes’. Of the participants, 89.65% stated that the acceptance of TQM values by leadership and middle management strengthened their grip over processes. Quality-related developments include the official announcements of quality plans, task distribution and methods involved in consistent evaluation, as all contributed to the centralisation of more power at the top and facilitated more control over processes in these public universities. Studies such as AIOqlah (2021), Bendermacher et al. (2017), Bugdol (2020), Rosinawati, Khadijah and Warta (2021), Sułkowski (2019), Tight (2020) and Houston (2007) reported similar results. Perceiving TQM as an enabler for establishing control, facilitating change, and improving the level of acceptance regarding change has resulted in increased attention to consider its values and practices in these Saudi Arabian public universities.

At these public universities, in addition to having a quality system in place, the findings revealed that the intention was also to help make policies and design strategies specifically to give legitimacy to authorities reinforcing change and exercising control over workplace performance, including academic faculties. Bendermacher (2017), Sułkowski (2019) and Rosinawati (2021) reported similar findings and highlighted that one of the most recognised core functions of TQM in the HE sector involves the consolidation of control. For instance, Bendermacher (2017) confirmed that as a result of the formalisation and standardisation of quality management practices, monitoring expanded and control became normalised under the banner of meeting quality standards as required by TQM. Similarly, Rosinawati (2021) stated that the application of TQM in HE could not be separated from one of its essential components, namely emphasising control and legitimised authority for monitoring adherence to quality standards requirements. These statements echoed by those studies in the literature were aligned



with the current study's findings. Sułkowski (2019) reported results that were also in agreement with the present study. Sułkowski (2019) confirmed that TQM can be used to promote power and rationalise control, so the findings of the current study show that TQM is perceived in the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities as a practical way to reinforce power at the top and push change through the system.

Overwhelmingly, participants from the three universities indicated that improvement concerning the proposed changes was attributed to the ability of leadership and quality developers, especially those at the quality deanship level, to link and justify the proposed changes as requirements for improvement. This means academics and non-academic staff in these universities are more inclined to participate in the change process and approve exercises relating to mentoring performance provided these were linked and justified for the sake of meeting quality requirement for improvement. These findings are in line with Houston (2007) who argued that TQM in workplaces results in a specific cause and effect and gives a logical justification for control and participation in making change. Furthermore, the influx of quality standards has had the effect on systemising control on performance in universities. They contributed to narrowing the gap acceptance of change, since these changes were perceived as vital for reaching a quality standard and the relevant objectives. It is, in effect, a way to ensure the compliance of academics and non-academics with the proposed changes. The following discusses the results linked to the final internal driver which contributed to the increase of quality value integration and practices for improvements in these Saudi Arabian public universities.

### **6.3.3 Academic and Administrative Performance Enhancement**

The thematic analysis of the study data revealed that TQM tools, such as the quality matrix, benchmarking and the key performance indicators (KPIs) helped improve the performance of

both academic and administrative staff and enabled faculties and departments to achieve shared quality improvement goals. All participants in this study agreed that the need to meet quality improvement objectives in teaching and managerial performance has led to an increased integration of TQM values and the adoption of quality techniques such as KPIs, benchmarking and various forms of quality matrices. These techniques served to eliminate variations and help in narrowing the discrepancies that can and will occur in performance across a university section. In a workplace environment where males and females are segregated, as is the case in these public universities, emphasising adherence to TQM values and practices can be an effective method to reduce variations and unite efforts to reach common objectives. Many reasons were cited that prompted these public universities to extensively engage with quality tools and adopt more TQM values to improve the quality outputs of teaching and managerial activities and make more informed decisions with the participation of employees, ideally improving communication channels and reducing waste in management. These findings agreed with previous research such as (Irfan et al. 2021; Prakash 2018; Psomas and Antony 2017; Al-Amri et al. 2021; Broshkov et al. 2020; Castro and Frazzon 2017).

According to Irfan et al. (2021), utilising a quality matrix in education highlights the demands of stakeholders and therefore helps in designing and creating education programs to satisfy the expectations of beneficiaries. Similarly, the findings in this study demonstrate that the use of quality matrices assists in ensuring that teaching and learning objectives were accomplished. In addition, the increased use of quality matrices in these HEIs made possible the collection of vast quantities of data, including the perspectives of both teachers and students with respect to their experiences and opinions regarding course content. For course developers and program designers, this data and information enabled them to identify areas where improvement was not evident and evaluate the outputs to be attained from education programs framed on students' requirements. Similar findings to these were echoed by Prakash (2018), Psomas and

Antony (2017), and Sciarelli, Gheith and Tani (2020). For instance, Prakash suggested that TQM tools can assist education institutions in organising resources, constructing student learning, and developing curriculum content to match students' needs. In line with this, Chiarelli, Gheith, and Tani (2020) stated that a successful TQM program is founded on establishing a close relationship to better comprehend and address the needs and complaints of the individuals whom universities are serving. In the three public institutions, participants revealed that since the processes of teaching and learning were brought under the TQM regime, many changes had taken place, namely, control over processes had been strengthened, a strong system that included a feedback loop was built, and an extraordinary shift occurred where the focus was on improving students' learning, meeting their expectations and future demands.

In the Greek HE context, Psomas and Antony (2017) found that TQM as a managerial approach was implemented for strategic quality planning, process management, teaching and operational improvements. According to the same study, the collection of quality data and information associated with developments in the HEIs included information relating to teaching staff experiences, variations in processes and data concerning the desires and expectations of students and other parties. The focus on getting large volumes of data had a significant impact on changes in processes, improved teaching and learning outcomes, and managerial performance. While the current study confirmed similar findings that the data and information gathered as a result of the employment of TQM quality matrices have positively influenced efficiencies at the operational level like teaching activities, such practices have also aided those in executive positions to make informed decisions at executive levels.

Quality improvement techniques such as KPIs and benchmarking were among the most utilised methods in these public universities to ensure improvement in how both academic and administrative staff do their work. These two TQM techniques were reported to have positively

influenced the level of communication efficiency, in addition to improving monitoring processes and synchronising university sections. According to Alamri et al. (2021) and Wahid (2019), KPIs need to show how this tool, as part of TQM, was introduced as an assessment method and universities used them to measure progress and find or fix problems in performance. According to Alamri et al. (2021), institutions that rely on KPIs are more likely to focus on the outcome rather than the process. However, no evidence was discovered in this study to suggest that the use of KPIs in these public universities had altered or deflected the focus away from processes. Conversely, improvements in processes were noted alongside the implementation of KPIs in these Saudi Arabian public universities.

The findings in this study regarding the use of KPIs also aligned with Broshkov et al. (2020) and Aburizaizah (2022), who argued that KPIs enable universities to achieve multiple outcomes, including allowing managers to monitor activities; improving the efficiency of processes; making employees aware of the link between their specific responsibilities and the institution's strategic goals; and highlighting strengths and weaknesses. However, in these public universities, the findings underlined that the processes involved in developing KPIs were guided by the policies of the Ministry of Education and the National Vision 2030. This means that these universities were not at liberty to develop their own KPIs autonomously, reflecting a centralisation of the KPI development process. According to this study's findings, this could pose problems for some universities that lack the necessary human resources, especially since large and older universities have a better chance of dealing with the established KPIs owing to their experience and availability of expertise to carry this out.

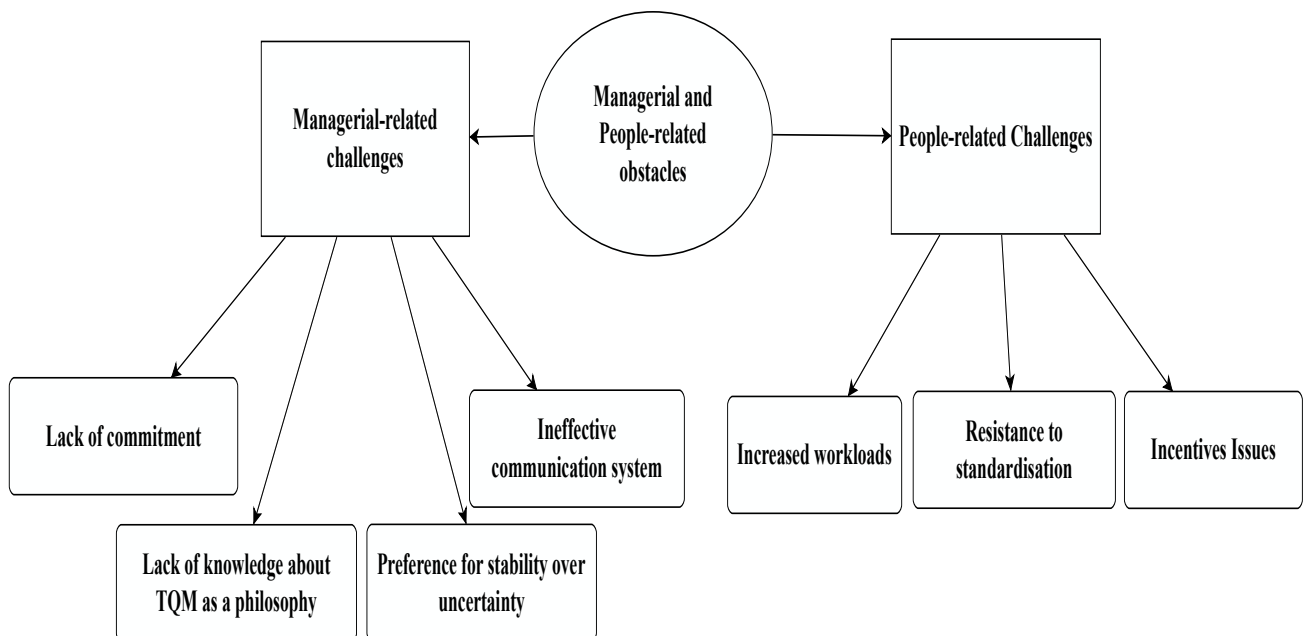
Benchmarking also improved the quality outputs of academic and managerial activities. Castro and Frazzon (2017) agreed with the current study's findings that benchmarking as a quality practice involves a systematic search. In the present study, two types of benchmarking

approaches were explored—internal and external benchmarking tools—noting that quality improvement practices involving benchmarking are a relatively new phenomenon in the Saudi HE sector. Internal benchmarking methods involve strategies conducted by a college, faculty or department with another college or department at the same university. Conversely, external benchmarking methods involve assessing the performance with another university’s college, faculty or department. According to Riad Shams and Belyaeva (2019), developing benchmarking for quality improvements should be built on the shared knowledge of all academic and administrative staff members. This shared knowledge is instrumental in setting a performance target for the following year and ensuring best practice is achieved in both academic and administrative sections. Similarly, a study conducted by Castillo (2020) found benchmarking is one of the best quality practices as it drives institutions to do better and compare what they have, rather than simply improving things without an exemplar. In the context of these public universities, there was a notable presence of this quality practice, aiming to enhance performance and foster cross-university learning. Therefore, for continual quality development at these universities, benchmarking tools encourage such comparable performance. This section has covered the discussion related to the internal quality driver that the current study has revealed. The remainder of this chapter discusses the barriers reported in Chapter 4, including the classified managerial and people-related obstacles in public universities. These two types of obstacles were reported as major contributors to the existing difficulties which make the proper integration of TQM values and practices such hard tasks in these Saudi Arabian public universities.

#### **6.4 Managerial and People-related Challenges to Implementing TQM**

The thematic analysis also resulted in revealing managerial and people-related obstacles, reducing the likelihood of achieving high-level integration of TQM values and practices in these universities. Several obstacles were categorised as managerial challenges, including a

lack of commitment, insufficient knowledge, ineffective communication, a desire to maintain stability, and avoidance of radical change. In addition to these managerial obstacles, there is another group of barriers classified as people-related challenges including concerns about the constantly increasing workloads, resistance to standardisation in an attempt to preserve autonomy and mitigate extensive managerial controls and interventions, and a lack of diversified incentives and rewards, all of which were cited under the people-related challenges as shown in Figure 6.4. In this section, these managerial and people-related obstacles are discussed.

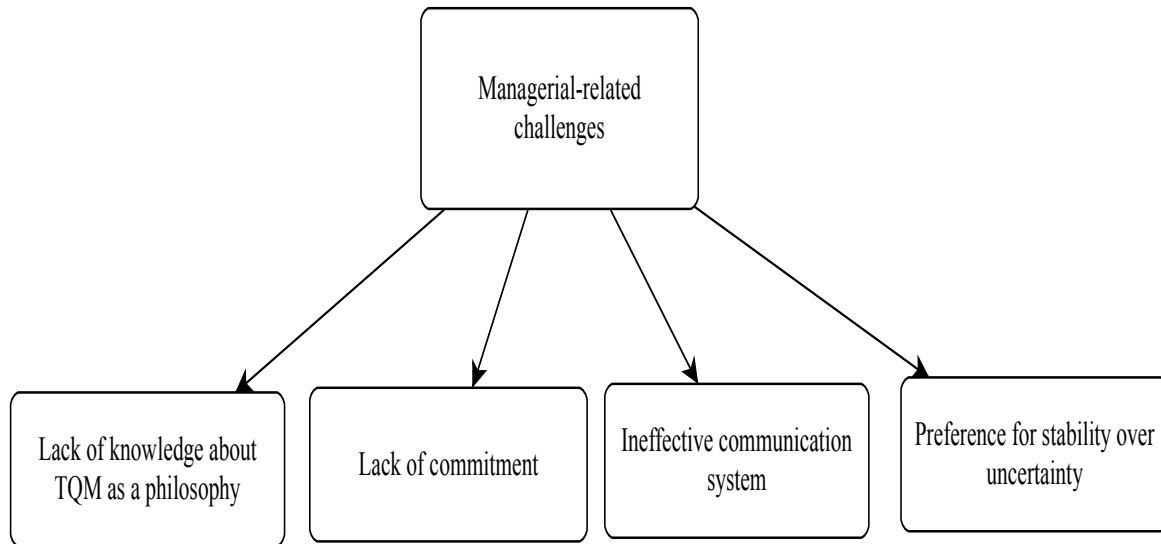


**Figure 6. 4 Managerial and people-related challenges**

#### **6.4.1 Managerial Challenges in TQM Implementation at Saudi Public Universities**

The data analysis has revealed the following management-related challenges (see Figure 6.5): lack of commitment, lack of knowledge about TQM, ineffective communication, and a preference for stability over uncertainty. These issues have been crippling attempts to achieve higher-level integration of TQM values for quality improvements in the chosen Saudi Arabian

public universities. This section discusses these challenges faced by the country's public universities when attempting to adopt TQM values and practices.



**Figure 6. 5 Managerial challenges preventing higher-level integration of TQM values**

#### *6.4.1.1 Inadequate Commitment To Embrace TQM Values*

Lack of commitment was confirmed as one of the obstacles that undermined attempts to achieve the higher-level integration of TQM values in the public universities. Responses from 82.75% of the participants identified inadequacy in the level of commitment to TQM implementation across different hierarchical levels. The findings revealed a lack of commitment by leadership, including Vice-Rectors, Vice-Deans, Deanship Deans and Faculty Deans. Furthermore, a lack of commitment was also found to be evident among lower-level employees, including academic and non-academic staff: teaching and administrative staff in these public universities. Several studies similarly reported a lack of commitment as one of the major barriers faced by education institutions when adopting TQM (Arokiasamy & Krishnaswamy 2021; Belimane & Chahed 2021; Laurett & Mendes 2019; Abubakar, Sighn & Mohammed 2018; Jasti, Venkateswaran & Kota 2021; Ullah et al. 2018; Brinia, Poullou & Panagiotopoulou 2020). In the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities, this lack of

commitment emerged as a major issue that underlined difficulties in achieving smooth integration of TQM values. According to Laurett and Mendes (2019), for the successful adoption of TQM in universities, the effective involvement and commitment by leadership is required.

The findings of this current study agree with the content analysis carried out by Belimane and Chahed (2021), where the lack of management commitment was found to be a major constraint in the universities' acceptance of TQM. Nevertheless, the findings of this current research study revealed an existing scepticism among those at the top of the hierarchy concerning the fit between values and practices applied from the TQM and the objectives of public education institutions. What is evident is the insufficient support for quality improvement initiatives by those at the top. In other words, the inability to conceptualise the fit of TQM in the HE has somehow discouraged full commitment by leaders to invest in TQM implementation. The findings have revealed scepticism towards the dealing with TQM's values as they consistently stress the need for changes. These findings are supported by Abubakar, Sighn and Mohammed (2018), Arokiasamy and Krishnaswamy (2021), Jasti, Venkateswaran and Kota (2021), and Ullah et al. (2018). Arokiasamy and Krishnaswamy (2021) attributed the lack of commitment to TQM to the sceptical attitudes of leaders in universities and whether it was actually relevant to workplaces in these institutions. For Abubakar, Sighn and Mohammed (2018), not enough knowledge about how TQM works in accordance with the universities' objectives marked the decline in commitment by institutional leaders to TQM. Therefore, the inability or difficulty to define how the values, practices and languages of TQM philosophy apply to public universities hindered belief in the strategy for quality development. These findings agree with results of studies such as those by Cruickshank (2003), Jasti, Venkateswaran and Kota (2021) and Ullah et al (2018).



Several challenges have contributed to a lack of decisive support for TQM values in these Saudi Arabian public and non-profit universities. Among the major challenges, the current study findings have highlighted the intangibility of outcomes and the difficulty of associating marketing principles, which emphasise the need to satisfy customers for profit motives in business, with knowledge creation in these public and non-profit universities. According to Sunder (2016), universities do not operate like other industries because they have far more social responsibilities and learning does not necessarily mean having to compete with others in a business sense. Houston (2007) echoes that although removing variations in processes and maintaining compliance is regarded as a positive indicator of quality improvement in industries, in universities, a primary objective is to encourage diversity and uniqueness in what is learnt, not conformity.

In the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities, TQM is a fairly new phenomenon (Mohammed, Ali & Abdulaziz 2016) and is still quite controversial. The findings of the current study indicate that leaders in these universities expressed concerns regarding the implementation of TQM in workplaces. These concerns revolve around the potential increase in expenditure associated with advancing TQM, as well as the extended period of waiting required to evaluate if the desired outcomes are achieved. Furthermore, anticipation involved a perceived increase in workplace complexity during the adoption of TQM values and the application of quality tools within these universities settings was underlined by the findings of this research study. These findings were consistent with (Jasti, Venkateswaran and Kota 2021; Jasti et al. 2021; Sitalakshmi 2007) which highlight similar concerns among decisions-makers when it comes to TQM adoption. The conceptual problems associated with the views of TQM as a cause for creating complexity in the workplace and increasing spending have resulted in a lack of support by leaders of public universities. Nasim, Sikander and Tian (2020) and Martínez-Gómez, Jabaloyes Vivas and Carrión García (2020) reported that the application of

the TQM philosophy is a complex task and will not be effective if it does not have the support of leadership.

Therefore, for successful integration to occur, the findings suggest that leaders must communicate their commitment to TQM values through the strategic plans of these public universities. These necessities tackle the negative perceptions about TQM adoption by developing quality training programs given by quality experts and targeting the development of leadership's understanding and skills for dealing with TQM implementations. By increasing quality development training programs, individuals will be able to acquire the technical skills necessary for handling quality-related duties, which will increase the positive responses and employee dedication toward quality development. These findings are supported by Bolatan and Akgul (2019) and Oschman (2017). They reported that improving understanding and linking the integration of TQM with SP in organisations will provide a pathway for organisations to be successful.

Most studies in the literature assert that organisations employ TQM to reduce process costs, but this notion is viewed differently in these Saudi Arabian institutions. In contrast, the findings of the current study revealed a growing concern among leaders that implementing TQM may result in higher spending without the actual realisation of cost reductions. This finding is consistent with Zabadi (2013), who suggests that there is still a traditional belief that by adopting TQM to upgrade quality in organisations, costs will only increase. This preconception has resulted in reluctant leaders engaging in TQM in the Saudi Arabian public university context. Therefore, to ensure sufficient support for the smooth integration of TQM values in these public universities' systems, the costs involved for such adoption must be addressed and justified to pave the way for TQM support in the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities.

#### *6.4.1.2 Lack of Awareness Regarding the Underpinning Components of TQM Philosophy*

The current study found problems originating from the lack of understanding of the TQM philosophy in the contexts of these public universities as a significant barrier. In total, 68.59% of the participants provided diverse responses, underlining a lack of knowledge specifically cited as a major impediment to implementing TQM's values to improve quality in these public universities. Hence, TQM is primarily viewed as a method that has been brought to the fore to strengthen and legitimise control in an attempt to meet specific quality standards. Studies from the literature such as (Samsudin, Jalil & Ibrahim 2017; AIOqlah 2021; Bouranta, Psomas & Pantouvakis 2017; Sitalakshmi 2007) similarly highlighted the inadequacy of knowledge concerning TQM as a fundamental issue that has crippled attempts by institutions to come to grips with TQM and weakened the momentum required for the adoption of its values and practice.

AIOqlah (2021) investigated the challenges related to TQM implementation and statistically, with the highest means value of (3.67), reported a lack of adequate understanding of TQM is a major obstacle in universities. The findings of this current research study are consistent with the result of AIOqlah (2021), where the lack of awareness about the meaning of the TQM philosophy was reported as a detrimental factor. These findings align with Sitalakshmi (2007), who stated that the lack of understanding of the TQM philosophy is a significant challenge for any education institution that endeavours to improve quality and make the related changes. Another study by Samsudin, Jalil and Ibrahim (2017) provided supporting evidence by identifying a lack of knowledge as one of the key reasons underlying TQM failure in organisations. These conclusions are consistent with the current study's findings, which found that insufficient knowledge leads to shortfalls in successful TQM adoption and application. Therefore, understanding the TQM philosophical foundation and practices is pivotal to its success in the university sector.

The findings of this study revealed that quality initiatives aimed at development in public universities were occasionally abandoned, primarily because of a failure to realise the anticipated benefits. The decision to abandon these initiatives was often made by senior officials at these public universities who perceived early complexities and signs of potential failure, coupled with prolonged waiting periods for the desired outcomes to materialise. Samsudin, Jalil and Ibrahim (2017) found similar results in that a lack of sufficient knowledge about the TQM philosophy resulted in difficulties in achieving desired objectives and, as a result, led to the abandonment of its adoption and application in institutions. In these Saudi Arabian public universities, the knowledge gaps, unreasonable expectations, and a lack of long-term planning were all cited as factors contributing to abandoning quality initiatives and programs. According to Mohammad Mosadeghrad (2013), adapting and institutionalising TQM requires improving people's real understanding of the philosophy. Similar findings were echoed by Álvarez Santos, Miguel-Dávila and Nieto Antolín (2018) and Fredriksson and Isaksson (2018), who highlighted the significance of awareness in ensuring the successful adoption of the philosophy on institutions.

As in many developing countries, the most popular view of TQM in Saudi public universities is that TQM is a controlling and monitoring strategy. However, according to Sohel-Uz-Zaman, Kabir and Osman (2020), TQM is not simply a mechanistic approach to ensure conformity rather it is a philosophy of continuous improvement, but this level of understanding was found to be lacking in the context of these public universities. Thus, leaders need to understand TQM beyond perceiving it solely as a tool for controlling and overseeing workplace processes. In other words, it should be viewed within the framework given its varying orientations related to conceptualisation, measurement, and control. This suggestion was supported by Gomes, Small and Yasin (2019) and Bouranta, Psomas and Pantouvakis (2017). Both studies called for tackling perception-related shortfalls in viewing TQM and to consider all TQM aspects as they

are adopted by organisations. Thus, pursuing a comprehensive acceptance of all TQM aided by leadership support, these universities will likely overcome problems resulting from the lack of understanding of how to achieve quality improvement objectives.

The findings of the current research study further revealed that the random hiring of individuals with no prior expertise or knowledge of quality management has undermined the adoption and implementation of TQM philosophy in the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities. In most cases, the workforce lacks skills and experience in handling quality improvement tasks, such as designing and executing plans, mentoring processes and evaluating their own personal progress and completion of tasks. Dilawo and Salimi (2019) and Mosadeghrad (2014) agreed that engaging quality experts who have experience in delivering training programs can enhance employees' understanding of TQM and how people should work with it. Thus, a full-time quality manager (Mosadeghrad 2014) is required to make this implementation possible. The occurrence of errors during the handling of quality tasks for development was noted by Dilawo and Salimi (2019) and was attributed to inexperienced employees charged with quality improvement tasks. The findings of these studies align with the results of this thesis, highlighting the prominent challenge arising from the scarcity of experts with a complete grasp of a TQM in both theoretical and practical domains. The understanding deficiency, accompanied by a lack of knowledgeable individuals, has considerably hindered the effective adoption of TQM philosophy, values, and practices within these Saudi Arabian public universities, and further complicated successful implementation.

#### *6.4.1.3 Communication Issues Undermine Success in Adopting TQM Values and Practices*

The findings of this study highlight issues stemming from gender segregation and incompatibility of the language used by TQM, thereby diminishing the efficiency required in communication to ensure successful adoption. Elicited responses from nearly 94% of the

participants have led to the identification of the challenges encountered when communicating TQM values and practices with the aim of enhancing quality in the setting of these Saudi Arabian public universities. One prevalent challenge pertains to the utilisation of specific TQM terminologies which has emerged as a recurring obstacle, posing difficulties in the adoption of this philosophy within these universities' settings. Additionally, gender segregation was identified as a unique barrier that affected the speed and efficiency required in communication concerning the articulation of TQM values and practices in these public universities. Section 5.4.2 discusses the findings concerning the issues of language and gender separation influenced the efficacy of communications required for TQM successful adoption in the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities.

#### *6.4.1.4 Incompatibility Issues Related to the Use of TQM Language in Workplaces in Public Universities*

The study data revealed a struggle in these public universities to find compatibility between the terminologies brought in and used from TQM and the nature of the work done in public universities. Key concepts for quality improvements promoted by TQM, such as customer satisfaction, performance measurement and control, have been perceived as incompatible with the work environment in these educational institutions, creating complexity and misunderstood objectives in communicating concepts for ensuring quality such as those drove from TQM philosophy. Concepts driven by TQM, as found by Avila (2018) were not uniformly applicable in all contexts, and its language sounds strange in the HE context (Carothers 2018). Some studies confirmed similar findings, where complexity was evident in efforts trying to transfer TQM language and practices into HE owing to the different natures of the working environment in these institutions and other industries where TQM values and practices were originally developed (Tomažević, Seljak & Aristovnik 2016; Sunder M & Antony 2018; Lust, Huber & Junne 2019; Jasti, Venkateswaran & Kota 2021; Sunder M 2016).

TQM is well known as a customer-oriented approach, with its core message focusing on people's needs. This core philosophical concept related to meeting customers' needs and expectations has emerged as a challenging concept when dealing with TQM implementation in these Saudi Arabian public universities. This finding by the current study was collaborated by studies in the literature such as those by carried out by Sunder and Antony (2018) and Tomažević, Seljak and Aristovnik (2016), who similarly highlighted that in HEIs, the definition of the customer and striving to meet their satisfaction as dictated by TQM poses a challenging task and complexity in quality development. In the university sector, the term 'customer' is far more complex and difficult to understand (Tomažević, Seljak & Aristovnik 2016). Similarly, Sunder and Antony (2018) found that categorising customers and the relationships that govern their interaction in universities was very different and more complicated than in the manufacturing and services sectors. Given that customers in the HE sector include students, faculties, managerial staff, parents, employers, the government and society, these public universities have a larger customer base. Consequently, a much broader consumer base creates complexity in the attempt to accommodate all people's needs and expectations and makes it difficult to practically relate to such complicated value. According to the current study findings , the TQM language addressing these customers' diverse demands and expectations has resulted in challenges in communicating TQM values and practices in these public Saudi Arabian universities.

In addition, the data revealed existing difficulties in measuring outcomes and establishing further control at these universities. In workplaces in these Saudi Arabian universities, a heavy focus on measures and control proved to be problematic. For instance, academics regarded TQM values such as those that emphasise the need for control, as conflicting with the fundamental values of these universities. These finding are aligned with Carothers (2018) who stated that the reinforcement of statistical process controls sounds like a hostile attempt to take

over academic autonomy. Therefore, attempting to impose more controls may result in less collaboration in disseminating TQM values and practices in universities as in response to this, academics might organise a lobby to challenge, reject, and delegitimise quality managers' attempts to enforce their authority, resulting in more complexity and hardship in integrating the core values and practices of the TQM philosophy for improvement in these public universities. These findings were consistent with Green (2012) and Sunder M (2016) who also noted that difficulties in adopting quality values and practices such as those promoted by the TQM philosophy stemmed from using such unfamiliar language and struggling to see the compatibility between the terminology originated by the philosophy and the workplace environment.

The increase in standardisation in measuring performance at these universities through the use of TQM methods and tools was also found to be a challenging issue. The data showed that, at these universities, there was a lack of confidence in the practicality and appropriateness of the tools derived from TQM to measure the performance outcomes owing to the intangibility of outcomes. Thus, people were not fully collaborating and actively engaged in the processes involving the measurement of performance and outcomes. Jasti, Venkateswaran and Kota (2021), Latif et al. (2019) and Sunder (2016) highlighted similar findings where the tasks involving outcome measurements pose challenges for TQM in education institutions. These studies attributed such challenges to the intangible nature of the outcomes in educational institutions. Thus, even if some methods and tools have been successfully applied to measure outcomes, universities must do more than follow suit by directly and similarly employing these tools taken from business to measure what appears to be intangible service outcomes.



#### *6.4.1.5 Communication Issues Arising from Gender-Segregated Departments*

The findings have further unfolded issues that have complicated communication processes as a result of longstanding gender segregation practices. It was reported that there is a reluctance to remove barriers in communication between male and female departments owing to religious and cultural considerations. According to the ethics of Islam, males and females are kept separate, and communication between men and women is limited in Saudi HEIs (Elyas & Picard 2013; Abalkhail 2017). For this reason, there are separate campuses for male and female students. Therefore, quality is managed and overseen independently at these public universities; quality improvements are managed by female employees on female campuses and departments, while male employees supervise and manage quality on male campuses and departments. Therefore, the interaction between women and men in the workplace is very constrained and restricted. The findings of this study verified the difficulties in obtaining proper department-to-department communication, delays in sharing a completed quality report, and a significant amount of time wasted on correcting errors involving aligning and combining quality works across units and departments in one integrated report. In these universities, gender segregation causes issues in relation to communication systems and quality improvements.

Given the constraints imposed by religious teaching and cultural conventions, there was reluctance to promote communication between male and female staff and faculty members at these institutions. Pursuing more active engagements that conform with TQM core values, such as total involvement and open communication, did not resonate with the cultural norms of these public universities. Following religious and customary norms, active communication between men and women at Saudi universities is discouraged for Islamic conventions on morality (Abalkhail 2017; Barry 2019). Total engagement and effective communication between people across units and departments were highlighted in the literature as prerequisites for the

successful implementation of TQM (Glaveli, Vouzas & Roumeliotou 2021; Mosadeghrad 2014). However, the findings by this study revealed caution exists in breaking down communication barriers between men and women. The separation between the genders has necessitated the establishment of units and programs, and the equitable design of work tasks to ensure the same goals were given to both male and female sections in an endeavour to ensure the delivery of similar quality outcomes. This in itself has enlarged the administrative structure of universities and, as a result, complicated how faculties, divisions and departments work with each other, resulting in the downgrade of communications efficiency in across collage and departments in these public universities. Balamurugan (2021) found that TQM was successful in an organisation as long as it had a flexible and less hierarchical structure. Similarly, García-Bernal and García-Casarejos (2014) argued that TQM is non-hierarchical as it offers a process for decisions being made that do not necessarily reflect the traditional chain of command.

Another noteworthy finding was the delay in sharing data and information around quality improvement initiatives and activities. According to the study findings, the discrepancy between male and female departments in sharing and receiving regular quality reports on time was related to a lack of active communication. Employees must work together to achieve the agreed quality improvement objectives (Mohammad Mosadeghrad 2014). Similarly, Fotopoulos and Psomas (2010) discovered that a lack of data quality management and effective employee participation and communication affects quality efforts and practices. The current study's findings were found to support the results by other research studies in the literature which argued that to improve quality development through TQM, collaboration between people across departments needs to be improved. For example, Ishijima et al. (2020) emphasised the significance of consistency and timing in sharing data and knowledge on best practices and encouraging feedback. According to the same study, this improves peer-learning techniques when working on quality improvements. The current study's findings were

consistent with Ishijima et al. (2020), as regular data and information exchange between male and female departments will ensure a better and more advanced understanding and will keep everyone up to date regarding the initiatives and activities being carried out. Sharing quality data and information regularly will allow quality developers to detect faults earlier in the process rather than later. However, this would require a change to the status quo in communication in these public universities with a focus on reducing the barriers resulting from gender separation practices to encourage people to become actively connected and engaged, including male and female quality developers across colleges and department in the process of quality development.

#### *6.4.1.6 Adopting TQM Promotes Concerns About Uncertainty, Fear of Instability and Loss of Control*

The study's findings revealed that leaders were inclined to retain stability, avoid disruptions in the processes, fear uncertainties with exposure to continual changes, and avoid losing control if others are empowered as mandated by TQM values and practices. Of the study participants, 89.65% of responses identify fear of instability and loss of control as impediments complicating the adoption of TQM values and practices in these public universities. Fear of change, embarrassment avoidance or 'loss of face' and other people's empowerment undermine control by the authorities. The data show that leaders in these public institutions did not fully support the adoption of TQM values and practices. Instead, they took a cautious approach towards the widespread application of TQM values and practices to avoid major disruptions that would undermine control and weaken their authority. Many research studies have reported similar findings where the concept of TQM caused fear as it encourages radical change, cultural transformations, new centres of power/authority, etc. (Andrade, Mendes & Lourenço 2017; Bugdol 2020; Ullah et al. 2017; Jasti, Venkateswaran & Kota 2021; Jasti, Venkateswaran & Kota 2022).

According to Andrade, Mendes, and Lourenço (2017), TQM requires systemic changes in management practices, such as redesigning work, redefining managerial roles, restructuring organisational structures and objectives for improvements. Thus, the values and practices of TQM were viewed as potential threats to the stability and control at these Saudi Arabian public universities. In a highly centralised context such as these public universities, philosophies promoting significant change, empowerment and the widespread adoption of cultural reforms, such as the values pioneered by TQM, were not warmly welcomed. On the contrary, the findings of the current study revealed that leaders in these institutions were more cautious about TQM and less supportive for its value integration. Bugdol (2020) stated that implementing TQM causes an increasing fear that can be even further intensified if the scope of change is too difficult to keep under control. The current study's findings agree with Bugdol (2020), as the rhetoric by TQM frequently which emphasises the need for constant change triggered fear of uncertainty among decision-makers.

The fear of radical change induced by TQM can be attributed to the hierarchical structure of these Saudi Arabian universities, which is a highly centralised system. Smith and Abouammoh (2013) and Onsman (2010) highlight that the Saudi education system traditionally adheres to a top-down administrative bureaucracy, emphasising centralisation to ensure stability and maintain control. Consequently, theories and values that promote radical change and power delegation, such as those derived from TQM, may be perceived as disruptive forces. For this reason, senior managers in these universities were keen to mitigate the potential effects of values and practices that might cause major disruptions in the process such as those values which stem from the philosophy of TQM, thereby limiting its widespread adoption and practice. Similar findings were found in the study conducted by Galyani, Moghaddam, and Moballegghi (2008), which reported that managers in institutions utilising a top-down approach fear disruptions and a loss of control. Consequently, institutionalising ideologies for quality

development such as those associated with TQM results in hesitancy as requirements for change and establishing a new culture clash with the fear of disruption, loss of control and the rise of uncertainty.

Research studies conducted by van Kemenade and Hardjono (2019) and Mosadeghrad (2014) emphasised that the establishment of a robust quality culture, reinforced by proactive leadership teams, assumes paramount significance in facilitating the effective assimilation of TQM values and techniques. These scholars underscored the indispensability of the role played by top management in guaranteeing the seamless and successful incorporation of TQM into organisational processes and operations. In the same way, Bendermacher et al. (2017) recommended the development of a quality culture and advised a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches when dealing with TQM issues. The findings documented in these studies were in keeping with the results reported in this thesis, which encourages the development of a quality culture in these public universities with both top-down and bottom-up collaborations to integrate TQM values and enhance its practices in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities. The research findings unveiled the significant impact of embarrassment avoidance on the extent of participation and the lack of receptiveness to adopting TQM values and practices. This issue stemmed from anxiety surrounding the possibility of committing errors during quality improvement efforts, which had the potential to reflect negatively on the managerial standing and reputation of top-level individuals. Consequently, the fear of exposure to broader criticism, particularly from failing to achieve quality objectives, acted as a deterrent, undermining the enthusiasm for embracing TQM values and practice. Supportive evidence of these findings was found in previous studies such as those by Deming (1986) and Bugdol (2020), which highlighted that anxieties and the fear of failure in organisations were obstacles to quality improvement initiatives including TQM value adoption. Deming (1986), for instance, in his comprehensive book entitled *Out of the Crisis*,

reported that embracing TQM methods could generate anxieties and fear of embarrassment because it involved complexity and long-term commitment. In the same way, Bugdol (2020) reported that fear of failure and embarrassment in dealing with quality development will result in leaders being reluctant to undertake an active role in quality improvements initiatives and practices.

People and particularly those in senior positions at these public universities assume there will be a high probability of errors in quality tasks. As a result, there was a propensity to avoid full engagement in encouraging initiatives set for quality development using TQM techniques. Such attitudes by leaders were more likely to be taken to avoid subjecting themselves to blame and criticism for poor quality outcomes. Similar findings by studies in the literature underlined embarrassment avoidance as a barrier to successful TQM implementation (Andrade, Mendes & Lourenço 2017; Wong, Woo & Woo 2016). These studies acknowledged the impact of hesitancy and the fear of embarrassment as factors that negatively hinder the successful integration of quality values and practice for improvement. Thus, the importance of eradicating a blame-and-shame culture and promoting a tolerant one cannot be ignored, as highlighted by the current study, as crucial step in advancing TQM values and practice in these Saudi Arabian public universities. These findings were supported by research studies in the literature such as (Godfrey et al. 1997; Naser Alolayyan, Anuar Mohd Ali & Idris 2011; Raza 2016; Purwanto 2016; Soltani & Wilkinson 2020).

Godfrey et al. (1997) and Naser Alolayyan, Anuar Mohd Ali and Idris (2011) stressed the need to remove the culture of blame from the workplace to allow more quality initiatives and pave the way for improvement. Similarly, Purwanto (2016) stated that institutions should develop a culture which is tolerant of errors as result of trying out new things and risking failure. Indeed, shifting from a traditional approach where the focus is mainly on monitoring, controlling, and

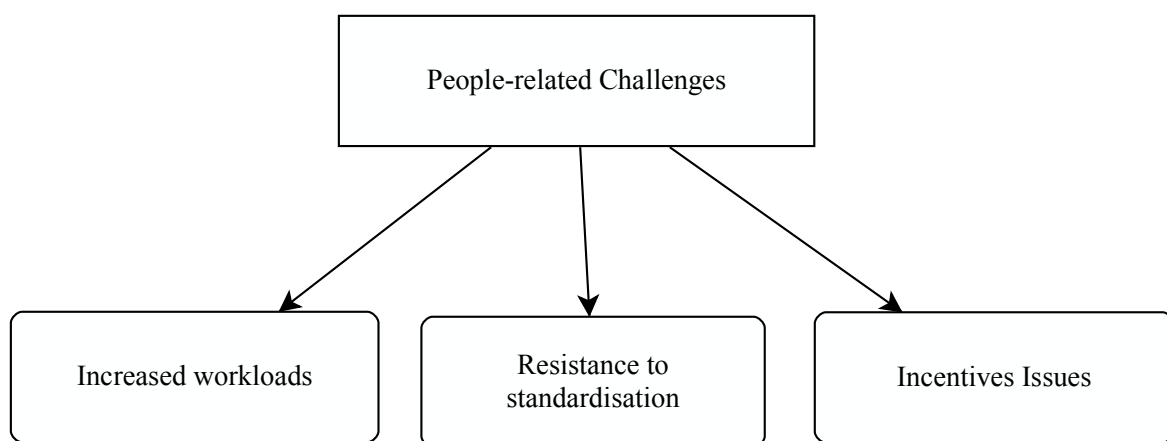
intimidating to promoting a culture that is tolerant to errors and mistakes is essential for embarking on the TQM vehicle. Thus, in the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities, creating a tolerant culture could yield mass participation in quality improvement initiatives, and enhance efficiency and drive fear out as advised by TQM gurus. Empowerment was another issue faced when adopting TQM values and practices in these universities. According to Alhwairini and Foley (2012), TQM implementation is commonly acknowledged to be a transition from focusing on management to offering value to employees by involving and empowering them. Similarly, Andrade, Mendes, and Lourenço (2017) noted that TQM empowers individuals by delegating more tasks and responsibilities traditionally held by senior staff members. These facts about TQM as the driving force for empowering others were found to not resonate well in these public universities; they were found to be problematic for the leadership, threatening the loss of grip and undermining their authorities.

The findings revealed that leaders resist delegating power prescribed by the TQM philosophy. Decentralisation of power means a loss of control and emboldens others to seek promotion for themselves up the hierarchical ladder. According to the study data, the relaxation of centralised power or authority through more delegation was perceived as an ingredient for undermining those at the top and changing the nature of control in institutions. These findings were consistent with those of Banuro, Ntiri-Ampomah and Banuro (2017) and Bugdol (2020). When significant power is delegated and employees are given power and authority, their behaviours change either for good or for bad (Banuro, Ntiri-Ampomah & Banuro 2017); they may deviate from the strategy established by management and use delegated power for their own personal gain. Bugdol (2020) highlighted empowerment as the component of TQM which triggers the leadership's fear of losing control, and as result, they are growing reluctant to accept the empowerment of others and embrace values to demolish centralisation and undermine their

authority. The following section discusses the findings related to the second cluster of challenges, which are people-related challenges.

#### **6.4.2 People-related Challenges Facing Universities in Implementing TQM.**

The data analysis revealed that an increase in workloads, resistance to standardisation and a lack of incentives are the people-related challenges that have hindered participation in quality improvement activities, thereby limiting the seamless integration of TQM values and practices in these Saudi Arabian public universities (see Figure 6.6). These types of challenges were weakened the level of involvement by individuals who hold a non-managerial role, but their contributions are prerequisites for meeting quality objectives in these public universities. These identified challenges were found to have negative impacts on the level of involvement and contributions made by those non-managerial individuals, which were prerequisites for attaining quality objectives within these public universities. Unlike the preceding managerial-related challenges, these barriers exist among those who do not necessarily have important administrative positions. This section discusses the main findings associated with these identified obstacles.



**Figure 6. 6 People-related challenges**



#### *6.4.2.1 Increasing the Workload*

The study findings unveiled a significant increase in the workload assigned to employees in public institutions because of the rise in quality-related activities and demands in these public universities. The responses of 86% of the participants confirmed that, as a result of increased quality improvement activities and requirements, academic and administrative personnel are coming under substantial pressure to cope with the quality demands and addressing requirements for change in their workplaces. The findings confirmed an overwhelming feeling caused by the additional quality tasks that have become mandatory practices impacting an employee's willingness and level of commitment to participate in what they perceive as a time-consuming and unproductive exercise. Several studies have reported similar findings where the requirements associated with TQM implementation have resulted in increased workloads and consequently affected the degree of employee commitment and willingness to engage in the process of quality improvement (Bendermacher et al. 2017; Dilawo & Salimi 2019; Sim et al. 2022; Eryılmaz et al. 2016; Shokry & Soliman 2016).

The current study's findings align with those of Bendermacher et al. (2017) and Dilawo and Salimi (2019), which confirmed that changes in workload experienced by employees in organisations adopting TQM have resulted in unfavourable sentiments. These studies indicated that employees' workloads have increased owing to their additional responsibilities since quality enhancements have become an integral part of the daily work. Sim et al. (2022) and Bertillo, Julius, and Lacambra (2017) also found that the implementation of TQM leads to increased workloads within organisations. This, in turn, elicits negative reactions from employees towards TQM values and practices because of the considerable time and effort required to fulfil its demands. Such demands include activities like documenting processes and conducting regular performance evaluations to ensure adherence to quality development objectives and identify any deviations in outcomes. The present study's findings align with

those of Sim et al. (2022), which discovered that universities workers, particularly academic staff were facing significant pressure and increased workloads because of the growing demands for quality and CI initiatives. Practices involved with the handling quality-related tasks has certainly contributed to the mounting workload experienced by academics in public universities. As a result, academics found it challenging to balance teaching tasks with quality-related responsibilities. Therefore, participating in quality improvements was perceived by academics as a burden on their time and career progression, including improving teaching skills, conducting research and publishing. These findings were similar to those results echoed by studies in the literature, such as those of Shokry and Soliman (2016) and Mahbub (2017).

Shokry and Soliman (2016) conducted research that unveiled constant change and increased workloads as significant barriers to adopting TQM. Consequently, personnel tend to resist devoting substantial amounts of time to performing quality-related tasks and grappling with the complexities associated with utilising improvement tools. Building upon these findings, Mahbub (2017) suggested that one possible solution to address this resistance is to reduce the teaching workloads of academics involved in quality administrative work. The suggestion put forth by the present research study aligns with Mahbub's (2017) proposition, emphasising that establishing reasonable workloads can effectively mitigate resistance towards engagement in quality development within public universities. McDermott et al. (2022) and Mohammad Mosadeghrad (2014) also observed that implementing TQM increases demands and pressure on the already heavy workloads of employees. In light of this, providing academics with a reasonable teaching workload seems imperative to enable them to effectively focus on quality improvement in addition to their academic tasks and ensuring their long-term commitment towards development practices. Mosadeghrad (2014) recommended that managers should strive to establish a well-balanced work schedule for employees to reduce job stress resulting from quality demands.

These recommendations align closely with the findings of the current study in underscoring the importance of reducing workplace stress and making efforts to balance workloads to create an environment conducive to maintaining employee engagement and dedication to quality objectives. In the context of quality management in the female divisions of Saudi Arabian public universities, this study uncovered a notable discrepancy between female and male staff in coping with the increasing workload intensity and quality tasks. The findings revealed that female staff encountered more challenges and experienced a higher intensity of increased workloads compared with their male counterparts. Remarkably, no previous studies have reported similar findings, highlighting the significance of this discovery. The observed difference can be attributed to two key factors: a shortage of human capital and a lack of specialised training programs tailored to the needs of the female divisions in effectively managing quality demands. Consequently, the substantial amount of paperwork involved in quality reporting and evaluation documentation has overwhelmed female staff, impeding their ability to adapt to the evolving demands and heightened quality requirements present in these public universities. This previously unnoticed gender-based variation underscores the importance of providing targeted support and allocating the necessary resources to address the unique challenges faced by female staff in relation to the issue of workloads in these public universities.

The rise in workloads resulting from demands for quality improvement initiatives in these institutions has led to resentful feelings among academic and non-academic staff towards TQM values and practices. Therefore, ensuring collective engagements and sustaining long-term commitment from employees to TQM values and practices is quite challenging, as there is a perception that activities and initiatives linked to TQM will simply increase those employees' workloads. The following section discusses the findings related to the resistance to

standardisation as another obstacle faced when attempting to adopt values and practices from TQM in these public universities.

#### *6.4.2.2 Resistance to Standardisation*

Resistance to standardisation poses another significant obstacle to achieving high-level integration of TQM values in Saudi Arabian public university systems. The study findings indicate that TQM has been perceived as a technique that promotes ideologies for a greater acceptance of standardisation and authoritarianism in university settings through controlling and monitoring activities by university staff. Studies have shown that adopting TQM practices in universities has been controversial among academics (Cruickshank 2003; Skolnik 2016) because it overlooks institutional diversity and leads to increased administrative interventions. In the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities, implementing a set of quality standards designed to ensure and document quality development might be viewed as tools through which managers seek to extend their power over control. Consequently, employees, especially academics, tend to resist ideologies that promote standardisation, and they become less cooperative in TQM implementation owing to suspicions regarding managerial authority and interference with academic autonomy and freedom. Research studies from the literature have yielded similar results where resistance to standardisation was underlined as a major barrier to the adoption of TQM values and practice (Lucas 2017; Tight 2020; Jasti, Venkateswaran & Kota 2021; Carothers 2018; Ullah et al. 2018).

Lucas (2017) found in his research that academics in UK universities resist quality initiatives because they promote a standardisation regime that could significantly alter academic work, restricting autonomy and freedom and challenging established academic values. Similarly, Ullah et al. (2018) observed that academics defend their autonomy and independence, leading them to oppose proposed procedures, such as quality standards emphasising compliance and

monitoring. The findings of Lucas (2017) and Ullah et al. (2018) were consistent with the current study's findings, confirming academic dissatisfaction and concerns regarding the constant emphasis of and increase in standardisation in workplaces. The findings of this current revealed that academics fear excessive intrusion by managerial staff into academic affairs. Therefore, promoting standardisation in the workplace is predominantly perceived by academic staff in these universities as a focus to ensure compliance, with less direct enhancement to the curriculums and limited benefits for developing teaching and research skills. These findings align with Brady and Bates (2015), which similarly stated that academics view the promotion of standards for quality development as a mechanistic approach primarily aimed at improving surveillance rather than teaching and learning activities and outcomes. Suspicion among academics regarding the transformative effect of standardisation on teaching, learning, and research activities hampers collaboration in the context of these Saudi public universities as it is viewed as a means of strengthening managerial control, with TQM granting them more authority for exercising control and monitoring.

These findings coincide with the results of Tight (2020) and Carothers (2018), which confirmed similar findings regarding academic resistance to standardisation was because it strengthens administrative employees grip on control and monitoring. Carothers (2018) found that TQM efforts in universities triggered faculty concerns about the role played by administrative staff, giving them superior managerial roles, including monitoring academic activities. Similarly, Tight (2020) highlighted a widespread loathing among academics towards standardisation, as they are concerned about the rise in managerialism control and consolidation of its power for more intervention. In such circumstances, academics, according to Tight (2020), can mobilise to resist quality standards, creating a challenging path for full TQM implementation. Therefore, TQM in the context of these Saudi public universities was perceived as a managerial tool through which standards are imposed to strengthen the authority of administrative staff and

sustain control and stability. Manatos, Sarrico, and Rosa (2017) similarly found that academics resist concepts that endorse being managed. Their aversion to maintaining quality standards may be justifiable because they threaten academic autonomy and freedom, empowering those responsible for managerial roles.

Manatos, Sarrico and Rosa (2017) echoed results that align with the current findings, illustrating that academics exhibit resistance towards concepts that promote being managed and values advocated for increased managerial monitoring in academics. Academics may view the enforcement of quality standards as a means of empowering individuals in managerial positions, potentially compromising their own autonomy within the academic realm. Consequently, their reluctance to embrace such standards can be viewed as a justifiable response to preserve their academic independence and resist encroachments on their professional freedoms. The findings of Manatos, Sarrico and Rosa (2017) support the current study's results, highlighting that academics demonstrate resistance towards concepts that promote being managed and values that advocate for increased managerial monitoring in academia. Academics may perceive the imposition of quality standards as a way to empower individuals in managerial roles, which could compromise their own autonomy within the academic sphere. As a result, their reluctance to embrace these standards can be considered a justifiable response aimed at preserving their academic independence and resisting infringements on their professional freedoms. The following section discusses the findings related to issues discovered in public universities' reward systems, which present challenges for the proper integration of TQM.

#### *6.4.2.3 Incentives and Rewards Issues Impeding TQM Integration Efforts*

Another obstacle which makes the achievement of the high-level integration of TQM values and practices in these public universities is the inefficiency of handling incentives that promote

individual participation. The current study's findings underline the need for attention to and reform of the reward system with the inclusion of more diverse incentives, including monetary and non-monetary, to motivate more participation and encourage commitment to TQM implementation. Responses obtained from 65.51% of the study participants revealed inefficiencies in incentive management and deficiencies in the functioning of reward systems. These inadequacies hinder the effective alignment of incentives with the diverse needs of employees, which are crucial for motivating their active involvement. The identified shortcomings in managing rewards and handling incentives were found to have adverse effects on the long-term commitment of employees in public universities to adopting TQM values and practices. Studies from the literature such as (Agrawal 2019; Bendermacher et al. 2017; Haffar et al. 2019; Mohammad Mosadeghrad 2014) similarly underlined the importance of incentives for ensuring positive changes in attitudes, enhancing the level of participation and building employees' long-term commitment in institutions to TQM adoption.

According to Sahney (2016) and Al-Khasawneh, Al-Jammal, and Battah (2012), establishing a reward system and ensuring efficiency in diversifying incentives in the education sector are essential functional steps to improve quality through and ensuring successful adoption of TQM values and practices. Studies such as those of Iqbal (2021); Suwandej (2015) and Rehman and Iqbal (2020) emphasised the significance of using incentives and improving the efficiency of reward system functions to shape attitudes, emotions and commitment in workplaces to improvement. According to Iqbal (2021); Suwandej (2015), appropriate incentive programs must be designed to encourage staff and institutions to continue improving their services, while the findings by Suwandej (2015) show that effective incentive programs are essential for motivating staff to become more responsible and to participate. In a similar vein, Glaveli, Vouzas and Roumeliotou (2021) and Mohammad Mosadeghrad (2014) echoed similar statements. For instance, Glaveli, Vouzas and Roumeliotou (2021) conclude in their study that

institutions must effectively deploy an incentive system to encourage employees to support common goals and make quality improvement highlighting recognition and reward for quality as a crucial function for quality development in educational context. Similarly, Mosadeghrad (2014) found that adopting both monetary incentives and non-monetary reward schemes will boost TQM's effectiveness in institutions.

The findings by this current study agree with the aforementioned work on the importance of incentives and the efficiency of the reward system to realise more participation and engagement in quality improvement in these Saudi Arabian public universities. The current study confirmed that the reward system utilising a wide range of incentives, including monetary and non-monetary ones, would assist in changing behaviours and creating attitudes that are more receptive towards TQM values and practices and reinforced a long-term commitment to quality developments in these public universities. These finding were consistent with studies in the literature such as those by Bendermacher et al. (2017), Rehman and Iqbal (2020), and Agrawal (2019). For example, Bendermacher et al. (2017) found that non-monetary incentives such as involving employees in the process of decisions making and making them a part of these decision-making process will improve their level of commitment. Thus, for those Saudi Arabian public universities, employees with non-managerial roles should be encouraged to share their thoughts and be part of the process involved in making decisions in their universities to enhance the sense of belonging and encourage involvement in quality developments. For Rehman and Iqbal (2020), corrective behaviour and an increased commitment entail an effective recognition and reward system in which individuals' efforts are acknowledged when goals are met. In keeping with the current study's results, Agrawal (2019) and Soltani and Wilkinson (2020) similarly found that adopting various types of incentives will potentially influence efforts and will more likely result in positive attitudes in assisting the successful implementation of TQM.



Therefore, a reward system or program that encompasses diverse incentives, both monetary and non-monetary, seems vital in the context of these Saudi Arabian public universities. Agrawal (2019) stated that a diverse approach in employing different types of incentives holds significance in motivating employees to strive for excellent performance and contribute to the meeting of quality improvement objectives and addressing quality standard requirements in institutions. In the context of Saudi public universities, the current study's finding revealed shortcoming in the management of recognition and a lack of diverse incentives which negatively affected the level of commitment to quality improvement. Mosadeghrad (2014, p. 551) stated that for TQM to be successful, 'employee participation in TQM must be recognised, supported and acknowledged'. Hence, obtaining best practice and sustaining long-term commitment necessitates the existence of a non-monetary incentive such as acknowledgement as a vital tool for motivation in addition to other financial incentives.

The findings align with previous studies by Khan, Malik and Janjua (2019) and Haffar et al. (2019), emphasising recognition as a non-monetary incentive for promoting best practice and maintaining employee motivation. Therefore, recognition is a crucial motivator in the workplace, effectively influencing behaviour and fostering active participation in achieving an organisation's quality objectives (Haffar et al. 2019). Similarly, in addition to monetary rewards, Khan, Malik and Janjua (2019) acknowledged recognition as one of the most important practices of TQM within organisations. Thus, to promote a sense of personal benefit from participating in TQM, it seems vital to establish a diverse, transparent and fair reward system that encompasses both monetary and non-monetary incentives. Implementing such a scheme in Saudi Arabian public universities will encourage employees to align their behaviours with TQM values and practices, ultimately resulting in a higher level of involvement in TQM implementation within the context of these public universities.

## **6.5 Summary**

In this chapter, the findings of the current study were discussed with respect to the objectives and research question(s) (see Chapter 1). In this chapter, effort was made to gain a deeper understanding of how the results of the current study connect to the existing knowledge in the field of TQM and to situate the present study within the extant literature in the field. Consequently, the author was able to acquire an in-depth understanding of the factors that prompted these Saudi Arabian public universities to adopt TQM values and practices, as well as identify the challenges faced by these public educational institutions which hinder the high-level integration of TQM philosophy values. Furthermore, throughout this chapter, the author conveyed how the findings of the present research coincided with or differed from the existing literature in the field of TQM philosophy, with a focus being on exploring the philosophy adoption and practices in the HE sector. Chapter 7 provides the study's conclusion and highlights its practical implications. The limitations associated with this research study are acknowledged and suggestions are made for future research studies that can further extend the contribution made by this research study.

## **Chapter 7: Concluding Remarks, Implications, Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

This chapter presents the conclusion of the current study. Section 7.1 reiterates the core insights that emerged from the empirical findings of this qualitative study, addressing the research major question. Section 7.2 outlines the theoretical and practical contributions made by this study. Section 7.3 discusses the study's limitations and provides suggestions for future research to build on the established knowledge, advancing the understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to the adoption of values and practices of the TQM philosophy in universities in the HE sector.

### **7.1 Concluding Remarks**

This qualitative exploratory study was conducted with the primary objective to explore the obstacles and determine the key forces for advancing the incorporation of TQM core values and practices in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities. Therefore, in this study, the researcher strives to address the main research question, "How can Saudi Arabian public universities foster and sustain a quality-oriented culture through the high-level integration of TQM CSFs?" To answer this question, a set of three sub-questions were established (see Chapter One). Thus, the research seeks to achieve a better understanding of how TQM is perceived, thoroughly examining the driving forces that provide opportunities for promoting TQM values, and then exploring in more depth the inherent challenges faced when dealing with TQM values and practices in the context of public universities to pave the way for the proper integration of TQM philosophy values for more sustainable quality development. The empirical findings of the current research study, therefore, have yielded key insights that address the stated research questions and meet the research objective, contributing to the debate in the field of TQM implementation in the university context. First, the study specifically

identified unique drivers which represent opportunities for promoting the introduction of TQM and facilitating more of its value integration in the context of Saudi Arabian universities. Second, the study successfully explored the key challenges experienced when dealing with TQM values and practices for quality improvement in the public university sector. Thus, it is predicted that with pre-understanding of these unique drivers as well as the explored key challenges, leaders and quality developers will be in a better position to make effective plans, reach informed decisions, drive meaningful change, and create a quality-oriented culture through the high-level integration of TQM CSFs in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities.

The empirical findings of the current research study revealed that while values and practices of TQM have been introduced quite some time ago, there are still difficulties in capturing the real essence of its discourse as a management philosophy that aims to optimise every aspect of human and material capital to create a culture focused on continuous quality improvement, particularly in the context of the university sector. The lack of understanding of TQM as a transformative philosophy, and the vagueness surrounding the compatibility of its values with the work environments in educational institutions, along with the weak foundation connecting it with the stated missions and quality efforts, have created difficulties in fully integrating TQM into Saudi Arabian public universities. The prevalent perception of TQM was merely as an instrument for quality control and measurement, with emerging evidence indicating complexity in understanding its applicability and terminologies in the context of non-profit public universities. These insights reinforce prior contributions by studies such as Jasti, Venkateswaran & Kota (2021) and Nasim, Sikander & Tian (2019), highlighting the ongoing challenges with TQM implementation due to a lack of understanding of its full meaning. Hence, to bridge this gap in understanding, the current study joins the calls in the literature for a proper introduction of TQM and the provision of adequate training to overcome the issues

associated with perceptions and to develop a better understanding of its philosophical elements in the context of universities. Specifically, the current study, with its objective of aiding quality developers (quality deanships staff) to lead development processes strategically and effectively in universities, stresses the need to enhance knowledge of TQM's philosophical aspects to change mindsets, attitudes, and mitigate any risk of failure in integrating its values and practices into the university system for quality culture enhancement. Evidence from the findings of the current study has led, thus, to the identification of a set of driving forces which, if leveraged, are likely to enhance knowledge, perceptions, and contribute to the promotion of the seamless integration of TQM values and practices, encouraging more investment in its application in the context of public universities.

The current study offers insights into those identified specific drivers, including a combination of external and internal factors, that have the potential to promote TQM values and practices in public universities. The need for quality accreditation, the requirements set out by the government's Vision 2030 blueprint, and NUL requirements, alongside the necessity to address community expectations, were identified as external drivers that could exert more pressure to increase the adoption of TQM values and practices in these institutions. The imperative role of quality accreditation emerges as a significant driver; if employed effectively, it can pave the way to the increased adoption and implementation of TQM in public universities. The mandates from quality accreditation bodies, such as the NCAAA, solidify the adoption of TQM-recommended values and practices. The study reinforces previous contributions in the literature regarding the critical role of quality accreditation bodies' supervision (Alsaleh 2016; Jamal Al-Lail & Mohamed 2019; Sitalakshmi 2007). In addition, this study has broadened these contributions by emphasising that policies and standards set forth by quality assurance agencies can be refined to align efforts and generate momentum towards the attainment of

shared goals, and promoting the adoption of TQM ideologies and practices, aiming for enhancements in the context of the country's universities.

The study further shows the new demands and expectations set by the National Vision 2030 and NUL are key forces that can instigate shifts in priorities, with a renewed emphasis on improving quality and providing more training to meet the ambitious objectives established by these initiatives. The study also notes the increasing and changing community expectations as a driver reinforcing the integration of TQM values and practices to address these expectations. The current study enriches our understanding and stimulates discussion around TQM as a vehicle for enacting substantial changes to meet the evolving demands and expectations of diverse stakeholders within the context of these non-profit universities. It opens a new perspective on how public and non-profit universities might embrace TQM ideologies, values, and practices to build trust and enhance stakeholder confidence in their programs and services. This suggests that a novel paradigm for managing such institutions could be effectively initiated through the adoption of TQM principles. Additionally, empirical evidence from this study offers fresh insights into a range of internal drivers within the universities themselves, acting as catalysts for a more comprehensive integration of quality initiatives and a growing interest in the adoption of TQM values and practices.

This study has underscored the importance of improving internal accountability and strengthening control and transparency to ensure the delivery of quality outcomes. These internal motivations were identified as pivotal for integrating TQM values and practices within university systems. The literature highlights the benefits of TQM in fostering accountability, enhancing transparency, and strengthening control and monitoring in various professional settings, as noted by researchers such as Oluwafemi and Laseinde (2020), Asrar-ul-Haq (2018), Bendermacher et al. (2019), Laseinde (2020), and Muhammad Din et al. (2021). The empirical evidence from this study further supports these benefits within the context of universities,

especially in centralised education systems like Saudi Arabian public universities. The realisation of these benefits can significantly contribute to the promotion of TQM values and the adoption of practices in the Saudi Arabian university sector. University leaders and managers, who are keen to maintain and strengthen power and control over processes, are likely to welcome these values and tools such as those offered by TQM which stress control and accountability. This is particularly applicable to TQM concepts and metrics that prioritise meticulous monitoring, activity tracking, strict adherence to bureaucratic processes, and systemic performance control. In the context of universities where autonomy is high due to the nature of workplace, the rhetoric of TQM reinforcing control and transparency seems to be of sound of interest for the leadership.

The study expands knowledge on the discussion about the challenges associated with adopting TQM philosophy in university environments. The empirical findings showed two primary types of barriers: managerial and people-related challenges. A thorough understanding of these challenges, as delineated by this study, will aid quality development specialists in devising effective strategies and adopting innovative methods to counteract and mitigate the effects of such obstacles, paving the way for successful integration of TQM values and practices, limiting the risk of failure in adoption and implementation. Managerially, the identified challenges include a lack of commitment, undeveloped knowledge of TQM as a philosophy, poor or ineffective communication stemming from gender and terminological problems and a preference for stability over uncertainty. These major challenges are preventing the high-level integration of TQM values and practices in Saudi Arabian public universities. The insights presented by the current study in relation to these barriers reinforces existing discussion on the challenges faced when adopting TQM in organisations. Empirically, this study provides more in-depth details into these barriers to ensure an adequate understanding. The study shows a lack of commitment as a major barrier to the successful integration of TQM and determines

the causes behind this hurdle across different managerial levels. Operationally, it confirms faculty and staff concerns that TQM leads to increased stress and a realignment of priorities—often at the cost of essential activities such as teaching, research, working on new publications, and the complexity of managing and dealing with forced quality standards. Strategically, the study highlights a reluctance from the top to invest heavily in and embrace TQM due to uncertainties about its suitability for public educational institutions, increased costs, and challenges to maintaining established hierarchies amid TQM-driven changes (stability). These circumstances have led to hesitant attitudes by leaders and cautious staff toward engaging with TQM and the avoidance of quality initiatives at different levels in these institutions. The study, therefore, contributes to understanding why engagement (staff) and support (leaders) were lacking in advancing TQM adoption and implementation in public universities. Furthermore, this study contributes to the discourse on communication barriers that impede successful TQM integration. While previous discussions in the literature have broadly addressed communication issues as barriers to the successful implementation of TQM in the higher education sector, with some attempts at diagnosing the main causes in the context of Saudi Arabian universities, this study has specifically highlighted uniquely the causes of such problems, primarily attributed to gender segregation and the complexity of TQM terminologies in the context of universities. These factors complicate communication and negatively impact the efficiency of communicating TQM implementation in the Saudi Arabian university sector. The strict segregation policies have restricted collaborative opportunities, slowed down cross-departmental communication, and limited interactions between male and female personnel—elements crucial for quality improvement. Consequently, this has led to frequent delays in quality-related tasks, task duplication, discrepancies in work outputs, and an increased time investment in processing feedback and compiling quality reports in gender-divided divisions. The inability to fully confirm a direct fit of TQM terms and values in the context of those public



universities has, in fact, disrupted the scale of communicating it in these institution settings. Furthermore, the study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the increasing fear associated with adopting TQM values and practices due to unproductive disruptions in the workplace. The empirical findings provide insights that affirm fear as a significant barrier to the full integration of TQM. In the context of centralised public university systems, fear arises from the potential loss of control due to TQM's emphasis on greater delegation and empowerment. Such emphasis by TQM causes leadership hesitancy in endorsing its values and practices in these educational institutions. Consequently, decision-makers exhibit reluctance to adopt TQM's core values and practices, which can be seen as disruptive and threatening to the stability of centralized authority in top-down university structures. It was particularly notable in such hierarchical universities structured context fear arises from increased concern about exposure to criticism and subjecting performance to quality reviewers' critiques. In addition to these hurdles, the study empirically provided insight into other issues such as increased workloads, resistance to standardisation, and inadequate incentives contributing to the existing complexity in integrating the philosophy's values and practices in the public universities.

The insights from this study build on the existing literature, confirming that academic staff struggle to balance quality demands with their regular duties. This struggle leads to decreased enthusiasm for TQM initiatives due to increases in workloads (Royo, 2017). However, this study uniquely highlights the variation in the intensity of pressure experienced by female staff in the women's divisions due to the heightened quality standards combined with staff shortages. No previous study has identified this particular issue, which hinders the collective efforts required toward achieving a common objective regarding quality development in the Saudi Arabian university sector. Consequently, this study advocates for immediate actions targeting the equitable distribution of workloads, enhanced training, and an increase in the recruitment of female staff. Addressing understaffing issues is crucial for improving productivity in the

female divisions, as quality enhancement requires uniform and collective practices. This study has also contributed to the ongoing debate in the literature about growing resentment towards increased standardisation as result of quality improvement requirements (Bouranta et al., 2019; Markowitsch, 2018). The current study reveals that the rise in standard requirements has been perceived negatively as administrative overreach, threatening academic autonomy and seeking more standardisation in workplace. Academics fear that excessive intrusion by quality reviewers leads to increased monitoring of their performance, undermining the privileges of those with academic backgrounds (autonomy). The unease and heightened scepticism about the intensification of quality standardisation at their workplaces have made it difficult to foster a culture receptive to quality initiatives like those proposed by the TQM philosophy in the context of those public universities. Such perspectives as empirically explored have led to negative perceptions of the philosophy in public universities and even sparked mobilisation against its values and practices in universities. Thus, a thorough pre-understanding of these identified drivers and challenges is crucial for adequate preparation, and effective executions of improvement plans enabling universities to seize opportunities and overcome obstacles, thereby achieving the high-level integration of TQM CSFs for sustainable quality advancement

## **7.2 The Study Implications**

This qualitative exploratory study attempts to advance the level of understanding of TQM in the context of Saudi Arabian universities, a sector often overlooked in the current literature focused primarily on profit-driven or Western educational institutions. The main contributions of this research are twofold: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it breaks new ground by applying TQM in a non-profit educational setting, offering a unique perspective on the specific challenges and drivers to ensure the successful and high-level integration of the philosophy's core values and practice for sustainable quality improvement in the public university context.

This novel approach extends the traditional perception of TQM beyond its current status quo, positioning it not just as a quality control tool, but as a holistic management philosophy essential for fostering a culture of quality in educational institutions with non-profit orientations. This perspective paves the way for future studies to explore TQM's relevance in diverse educational contexts practically, thus, the study serves as a crucial resource for quality management professionals within Saudi Arabian public universities to rethink their way with TQM's values and practice in mind for driving meaningful change. It provides detailed insights into some of the external and internal drivers which are crucially important for nurturing TQM values and practices in these institutions. Furthermore, the study offers a comprehensive analysis of the specific challenges, both managerial and interpersonal, faced by Saudi Arabian public universities in implementing TQM. By categorising and understanding these obstacles, the current study creates new knowledge vital for quality development professionals to be better equipped to develop effective strategies for overcoming inherent challenges, thereby enhancing the likelihood of successful TQM integration.

In summary, this research makes a valuable contribution by elucidating the specific conditions for embedding TQM and specifies the inherent barriers preventing the implementation of the philosophy's core values in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities. Thus, the utilisation of the knowledge created by this current study can lead to the proper adoption and successful application of TQM in the public university setting, fostering and sustaining a quality-oriented culture through the high-level integration of TQM CSFs. This qualitative exploratory study not only fuels scholarly debate but also offers insights which can lead to more actionable directives for practitioners, aiming to instil a sustained, quality-centric culture in line with TQM core values and practices. The following highlights the limitations and provides suggestion for future research to advance the knowledge created by this study to improve the level of understanding about TQM in the HE sector.

## **7.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

This section acknowledges the limitations of this qualitative exploratory study and offers suggestions for future research. Section 7.3. outlines the factors contributing to the current study's constraints. Section 7.3.2 provides recommendations for future research to expand on the knowledge established and to advance the existing understanding of the TQM philosophy in the context of universities in the HE sector.

### **7.3.1 Study Limitations**

Adopting a qualitative exploratory study approach provides the opportunity to thoroughly explore specific events or phenomena, as this research method facilitates a deep focus on understanding a topic or occurrence, which helps to identify new factors and connections while grasping the complexities of situations in a particular setting (Motzer, Armellini & Pelletier, 2020). As such, this methodology enables the exploration of complex issues in their natural environment, yielding rich, detailed insights and first-hand experiences related to the given topic. However, it is essential to acknowledge the inherent limitations of any research approach. Yin (2018) stated that limitations are potential weaknesses that are beyond the researcher's control and must be recognised. The following outlines the limitations of the current study.

One limitation of the current study relates to the sample size. The researcher adopted purposive sampling in the process of inviting and selecting participants to take part in this study, aiming to obtain quality and information-rich data. Palinkas et al. (2015, p. 533) stated that “purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest.” The purpose of employing purposive sampling in this study was to involve individuals who have expertise and who have served in quality deanship departments for various lengths of time (specifically no less than 5

years). Nonetheless, the adoption of purposive sampling and the criteria set for selecting participants resulted in a smaller sample size. This selection process excluded individuals with less than five years of experience or those not involved in managing quality development in a university quality deanship department. Consequently, the study may not accurately represent the broader demographic. It specifically focused on conducting interviews with quality developers (29 interviews) at select public universities in a particular country (Saudi Arabia). Another potential limitation of this study relates to its scope. The research was strictly confined to public universities, which may limit the breadth of the findings. This means that the study focused solely on investigating the research topic within the context of public universities, intentionally not including private universities and other educational institutions. While maintaining a clear and articulated scope of inquiry is recommended as an effective research strategy for ensuring clarity of direction and focus (Levac, Colquhoun & O'Brien, 2010), the narrow focus on public universities in this study could be seen as a limitation, as it excludes other types of educational institutions from the investigation. Additional factors contributing to the limitations of this study include the generalisability of the findings and the timeframe available to complete this research. Qualitative research typically does not prioritise generalisability, as it often utilises small, non-representative samples to conduct an in-depth examination of specific phenomena in defined contexts. Therefore, the results may not be widely applicable to other contexts or demographic groups, given their specific grounding in the context of Saudi Arabian public universities and the experiences of employees in quality deanship departments. Nevertheless, the insights gained may still be pertinent to universities in the GCC or developing countries with similar environments. The limited resources and the time constraints, particularly the submission deadline, further contributed to the study's limitations. These factors necessitated the selection of a cross-sectional study design, which is effective for capturing a snapshot of information at a specific moment but does not account for

changes over time. Thus, these limitations must be taken into consideration when interpreting and applying the findings of this research. The highlighted limitations of the current study could encourage other researchers to conduct new studies tackling these limitations in investigating TQM in the context of universities.

### **7.3.2 Suggestions for Future Research**

To build on the knowledge created by the current study on the topic of TQM application in the context of the university sector, future research may incorporate private universities and include the views of a more diverse larger sample size. New studies should also include different stakeholders such as students, lecturers, and administrative staff across various departments and colleges within universities. This would obtain a broader and more diverse view to better understand TQM in the context of universities. Mixed methods or the adoption of longitudinal research studies may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of TQM implementation in the university sector and provide more in-depth information beyond cross-sectional studies. In the context of Saudi Arabian universities, new studies should aim to investigate quality development issues in the female divisions of public universities. This study has revealed greater complexity in managing quality requirements in the female section compared to the male counterpart. One of the primary reasons is the issue of understaffing in the women's section, coupled with a lack of training programs for female employees. Consequently, there is an opportunity for new research studies to investigate further these complexities and the imbalance between divisions within a university. Hence, comparative research studies between male and female sections could provide more in-depth insights into the issues arising from segregation policies that impact the quality improvement flow and hinder interdepartmental collaboration. Such matters present uniquely complex challenges within Saudi Arabian public universities. By incorporating these suggestions for future research studies, the data would become more representative, resulting in a more

comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and enhancing the generalisability of the findings. With these suggestions in mind, new research studies can make up for the current study limitations and will contribute significantly to advancing the understanding of the TQM philosophy and its implications for the higher education sector.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: University Approval for Visit 1

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

[logo]




Deanship of Quality and Skills Development.

Dated on **29 May**

**2019**

**Dear Mubarak Ahmed Alhamami,**

Based on your letter requesting a visit to Deanship of Quality and Skills Development in  to conduct interviews with Quality and Skills Development leaders and staff in the university for your PhD research about Applying the concept of total quality management in higher education sector, we are pleased to inform you that we are willing to cooperate with you and assist you with your mission.

We wish you the best of luck

Sincerely,

[Signature]



**CERTIFICATION:** This is to certify that the foregoing English text is a true and correct translation from the **Arabic** language prepared by **Yousef Sahari**, professional NAATI-accredited translator, **NAATI No. CPN5OQ23X**. The source document is provided on the subsequent page.

المملكة العربية السعودية  
وزارة التعليم  
عمادة الجودة وتطوير المهارات

١٤٤٠/٠٩/٢٤ هـ

وفقه الله

سعادة الأستاذ/ مبارك بن أحمد الهمامي

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد:

إشارة الى خطابكم المتضمن طلب الموافقة على زيارة عمادة الجودة [REDACTED] لأجراء مقابلات شخصية مع قيادات الجودة وتطوير المهارات بالجامعة والتي تعتبر من المتطلبات المتعلقة بموضوع بحثكم لدرجة الدكتوراه في مفهوم إدارة الجودة الشاملة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي.

وعليه نفيديكم بأنه لا مانع لدينا من زيارتكم للعمادة.

سائلين الله عزوجل لكم التوفيق والسداد.

وتقبلوا وافر التقدير،،،

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Appendix 2: University Approval for Visit 2

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

[logo]

XXXXXXXXXX

Deanship of Development and Quality.

**Dear Mubarak Ahmed Alhamami,**

Based on your letter requesting a visit to the Deanship of Development and Quality XXXXX  
University to conduct interviews with development and quality leaders and staff in the  
university for your PhD research about Applying the concept of total quality management in  
higher education sector, we are pleased to inform you that we are willing to cooperate with  
you and assist you with your mission.

We wish you the best of luck

Sincerely,

[Signature]

XXXXXXXXXX



**CERTIFICATION:** This is to certify that the foregoing English text is a true and correct translation from the Arabic language prepared by **Yousef Sahari**, professional NAATI-accredited translator, **NAATI No. CPNSOQ23X**. The source document is provided on the subsequent page.

وفقه الله

المكرم الأستاذ / مبارك أحمد الهمامي

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته . . . وبعد

إشارة إلى خطابكم المتضمن طلب الموافقة على زيارة عمادة التطوير والجودة وذلك لإجراء مقابلات شخصية مع قيادات التطوير والجودة بالجامعة كونه من البيانات المطلوبه بموضوع بحثكم لدرجة الدكتوراه المتعلق بتطبيق مفهوم إدارة الجودة الشاملة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي .  
نفيدكم بأنه لا مانع لدينا من ذلك ، سائلين الله لكم دوام التوفيق والسداد  
وتقبلا خالص تحياتي . . .

عميد عمادة التطوير والجودة

### Appendix 3: University Approval for Visit 3

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

[logo]



Academic Development and Quality Deanship

**Dear Mubarak Ahmed Alhamami,**

Based on your letter requesting a visit to Academic Development and Quality Deanship in [redacted] interviews with Quality and Skills Development leaders and staff in the university for your PhD research about Applying the concept of total quality management in higher education sector, we are pleased to inform you that we are willing to cooperate with you and assist you with your mission.

We wish you the best of luck

Sincerely,

[Signature]



**CERTIFICATION:** This is to certify that the foregoing English text is a true and correct translation from the **Arabic** language prepared by **Yousef Sahari**, professional NAATI-accredited translator, **NAATI No. CPNSOQ23X**. The source document is provided on the subsequent page.



وفقه الله

المكرم الأستاذ/ مبارك الهمامي

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد ...

إشارة إلى خطابكم المتضمن طلب الموافقة على زيارة عمادة التطوير الأكاديمي والجودة بجامعة [REDACTED] وذلك لإجراء مقابلات شخصية مع قيادات التطوير والجودة بالجامعة كونه من البيانات المطلوبة بموضوع بحثكم لدرجة الدكتوراه المتعلق بتطبيق مفهوم إدارة الجودة الشاملة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي. نفيدكم بأنه لا مانع لدينا من ذلك، سائلين الله لكم دوام التوفيق والسداد.

والله يحفظكم ..

## Appendix 4: Consent Form for Participants Involved in the Study



### **CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH**

#### **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:**

I would like to invite you to be a part of this study entitled "Using Total Quality Management Critical Success Factors to move towards Quality Culture in Saudi Arabia's Higher Education Institutions". This study aim is to critically assess the theoretical perspectives of the critical success factors (CSFs) relating to TQM practices and the benefits of its integration in the systems of universities in Saudi Arabia. The attempt here in this study is to promote quality culture and improve quality practices through the roles of quality deanships in the universities, also to develop a quality model integrating TQM CSFs.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the study participants and will be audio recorded. In addition, document analysis, as well as observation will be used as methods for data collection. The researcher of this project is committed to minimising any potential risk that could affect the participants' wellbeing. Therefore, the confidentiality of the participants is the only matter of risk that could potentially be posed by this research study. Thus, in this project, the privacy/ confidentiality associated with the study respondents regarded as a high priority. Individuals' identities will be protected by keeping them completely anonymous. Further, the study data and materials will be uploaded on R drive making them inaccessible excepted the project student and supervisors.

#### **CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT**

I .....certify that I'm over 18 years of age and voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study entitled : "Using Total Quality Management Critical Success Factors to move towards a Quality Culture in Saudi Arabia's Higher Education Institutions" being conducted at Victoria University and supervised by Richard Gough.

I certify that the aim and objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by the study researcher : Mubarak Alhamami, and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- Attending the Semi-structured interview which will take maximum of one hours
- The interview will be audio recorded and later my responses will be used for the purpose of meeting the study aims and objectives as addressed in the study information form.
- The information I provided will be used only for this study addressed and titled above



I have also been informed that these data and information I provided will be kept securely.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand I can withdraw from this study at any time during the interview, and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I have been informed that the researcher will take measures and applied methods for the protection of the confidentially and privacy concerning my identity and the data I provided.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher's supervisor  
Richard Gough    Richard.Gough@vu.edu.au  
Mobile phone No: +61481968369

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

## Appendix 5: Arabic Translated Version for the Consent Form

### نموذج موافقة المشاركين في البحث

#### معلومات للمشاركين

أتشرف بدعوتكم للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة والتي هي بعنوان "تطبيق مفهوم ادارة الجودة الشاملة لتعزيز ثقافة الجودة وممارستها في جامعات المملكة العربية السعودية" والهدف منها هو السعي لتطوير نموذج لعمادات التطوير الجودة في جامعات المملكة العربية السعودية يعزز من ثقافة الجودة ويحسن ممارستها من خلال الادوار المبدولة من ممارسي اعمال الجودة في تلك العمادات. تهدف الدراسة إلى التقييم النقدي للجوانب النظرية لعوامل النجاح المرتبطة بممارسات وتطبيق إدارة الجودة الشاملة وفوائد دمجها في أنظمة الجامعات في المملكة العربية السعودية.

سوف يتم عقد مقابلات مع المشاركين في الدراسة باتباع قواعد المقابلات شبه المنظمة وتسجيل صوتي لتلك المقابلات. يلتزم الباحث في هذا المشروع بأخلاقيات البحث العلمي وذلك بتوضيح أي مخاطر محتملة للمشاركين في هذه الدراسة. ومن ثم فإن سرية معلومات المشاركين هي الخطر الوحيد الذي قد تشتمل عليه الدراسة البحثية الحالية ولذلك فإن موضوع الخصوصية/ سرية المعلومات المرتبطة بالمشاركين في الدراسة سوف تعامل بأولوية خاصة في المشروع من أجل الحفاظ على هوية الأفراد المشاركين حيث سيتم حفظ البيانات والملعلومات في قرص ار R drive ولن يتمكن من الوصول الى هذه المعلومات الي الباحث فريق الاشراف. سيتم الإشارة الى المشاركين في البحث برموز واحرف حيث سيتم الحفاظ على شخصيات المشاركين مجهولة بشكل كامل.

#### شهادة من المشارك

أقر أنا، .....، بأنني اتجاوز 18 عاما وانني أوافق طواعية على المشاركة في الدراسة بعنوان " تطبيق مفهوم ادارة الجودة الشاملة لتعزيز ثقافة الجودة وممارستها في جامعات المملكة العربية السعودية" والتي تجرى في جامعة فيكتوريا تحت إشراف ريتشارد جوف.



## Appendix 6: Information sheet for Participants



### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Using Total Quality Management critical success factors to move towards a quality culture in Saudi Arabia’s higher education institutions”.

This project is being conducted by a student researcher, Mubarak Alhamami, as part of a PhD research study at Victoria University under the supervision of Richard Gough from the College of Business.

#### **Project Explanation**

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This project is a qualitative research study to critically assess the theoretical perspectives of the critical success factors (CSFs) relating to TQM practices and the benefits of its integration in the system of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It includes developing a quality model that can provide guidelines for quality deanships to meet quality requirements, and stakeholders’ expectations moving towards a quality culture in the context of Saudi Arabia’s HEIs. The model is an attempt to make significant contributions to the theoretical domain in the TQM literature. For this purpose, theories related to TQM and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions model have been thoroughly integrated. The expected outcomes of this study are to develop a quality model and promoting high-quality culture practices in the HEIs by integrating the TQM CSFs into the universities’ systems. A qualitative methodology, with a case study approach, will be used to meet the study’s aim and objectives. This involves Semi-structured interviews audio recorded, document analysis, and observation as methods for the data collection. NVivo software will be employed during the process of data analysis.

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

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- Open-Ended questions will be asked following a discussion of the relevant rules for semi-structured interviews.
- Participants will take part by answering the questions. However, they have the right to go beyond these questions and ask their questions during the interview.
- All participants in this study will be interviewed for about between 30 minutes to one hour.
- The scheduled time for doing interviews will be agreed in advance with participants, and according to their preferred time.
- Copies of the questions can be sent in advance to the participant if so requested.
- All interviews will be audio recorded using a recorder device. These audio records will only be used by the researcher for analysis and transcribing the interview.

- All participants have the right to abstain themselves from answering questions if they feel uncomfortable also they have the right to withdraw with no obligation as the participation in this study is voluntarily.
- The respondents might be politely interrupted by the researcher during the interview for clarity, or to adhere to the topic.

**What will I gain from participating?**

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On the institutional level, this study attempts to provide the quality deanship units with a model for quality improvement. Your educational institution will benefit from the study as it provides guideline towards the promotion of quality culture, and effective quality practices. This study also will develop knowledge associated with TQM implementation, and practices in universities, and thereby those individual staff members will be able to manage effectively quality practices as well as deploy quality culture.

**How will the information I give be used?**

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All the information provided by participants will be thoroughly treated. The purpose of the information here is to ascertain the consistencies, similarities, and dissimilarities that exist between the proposed theoretical assumptions proposed and the data collected from a real-life experiment. Information provided by participants will be used to enhance the quality culture. Participants' perspectives and real-life experiences will lead to more understanding. Measures in this study have been taken to protect the respondent's confidentiality and privacy. Thus, no personal details or leading information will be attached to the data, as all the study data and materials will be kept securely on R drive.

**What are the potential risks of participating in this project?**

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Leaving personal details accessible is the only potential risk in this project which could lead to the identification of the respondents' identities. However, strategies in this study have been made to minimize this risk. The project researcher will use fake names or references referring back to the study participants, where no names or information about individual respondents will be attached to participants' responses. Furthermore, the data will be uploaded and managed securely using the R drive to make it inaccessible except the student and the supervisors of this project.

**How will this project be conducted?**

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This project will be entirely carried out by the student researcher. A qualitative methodology approach following the convention of the case study design in qualitative research. Three public universities in Saudi Arabia will be the source of data for this study. Data collection methods will be involving Semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observation.

**Who is conducting the study?**

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Dr Richard Gough    Email    Richard.Gough@vu.edu.au

Dr Selvi Kennan      Email    selvi.kannan@vu.edu.au

The study researcher: Mubarak Alhamami. Email    mubarak.alhamami@live.vu.edu.au  
Mobile number: 0481968369

Please, if there are any queries about this project, you have the right to contact the Chief Investigator listed above. In case you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, Email [researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.



## Appendix 7: Arabic Translated Version about the Study

### معلومات عن الدراسة للمشاركين في البحث

أنت مدعو للمشاركة في هذا المشروع البحثي بعنوان "تطبيق مفهوم ادارة الجودة الشاملة لتعزيز ثقافة الجودة وممارساتها في جامعات المملكة العربية السعودية" الذي يجريه الباحث الطالب مبارك الهمامي كجزء من الدراسة البحثية لدرجة الدكتوراه في جامعة فيكتوريا تحت إشراف ريتشارد جوف من كلية الأعمال.

### شرح المشروع

المشروع عبارة عن دراسة بحثية نوعية من أجل التقييم النقدي للجوانب النظرية لعوامل النجاح الجوهرية المرتبطة بممارسات إدارة الجودة الشاملة ومزايا دمجها في نظم مؤسسات التعليم العالي كطريقة إدارية. يشمل البحث تطوير نموذج يمكن من خلاله تقديم الإرشادات اللازمة لخلق ممارسات و ثقافة الجودة في سياق مؤسسات التعليم العالي السعودية. الهدف الأساسي من تطوير نموذج جودة لممارسي اعمال الجودة في عمادات التطوير في الجامعات ومساعدة القادة والمديرين في هذه الجامعات على التغلب على العقبات التي تواجههم في تحقيق متطلبات الجودة وتوقعات المستفيدين، والنموذج عبارة عن محاولة لتقديم مساهمات قيمة للإطار النظري في أدبيات إدارة الجودة الشاملة. لهذا الغرض تم دمج النظريات ذات الصلة بإدارة الجودة الشاملة ونموذج هوفستد "الأبعاد الثقافية" بالكامل في الإطار التصوري لهذه الدراسة. أجريت الدراسة الحالية من أجل سد الفجوة المعرفية في التصميم الاستراتيجي لإدارة الجودة الشاملة في قطاع التعليم العالي. باعتبار حقيقة عدم اعتبار الجوانب الأخرى لإدارة الجودة الشاملة مثل عوامل النجاح الجوهرية في سياق عمادات الجودة في جامعات ، فإن هذه الدراسة سوف توضح بشكل مناسب أين يفترض بذل جهود تطوير الجودة في الجامعات.

النتائج المتوقعة من هذه الدراسة هي تعزيز ممارسات الجودة عن طريق تعزيز ثقافة الجودة العالية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي لتلبية حاجات وتوقعات الأطراف ذوو العلاقة. تقدم الدراسة إطار عملي لعمادات الجودة في الجامعات قيد المناقشة. يلبي منهج الدراسة النوعي متطلبات أهداف وغايات البحث الحالي. تعتمد الدراسة تصميم دراسة الحالة لتناول الموضوع

قيد البحث. يشمل البحث ثلاث جامعات حكومية سوف يتم جمع المعلومات منها. سوف توظف الدراسة المقابلات شبه المنتظمة مع تسجيل صوتي لتلك المقابلات وتحليل المستندات والملاحظة كطرق لجمع البيانات اللازمة للدراسة. سوف تستخدم الدراسة برنامج إنفيفو للترميز وإجراء التحليل الموضوعي. يمثل البحث المقترح محاولة للإسهام بمعارف جديدة في بناء إدارة الجودة الشاملة بكونها أول دراسة تقوم ببحث ما ستقدمه عوامل النجاح الجوهرية لإدارة الجودة الشاملة في جامعات المملكة العربية السعودية.

#### ما المطلوب مني القيام به؟

- صممت الأسئلة من نوع النهايات المفتوحة والتي سوف توجه خلال المقابلة
- كمشارك في الدراسة سوف تجيب على الأسئلة مع حقك تجاوز هذه الأسئلة أو توجيه الأسئلة أثناء المقابلة أو طلب مزيد من التوضيح إذا لزم الأمر.
- كمشارك في الدراسة الحالية سوف تجرى مقابلة معك لمدة 30 دقيقة تقريبا ولا تزيد عن 1 ساعة بحد أقصى.
- سوف يتم الاتفاق على الجدول الزمني لإجراء المقابلات مسبقاً مع المشاركين وذلك حسب الوقت المناسب لهم.
- سوف يتم تزويدك الخاصة بالمقابلات اذا فضلت ذلك
- سوف يتم التسجيل الصوتي لجميع المقابلات باستخدام جهاز التسجيل وسوف تستخدم فقط من قبل الباحث لتحليل وتدوين النصوص.
- لديك الحق كمشارك في عدم الإجابة على الأسئلة إذا شعرت بعدم الراحة لأي سبب من الأساس. وايضا الانسحاب تماما من المقابلة بدون أي حقوق او التزامات تترتب علي ذلك
- قد تحدث مقاطعتك أثناء المقابلة لغرض التوضيح أو لغرض الالتزام بموضوع الدراسة.

### ما الفائدة التي سأحصل عليها من المشاركة؟

على المستوى المؤسسي فإن هذه الدراسة هي محاولة لتزويد الجامعات بنموذج لتحسين الجودة. سوف تستفيد مؤسستك التعليمية من هذه الدراسة حيث أنها تحاول تقديم الإرشادات اللازمة لتعزيز ثقافة الجودة وتنفيذ عوامل النجاح الجوهرية لإدارة الجودة الشاملة. وعلى المستوى الفردي فإن ممارسي الجودة وخصوصاً القادة والمديرين وفرق العمل في عمادات الجودة وعليهم مسؤولية تجاه نتائج تطوير الجودة في الجامعات سوف يستفيدون أيضاً من هذه الدراسة. سوف يكونون قادرين على القيام بأدوار جوهرية عن طريق توظيف ثقافة الجودة وإدارة ممارسات الجودة بفاعلية في الجامعة باستخدام هذا النموذج. تسعى الدراسة الحالية لتحقيق تحسين الجودة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي عن طريق تطوير نموذج لعمادات الجودة في أحد أهم القطاعات في المملكة التي تتولى مسؤولية تطوير المهارات والمعارف.

### كيف سيتم استخدام المعلومات التي أقدمها؟

جميع المعلومات التي ستقدمها سوف يتم تحليلها بالكامل. الغرض من المعلومات هنا هو التأكد من أوجه الشبه والاختلاف والاتساق بين الافتراضات النظرية المقترحة في الدراسة وبين البيانات التي يتم جمعها من الخبرات الحياتية الواقعية. سوف تستخدم المعلومات التي يقدمها المشاركون في لغرض تطوير نموذج تعزيز ثقافة الجودة في سياق مؤسسات التعليم العالي. سوف تؤدي وجهات نظر المشاركين وخبراتهم الحياتية الواقعية لمزيد من الفهم عند تحليل الباحث للبيانات والمعلومات من أجل تحقيق أهداف وغايات الدراسة. يتحمل الباحث المسؤولية كاملة فيما يتعلق بمسائل الخصوصية والسرية. ولذلك سوف يتم الاحتفاظ بالمعلومات والتعامل معها بسرية باستخدام المساحة المركزية المقدمة من القرص ار R drive بجامعة فيكتوريا. الشخص الوحيد الذي له حق الوصول إلى هذه البيانات واستخدامها هو الباحث وفريق الإشراف .

### ما هي المخاطر المحتملة للمشاركة في هذا المشروع؟

سوف يبذل الباحث قصارى جهده لتقليل أي خطر محتمل يتعلق بمسائل السرية أو الخصوصية المرتبطة بالمشاركين في الدراسة. على سبيل المثال لن يتم ذكر أي اسم أو أي

معلومات هبة خالص قلب اليراد المش الرئي نفسي الدربة او بظه لبيبات الدربة التي سوف  
يتم فضظه في قرص ار R drive.

سوف يبيت خدم الباحث رموز او احرف بعد البشارة الى لمناء المش الرئي نفسي الدربة. علوة  
يؤى لكس وفتدار الم نوم اتمبش كل سري بحيث طب الباحث للوصول الى الم نومات ،  
بولكي تلمن الباحث من تخين وإدارة ومع الهة للبيبات ولم نومات مام يقبل الم خاطر  
الم صلم قبلت تعرف يؤى هبة المش الرئي نفسي الدربة الى الحدالى.

### اي فس يتم إجراء الدربة ؟

سوف يقوم الباحث بإجراء المشروع بالكامل بملت خدام الم هج للنوعي يبيت خدم الباحث أيضا  
تقويات الم هج للنوعية نحل الم هب لت شيها المظمة لجمع للبيبات الأسلمية للدربة و  
تلمهي المبتندات ولرلوب ام لحظة. سوف تقيد لا قبلت مع المش الرئي من ثلث  
عمادات جودقي ثلث جامعات مخوي تتبلح لقطاع التليم الاعلي في الم لكة الاعوية  
السعوية.

### من لذي يجري الدربة؟

د. ميش ارد جوف: المشرف العيس يؤى المشروع مبيد للكتروني: Richard.Gough@vu.edu.au

د. سهي ليينان، المشرف المش ارك، لبيد اللكتروني: selvi.kannan@vu.edu.au

لباحث: مبارك الم ام امي، لبيد اللكتروني: mubarak.alhamami@live.vu.edu.au

جوال: 0481968369

م لحظة في حال وجود أي تلفس ار حول المشروع الم حلبي لمنك لتوصل م غقي للبحث  
المكور أعله. إذا كان ليك أي تلفس ارات أو شك اوى بخص لاطيقة التي تم لتعامل  
بها معك لمنك التصل يؤى أملة للشؤون الخ لفة، لجة أخ لقيات للبحث للشري  
بجامع تقي لكتروني، جامع تقي لكتروني، ص ب: 14428، لهورن، في لكتروني، 8001، لبيد  
اللكتروني: Researchethics@vu.edu.au هتف: 4461 أو 9919 4781 (03)



## Appendix 8: Interview Guideline and Questions

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### Interview Guide

- Remember to explain that the role of participation is voluntary, and why his or her role was needed for the study
- Remind the respondents of the study aim and what the findings of the study mean to the quality development in the public universities.
- remind the respondents that a recorder device will be used to record the discussion if not approve then alternatively notes will be taken.
- Explain the process of converting the recorded interviews into textual, and data coding involving the NVivo software.
- Form of opened-ended questions ( semi-structured) will be asked during the interview. If facing difficulties in answering, he or she can ask for more clarification.
- Time framework will take between 30 to 50 minutes unless the interviewee would like to talk longer.
- Identity of the interviewee will be kept anonymous and now actual name or information will be link to the responses
- Sign the consent form before the start of the interview.
- If the question isn't clear enough, please tell me.
- Don't assume that I know things, answer the questions as fully as possible.

**Questions:**

1. Can you tell me about the extent to which TQM is being implemented in your university? (Q1)
2. Can you talk about the fundamental reason for adopting the principles of TQM? (Q1), and how do you think these quality values have been reinforced to support quality development in this university? (Q3)
3. Can you talk about the most influential factors you believe is important in the TQM for quality culture improvement? (Q1)
4. Can you talk about how the university has demonstrated its commitment to TQM? (Q 1, Q3,), and what are the fundamental role you have here at the quality deanship in the attempt to improve quality in this university? (Q4)
5. Is there a different approach that you think this university has in adopting the TQM philosophy compared to other public universities, if any? (Q3)
6. How would you describe the level of understanding among people about TQM practices at this university? (Q2, Q4)
7. Can you tell me what are the significant challenges in adopting TQM at this university? (Q2)
8. Can you talk more about what you think of TQM as a way of change in organisations? (Q2), and has the quality deanship applied this philosophy to make changes? (Q4)
9. Would you tell me about the communication mechanism in place in your organisation? And are there any hurdles you think are preventing effective communication? (Q2, Q3)
10. How the university makes use of the data and information available to improve the TQM practices? (Q4)
11. How would you describe the quality tasks division at your department? (Q4), Do you think more quality tasks are welcomed among quality deanships staff? (Q2)
12. Can you talk about how the concepts of the teamwork; has it been encouraged when carrying out quality tasks? (Q3) Have there been any challenges to increasing the level of participation among individuals to improve quality in the university? (Q2)
13. How would you explain people's acceptance when a new quality initiative is introduced in your university? (Q2) Is there an intervention role here by the quality deanship? (Q4)
14. How important do you think the quality culture is? And what impact do you think the organisational culture has on the implementation of TQM? (Q3)
15. Can you tell me more about what kind of supportive culture that could help a successful implementation of TQM? (Q2, Q3),
16. Do you have anything in mind that you believe it is important and has not been addressed within these questions? Please feel free to tell me.

**Closing:**

- Is there anything you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions about the study?
- Do you have any advice / recommendations for my field research?
- Here is my contact number and email address if you want to contact me concerning any question Date:

- **interview duration:**
- **Notes:**

- .
- .
- .
- .

## Appendix 9: Translated Version of the Interviews Questions

### أسئلة المقابلة

- (1) هل يمكن أن تخبرني برأيك حول كيفية اتخاذ قرارات الجودة؟ هل يمكنك بإعطاء بعض الأمثلة؟
- (2) كيف تصف مستوى المشاركة في عملية اتخاذ قرارات مرتبطة بتطوير الجودة؟
- (3) هل تستطيع اخباري عن آلية التواصل السائدة في مؤسستك؟ وكيف تسهم في عملية تطوير الجودة .
- (4) هل جودة المهام الخاصة بالجودة مقسمة تقسيم واضح بحيث تفهم بشكل ؟ وهل هناك ترحيب عندما تكون هناك مهام جودة جديدة؟
- (5) هل يمكنك التحدث عن تشجيع العمل الجماعي في تطوير مهام الجودة؟
- (6) كيف تفسر مدى القبول بين الأشخاص في إدارتك عندما تكون هناك مبادرة جديدة لتطبيق او تحسين اعمال الجودة؟
- (7) هل يمكن أن تخبرني ما رأيك في الاختلافات في الآراء بين الناس في إدارتك فيما يتعلق بتنفيذ إدارة الجودة الشاملة؟
- (8) كم عدد المرات التي تعقد فيها اجتماعات دورية لمراجعة التقدم المحرز ومناقشة قضايا الجودة؟ يمكنك التحدث أكثر عن ذلك؟
- (9) هل يمكنك التحدث عما يعنيه تطبيق إدارة الجودة الشاملة في مؤسستك؟ هل يمكنك التحدث أكثر حول ما تعتقده عن هذا المفهوم كوسيلة للتغيير في مؤسستك؟
- (10) كيف يمكنك وصف مستوى فهم ممارسات إدارة الجودة الشاملة في مؤسستك؟ هل يمكنك التحدث عن هذا و ماهي العوامل المؤثرة التي تعتقد بوجودها في إدارة الجودة الشاملة؟
- (11) كيف يتم التعامل مع التقييمات؟ وكيف تستغل ادارتكم البيانات والمعلومات المتاحة لتحسن ممارسات الجودة داخل الجامعة؟
- (12) هل يمكن أن تخبرني من وجهة نظركم عن مدى التي تم تحقيقه فيما يخص تطبيق الجودة الشاملة في مؤسستك؟



- 13) ما هو النجاح الأكثر بروزاً في مؤسستك والذي لم يكن أنت عازي لى تطبيق إدارة لاجودة للشركة إن وجد؟
- 14) ما هو الشيء الذي فيك ما زال مقبوضاً في عملية مبادرات إدارة لاجودة للشركة في مؤسستك؟
- 15) أضحني ما طكفي تتفلة لاجودة؟ ما مدى أهميتها ، وما هو تأثير التفلة للتطبيقية لى تطبيق إدارة لاجودة للشركة؟
- 16) هل لمكن أنت ضمني لمتجد عن أي نوع من التفلات للتطبيقية للداعمة و لتتوي لمكن أنتس اعفويتني ذن اجح تطبيق لاجودة للشركة؟
- هل يوجد أي شيء في ذهنك تعتقد أنه مهم لمحتق اليه هذه الأسئلة؟ نرجو عدم التردد في ذكر أفكارك من الفعلي؟



نهية الولاية