DRIVERS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF LEBANESE PRIVATE BUSINESS SCHOOLS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
AERES.	In French: Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur
ANQAHE	Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ARCHE	Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education
ARWU	Academic Ranking of World Universities
CAS	Centre for Academic Studies
CEAB	Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board
CEDRE	In French: Coopération Entre universitaire pour le Développement de la Recherche Scientifique)
CERD	Centre for Educational Research and Development
CTI	Computer Technology Institute
DGHE	Directorate General of Higher Education
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
FIBAA	Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
INQAAHE	The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
LCPS	Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies
LIRA	Lebanese Industrial Research Association
LMD	License-Master-Doctorat
LU	Lebanese University
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAAB	National Architecture Accrediting Board
NAHEQA	National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance
NCSR	National Council for Scientific Research
NEASC	New England Association of Schools and Colleges
OECD	Organisation for Economic and Cooperation and Development
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAHEL	Quality Assurance for Higher Education in Lebanon
QS	Quacquarelli Symonds
SAT	Student Achievement Test

TEMPUS	Trans-European Mobility Programme for university studies
THE	Times Higher Education rankings
TUV-Hellas	In German: German safety and standards institution
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDP-EQAIP	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDE	United States Department of Education
USJ	University Saint Joseph

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ABSTRACT

This research provides evidence on the relationship between responsiveness to quality assurance implementation and a business school i) organisational and leadership characteristics, ii) stakeholders' perceptions of quality assurance as innovation, and iii) the institutional pressures in the organisational field. It is based on the insights from the institutional theory and the diffusion of innovation theory and uses a mixed-methods research approach. The current global demand for accountability and concern with educational productivity in higher education makes this research timely.

The results of the study indicate that a business school's level of internationalisation (normative pressure) is positively associated with responsiveness whereas competition (mimetic pressure) and the government stipulations (coercive pressure) are not significant in determining whether a business school will or will not implement any quality assurance measures. In addition, leadership and organisational characteristics (such as size and level of conferred degrees) have been found to be associated with positive responsiveness. On the other hand, stakeholders' perceptions of quality assurance as innovation have not been found to explain the level of responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

This research concludes that responsiveness is due to a number of factors; government guidelines for quality assurance have not been seen to be effective mainly due to the lack of sanctions. The type of business has been found to impact responsiveness to quality implementation with for-profit organisations being less likely to implement quality assurance measures than their not-for-profit counterparts.

By recommending appropriate approaches to increase institutional responsiveness to implement quality assurance, the research contributes to practice as it may inform state and business schools decision makers on the appropriateness of their policy formulation and execution. It can thus assist in drawing well-versed strategies and tactics. The research also contributes to the body of knowledge on the factors affecting the adoption of quality assurance in higher education institutions.

Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1   Quality and quality assurance in higher education

By tradition, quality has been considered an inherent and expected element of higher education as part of the professional responsibility of the academy (Harvey & Askling, 2003). Nevertheless, the literature from the late 1980s onward suggests a growing interest in quality assurance in the higher education system (Papadimitriou, 2011) resulting from the rapid changes in the higher education context driven by political, economic and socio-cultural forces in the latter part of the 20th century. The major changes include: massification of education, greater diversity in terms of programme provision and student types, matching programmes to labour market needs, shrinking resources, heightened accountability and indirect steering of higher education. These changes have brought a call for more formal (explicit and systematized) quality assurance schemes (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Dill, 2007; Westerheijden et al., 2007).

Formal quality assurance in higher education was first initiated in a few developed countries (USA and Western Europe) in the 1980s and 1990s, and then has radiated rapidly to other developed and developing countries over the past two decades (Van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994; Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2004; Dill, 2010). Today, different actors, such as the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, and international networks (e.g. INQAAHE) and regional organisations as well as professional associations are playing significant roles in the introduction and spread of formal quality assurance in higher education across the globe (Singh, 2010).

1.2   Quality assurance worldwide

In Europe, The Bologna Process, launched with the Bologna Declaration of 1999, is now implemented in 48 states, which define the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EHEA was meant "to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe" (EHEA, 2017). The influence of the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education (ESG) is spreading and is gaining acceptance as a shared reference point for all actors in European higher education. Though the fundamental

responsibility for quality continues to rest within the higher education institutions, internal quality assurance is a duty of the institution, and the development of an effective "quality culture" is clearly linked to their degree of operational autonomy.

In the United Kingdom, The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) declares that as the UK higher education grows and diversifies, its mission is "to safeguard standards and to support the improvement of quality for students" (QAA, 2017). As the scale, shape, structure and purpose of learning provision are changing in the UK and around the world, the QAA argues that it is uniquely placed to anticipate and respond to these changes in order to safeguard the reputation of UK higher education, support economic opportunity for the UK, and provide assurance to those who invest in and undertake learning (QAA, 2017).

In the United States, accreditation is the process used to ensure that schools, higher education institutions, and other education providers meet and maintain minimum standards of quality and integrity regarding academics, administration, and related services (USDE, 2017). It is a voluntary process based on the principle of academic self-governance. The entities which conduct accreditation are associations comprised of institutions and academic specialists in specific subjects, who establish and enforce standards of membership and procedures for conducting the accreditation process. Both the federal and state governments recognize accreditation as the mechanism by which institutional and programmatic legitimacy are ensured. In international terms, accreditation by a recognized accrediting authority is accepted as the U.S. equivalent of other countries' ministerial recognition of institutions belonging to national education systems.

Circumstances may vary among Arab states, but several broad trends have contributed to growing governmental interest in establishing policy mechanisms to ensure quality and accountability in higher education and Lebanon specifically is witnessing developments in this direction.

The Arab world's first debate and dialogue about quality in higher education was initiated through the Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARCHE) held in Cairo, in 2000. The conference recommendations included, among others, that "each Arab State should establish a mechanism for evaluating the quality of its higher education at the systemic, institutional, programme, personnel, and outcomes levels. Quality assurance methods may include academic

accreditation, institutional evaluations or sector reviews by disciplines and professional areas, performance funding, and competency-based approaches to professional education and training. Accordingly, Lebanon started a national debate on quality assurance in higher education with the help of international partners such as the World Bank, the European Union and the UNESCO. Today, 17 years after the conference, Lebanon's higher education system is still in the midst of the process of being fully quality assured although some strides have been achieved in this direction.

1.3 Quality assurance in the Lebanese higher education system

Lebanon's higher education system is the oldest in the region and dates back to 1866, when the American University of Beirut (AUB) was founded under the name of the Syrian Evangelical College, followed by the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) in 1875, then by the Lebanese American University (LAU) in 1947, as the Beirut College for Women. The Lebanese University (LU) which is the only public university in the country was founded in 1951. The Armenian Haigazian University was founded in 1955, followed by the Beirut Arab University (BAU) in 1960 in collaboration with the Egyptian university of Alexandria.

Following the 15-year civil war ending in 1990, the sector rapidly expanded and today it includes 46 private institutions and still one public university

The Lebanese higher education system is characterized by diversity, autonomy, openness and competitiveness (El-ghali & Ghalayini, 2016). These qualities have enabled Lebanese graduates to be accepted in prestigious institutions worldwide and have encouraged students and professors, mostly from the Arab region, to join Lebanon's tertiary institutions, thus propagating Lebanon's fame as a renowned centre for learning.

Up until 2014, the sector has not witnessed any attempts of legislative and administrative reforms. In 2014 a new higher education Law was ratified by the parliament calling for all higher education institutions to implement a quality assurance plan. The law cited the main pillars for quality assurance but no injunctions were specified if universities did not comply. The law also sets the structure for the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAHEQA) with the responsibility to inspect and audit universities in order to ultimately confer accreditation. The need for a national reform of the higher education system was driven globally

and locally. On the global level, the establishment of knowledge-based societies and the fast technological and scientific evolution forced the educational institutions to take on new roles and responsibilities and urged them to constantly update and adjust their programmes. On the local front, the growth in population, the increasing demand for higher education, in addition to economic issues and employment concerns have exerted significant pressure (Jammal, 2015).

In an academic conference held in December 2015, the general director of the Lebanese higher education ministry expressed his regret at the reluctance and slow implementation of quality assurance programmes in Lebanese institutions; of the 46 currently in operations, 11 have implemented a quality assurance system.

1.4   Over-arching research question and focus

The over-arching research question is what drives the implementation of quality assurance in higher education. The choice to focus on the private university system and business schools in particular is based on two facts: First, the private system is by far the largest comprising 36 universities (the others are "university colleges" and "university institutions") and 63.6% of the total students' population of 199,679 in 2015-2016; whereas the one public university takes in 36.3% of the total students' population. Second, the business schools in general attract the highest number of students (CERD, 2016). In 2015-2016, business school students comprised 11% and 35% respectively of the one public university students and private universities students. Overall, business schools students make up 25% of the total number of university students in Lebanon. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that quality assurance, if implemented, would serve a large constituent of the academic system and specifically the private sector.

1.5   Research objectives:

The research will explore the current landscape of quality assurance in the Lebanese higher education system, and specifically in its private business schools, and aims to answer the main research question: what drives the implementation of quality assurance in higher education? Thus, the objectives of this research are to:

1- Identify the organisational characteristics that differentiate responsive business schools from non-responsive business schools.

2- Explore how the characteristics of business schools leadership affect responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

3- Evaluate the relationship between the business schools stakeholders' perceptions of quality assurance dimensions and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

4- Determine how institutional pressures affect the implementation of quality assurance

5- Formulate recommendations on adequate approaches to implement quality assurance in a business school.

Scott (2003, p. 91) affirms that "there is a close connection between the condition of the environment and the characteristics of the system within it". Therefore, to answer research questions 1, the research will try to identify the organisational characteristics of the business schools that are associated with the implementation of quality assurance- specifically the business type of the university, the size and age of the business school, the tuition fee level, the number of programmes, the level of conferred degrees and the number of branches.

To realise objective 2, the research embraces the view of neo-institutionalism and diffusion of innovation theory both drawing attention to the agents that affect the institutional conditions (DiMaggio, 1988) and operate as change agents or "institutional entrepreneurs" "who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones" (Maguire et al., 2004, p. 657). Therefore, the characteristics of leadership are explored to determine if and how they influence responsiveness.

Then, the research will use the insights from the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 1995) to carry out objective 3. As quality assurance entails the implementation of new processes that diverge from the established practices it is considered an innovation (Daft, 1982; Damanpour and Evan, 1984) to the university that decides to adopt it or is considering a decision in this regard. Therefore, the perceptions of the stakeholders could either drive or hold its adoption process (Rogers, 1995).

Next, to achieve objective 4, the research will also use the insights of institutional theory to investigate the existence of the institutional pressures, derived from coercive, mimetic and normative factors, and to inspect their effect on responsiveness.

Finally, the last objective will be accomplished by integrating the research findings.

1.6   Structure of the thesis

The following chapter 2 examines the context of the higher education system in Lebanon, its structure and the major legislative changes that have had an impact on its functioning.

Chapter 3 presents theoretical and empirical review of quality assurance in higher education literature.

Chapter 4 provides the theoretical background for the study. In particular, it introduces the institutional theory and the diffusion of innovation theory and how they both link to quality assurance. It then reviews the literature on the effect of organisational characteristics and the role that organisational leadership plays in implementing quality assurance. The chapter ends with the development of the research hypotheses.

Chapter 5 discusses the research process, describes it in general and then applies it to this research project. It focuses on the research philosophy and approach and the choice of the research strategy and appropriate methods of data collection. In addition, it considers the selection of appropriate sampling strategies and methods of data analysis. Finally, the chapter discusses the limitations of the methodology adopted and the reliability and validity of the research, data and the data collection instruments.

Chapter 6 presents the research findings on the organisational characteristics' associated with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation. Univariate and descriptive analyses are conducted to understand and summarise the primary data and to provide a background for bivariate analyses. Univariate and descriptive analyses are used to identify similarities and differences between and within samples, which will then be subjected to statistical testing using Fisher's exact test.

Chapter 7 presents the findings of a questionnaire on the perceptions of leadership characteristics and quality assurance as innovation. Exploratory factor analysis is performed and is followed by a correlation test between the independent and dependent variables.

Chapter 8 reports on the interviews and the results of the thematic analysis generated by Nvivo11.

Chapter 9 discusses the results of the analyses in the light of the previous chapters (chapters 6, 7, and 8) and in the context outlined in Chapter 2; then the chapter summarises the key findings and discusses the contribution of this study to the body of knowledge on responsiveness to quality assurance in higher education and the contribution to practice of the findings. Finally, it addresses the limitations of the research and proposals for further research.

Chapter 2   Context of Higher Education in Lebanon

2.1   Introduction

Up until the early nineties, even at the height of the civil war (1975-1990), Lebanon was considered the "University of the East" (Al-Jack, 2005). Its higher education system, much of which was and still is private, was regarded as the "oil" that generates money for a country with a small economy lacking natural resources (unlike its Arab neighbours) to cover its expenses and support its treasury.

Private higher education, which preceded the public system, began in Lebanon in the second half of the nineteenth century. Before that date, individuals wishing to pursue higher education went abroad, primarily to Turkey as Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Empire (Nahas, 2009). Since its foundation, the private higher education system played a key role in building the national intellect. The system contributed to the institution of the administrative, educational, judicial and military faculties of the Lebanese state. It also provided the private sector with knowledge, technical and scientific competencies (Khoury, 2013).To understand its current situation, it is imperative to describe the historical, political and socio-economic context in which it operates. This could shed some light upon the reasons behind its struggle with several issues including the implementation of quality assurance.

2.2   History

The history of the private higher education system in Lebanon can be summarized in four main stages:

1. The first stage: 1866- 1961

The first phase, the foundation stage, witnessed the establishment of the first private university in Beirut in 1866, the American University of Beirut (AUB), followed by the University of Saint-Joseph (Jesuit-USJ) in 1875, then by the Lebanese American University (LAU) in 1947. The only public university, the Lebanese University was founded in 1951, almost eighty years after AUB. The most important thing at this stage was that it was almost monopolized by two systems of higher education, each of which had roots abroad: the first, in the French language and

culture, and the second, in the English language and American culture. Most of the Jesuit students were from Lebanon, while half of the students of the American University were from Lebanon and half were foreigners (Bachour, 2005). On the social level, AUB and LAU attracted the majority of their students from the middle classes and above, with a minority of the poor. The contributions of these two universities to the sciences and arts and the building of artistic skills were undoubtedly enormous. Nevertheless, Barakat (1993) considers that these were generally not contributing to the establishment of a uniform national Lebanese culture by propagating foreign principles and dogmas. The political regime during this stage moved from the Ottoman Empire, to the French republic and then in 1943 to the Lebanese republic with close ties to the latter.

2. The second stage: 1961-1975:

The beginning of the year 1961 witnessed the first attempt at regulating the system with the passing of the first law with new rules for higher education. The 1961 law issued on 27/12/1961 consists of 28 articles that state and describe the legal framework of establishing and running private higher learning institutions, the conditions for their establishment, the specifications for obtaining a degree, and the penalties of opposing the contents of the law.

Nevertheless, the law said very little on the qualifications required for faculty members and the physical aspect of buildings and supplies.

3. The third stage: 1975- 1990

This stage is marked by the outbreak of the 15-year civil war in 1975 that affected the foundations and structures of many existing universities, changed their nature and brought to the surface new institutions and problems (Bachour, 2005). To cater for the divided population of the country, many universities opened branches outside the capital, Beirut, and new universities and university institutes began work without a license taking advantage from the absence of the rule of law in times of war. These institutions were for-profit organisations that distorted the academic level (Bachour, 2005) and introduced challenges to the old and reputable universities who found themselves in the midst of an unavoidable high competition for students.

4. The fourth stage: 1990- present

The post-war stage (1990) witnessed a movement of expansion and radical change in the number of institutions, colleges, institutions, specialties, students and graduates. In 1996, decree law

number 9274 was issued consisting of 11 articles laying down the criteria, standards and conditions for establishing an institution of higher education. The law also established the academic qualifications and requirements of faculty and administrative bodies which were not mandated in the 1961 law.

Article 7 of this decree calls for the establishment of an Education Committee made up of eight members headed by the Minister of Education, tasked with reviewing applications for the establishment of new institutions and making sure that all requirements and criteria that are described in this decree and the 1961 law are met.

From 1996 onwards, the state has licensed new colleges and institutions, as well as new departments within existing ones. This has led to a rise in the overall number of students from 82,446 for the academic year 1995-1996 to 195,474 at the end of 2016 according to statistics from the national Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD). Some experts explain this phenomenon by the ease of passing the official Baccalaureate high school exam, which lost much of its stringency during and after the war and by the new curriculum of school education adopted by the Ministry of Education in 1996 (Al-Jack, 2005). Others argue that the expansion of demand for higher education is following a global trend (Bachour, 2005; Dill, 2007) instigated by the market's need for skilled graduates, and facilitated by technological advancement in the forms of virtual learning and distance learning. Dill (2007) concurs that the competitive forces unleashed by globalization and massification increased students' admission rates because they sought to achieve the increasing private benefits available in this context to individuals with higher education degrees. Therefore, within this rapidly changing atmosphere, governments and other interested parties are urged to assure the quality of academic offerings, and to address broader public policy goals regarding areas such as access, affordability, economic competitiveness, and the sustaining of national or cultural identity (Kinser, 2014).

2.3 Demographic, socio-economic and political Context

Lebanon is a small open country—culturally, politically and economically—of high middle income status with a population of 4.5 million people in 2015 (The World Bank, 2016). Lebanon's diverse sectarian composition affected Lebanon in two distinct ways: it served as a medium for cultural and religious variety as well as for socio-political liberties; but it has also

increased its vulnerability to regional and international conflicts. Situated in one of the most volatile regions in the world, Lebanon is continuously exposed to political and security shocks evidenced by the devastating civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990 which fundamentally inflicted damage to the country's sectors- governance, infrastructure, and the macro-economy. At independence date (1943), the Lebanese state inherited a sectarian system of governance, mainly inspired and influenced by the French government that divided the regime power between its different religions and sects. Decades of recurrent conflict, political instability, and deep social and economic inequalities resulted in the state being 'hollowed out' in the face of sectarian interests and the imperative of preserving national peace at the expense of effective and efficient government (World Bank, 2016). Lebanon's civil war was formally ended by the 1990 Taef Accord which aimed at making the sectarian system more equitable; however, its partial implementation enabled the (wartime) elite to solidify its power behind the veil of a sectarian system, thus paralyzing the decision-making process. Consequently, reform efforts to improve the quality of institutions and promote growth have been limited.

Since the end of the civil war, the Lebanese economy has expanded at a moderate pace, but with high volatility due to frequent shocks. Nonetheless, the economic activity remains insufficient to regain pre-crisis growth rates or even reach potential output. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index, the weakness of the macroeconomic environment is Lebanon's biggest constraint, both in absolute terms and also compared to other countries. Lebanon's macroeconomic environment is ranked as the second worst in the world ranking of 144 countries (World Bank, 2016). A high debt level, sizable twin deficits (fiscal and current accounts), a large banking system, and a highly dollarized pegged economy present significant macroeconomic vulnerabilities which have been present for nearly two decades (World Bank, 2016).

Lebanon also faces a considerable unemployment challenge as economic growth has not translated into sufficient job creation and quality jobs. Unemployment is high, especially among women and youth, and has been exacerbated by the influx of Syrian refugees in the last seven years. Youth (age 15-24) unemployment rate in 2016 scored 43% (UNDP, 2016). In 2013, the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies (LCPS) reported that 23,000 individuals, on average, enter the labour market annually (Kawar and Tzannatos, 2013). To absorb them, the economy would

need to create more than six times the number of jobs it has been creating. According to Robalino and Sayed (2012), although there is a high level of graduates, there exists a shortage in terms of technical, cognitive, and -cognitiv e skills needed in the workplace that can compromise the expansion of high productivity sectors. This fact suggests that reforms in the education system are needed to correct the current skills gap.

Governance and institutional challenges are the most binding constraints to Lebanon's development (World Bank, 2016) including: (i) a lack of political will, capacity and institutions to design and enact new laws and policies and to implement reforms; (ii) a lack of vision for Lebanon and leadership for the country; and (iii) public institutions that are perceived as extremely weak, inefficient and possessing low capacity to provide high quality services, which is particularly damaging to vulnerable and less privileged citizens.

2.4   The political and religious/sectarian environment

The private higher education sector is like other sectors, where sectarian, political and utilitarian factors play an active role. Many private higher education institutions are owned or managed by influential political and religious parties who tend to resist change. Religious groups own and control many universities. For example, the Greek Orthodox Church founded the University of Balamand, the Sunni Moslem charitable association founded Beirut Arab University, the American Evangelical Mission founded the American University of Beirut, the Society of Jesus founded St. Joseph University (USJ), the American Protestant Mission founded the Lebanese American University, and the Higher Islamic Shiite Council founded the Islamic University of Lebanon. Any proposed change to these universities' in terms of their structure and operational procedures are considered to be an act of intrusion in the internal affairs of the religion. As a result, the government has been very cautious in its improvement initiatives of the system and has avoided forceful measures in this regard.

2.5   Human development context

In spite of challenges, Lebanon is well known for its high level of human development, as well as its large educated and successful Diaspora. In 2016, the Adult literacy rate scored 93.9% and youth literacy rate scored 99.3%. (UNDP, 2016). The country benefits from a large and

resilient remittance base (6.1 percent of GDP in 2015). Emigration is a major source of employment and better economic opportunities for Lebanese, but is also a reason behind the scarcity of skilled labour in the country. Progress on job creation is constrained by the sectarian system of governance that drives the distribution of power, has been captured by elites, and is lacking in accountability. This system results in political interference in public institutions and ensures a concentration of political influence and wealth across a thin stratum of society. It also exhibits a conflict of interest between the business community and the political elite which creates economic rents (Robalino & Sayed, 2012).

2.6   The Lebanese private higher education current context

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) is the authority supervising the higher education system in Lebanon. The Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) is an autonomous organisation under the trusteeship of the MEHE tasked with the responsibility of conducting research for the system's improvement and preparing statistical reports to help decision-making. In 2002, a Directorate General for Higher Education (DGHE) was established to regulate the private higher education sector and supervise and coordinate all actions related to it. The DGHE is in charge of the 45 private higher education institutions currently in operation in the country. The one state university (the Lebanese University) is not under the supervision of the DGHE. Its governing system (the president and the council of Deans) reports directly to the minister of education and higher education and the Council of Ministers.

2.6.1   The higher education type of institutions

There are three types of higher education institutions in Lebanon: a university, a university college and a university institute for religious studies. A university must start with at least three faculties, one of which should be for human sciences and another should be for sciences. These can grant all levels of degrees, from Bachelor degrees to doctoral degrees. A university institute or a university college has at least one faculty. Most of these grant Bachelor degrees. A few can deliver higher degrees after receiving permission from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Among the 46 higher education institutions in operation in Lebanon, there are 35 full universities, one state university-the Lebanese University, seven university colleges and three university institutes for religious studies. Some of these institutions are owned by a religious association or a political party and are not-for-profit; others are owned by individuals and set up as for-profit organisations.

Figure 2-1: The organisation of the higher education system in Lebanon.
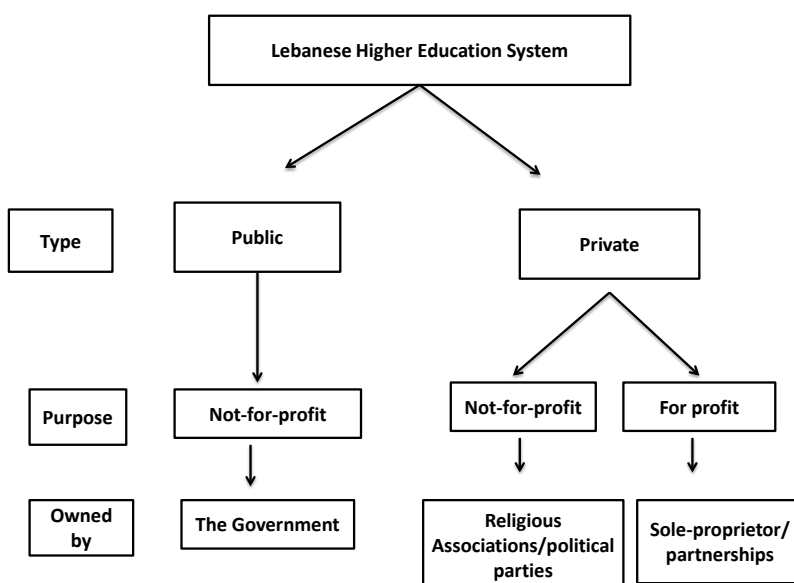
2.6.2 Students

The Table below presents the number of students for six academic years and their distribution in the private and the one public higher education institutions. This study shows that the number of students at the Lebanese University remains nearly constant. The increase in the number of students is absorbed by the private system with differential rates. According to the UNDP report in 2016, the gross enrolment rate of tertiary education (the percentage of students who go on to tertiary education within five years of completing secondary education) was 43% a decline from 48% in 2013 and 54% in 2010, which is more than double the average for other Arab countries (Kawar & Tzannatos, 2013). The findings of the report suggest that efforts need to be made to know why students are not joining tertiary education.

Lebanon has the highest rate of Bachelor degree university graduates in the Middle East. Yet there are concerns over Lebanon's ability to maintain its regional reputation and the quality of its higher education system (Kawar & Tzannatos, 2013).

During the academic year 2009-2010, 39% of total students' enrolment was in Social Sciences, Business and Law and 21% in Humanities and Arts (Yaacoub & Badre, 2012). During the academic year 2015-2016, 33% of total students' enrolment was in Business Sciences and Law (CERD, 2016).

Table 2-1 Number of students in higher education institutions

Year	Total number of students	Total number of students in the Lebanese University	Total number of students in private institutions	Total number of foreign student (in private and public)
2009-2010	180,850	72,813	108,037	29,361
2010-2011	192,138	72,507	119,631	31912
2011-2012	192,522	73,698	118,824	26233
2012-2013	191,788	71,440	120,348	-
2014-2015	190,157	69,994	120,163	21,359
2015-2016	199,679	72,518	127,161	19,621

Data compiled from CERD website, www.crdp.org

The Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies (LCPS) reports that university graduates make up 30% of people seeking a job (Kawar and Tzannatos, 2013), thus suggesting that the higher education system needs to play a key role in resolving the problem of youth unemployment in Lebanon. The key issue related to this sector is the mismatch between the highly skilled graduates that universities supply and the skills and professionals the labour market demands; these supply-demand failings in the labour market are increasingly preventing young people from finding a job in their country that fits their qualifications.

The figures in table 2-1 show a 10% decrease in the number of foreign students from 2009-2010 to 2015-2016 which raises questions about the causes and suggesting that steps need to be taken to rectify the problem.

2.6.3 Lebanon as an education hub

Before the civil war, Lebanon was considered as an education hub for the Middle East (Bachour, 2005). Students from the region and specifically the Arab countries came to Lebanon for higher education. They were attracted by the country's relatively open society, a liberal living style, and political stability. Dirani (2006) describes the Lebanese people as "non-traditional with westernized characteristics" which contradicts with their more conservative and traditional neighbours. As opposed to the other 21 countries, Lebanon embraces a democratic political system where public election is observed and freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed by the constitution. Lebanon's first university was founded in 1866, and the first Arab university- the Egyptian University- was founded nearly 40 years later in 1908. In the academic year 1973/74, one year before the civil war, foreign students accounted for 57% of the total university students' population. Twenty years later, in the academic year 1993/1994, the number had dropped to 23%. The decline continued after the war and reached 10% in the academic year 2003/2004 (Bachour, 2005). In the academic year 2015/2016, this percentage totalled 9.82%. This drop proves that although the loss of Arab students was firstly due to the war, its perpetuation afterwards raises other areas of concern, such as the quality of education (Bachour, 2005; Al-Jack, 2005). In this regard, experts advise that Lebanon is in urgent need of reforming its higher education system and of marketing itself as an educational destination in order to attract students from Arab countries as well as international students (Eliktisad, 2017).

2.6.4 Academic and administrative staff

The Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) reports that the total number of academic staff increases at a rate of 10% yearly, whereas the number of administrative staff increases at a yearly average of 14%. The numbers of professors and administrative support staff for six academic years are shown in the Table 2. The student-teaching staff ratio varies with an average of 12 students for each instructor. More precisely, in the academic years 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 the ratios were 10:1 and 9.5:1 respectively which are small if compared with the 16:1 ratio of the 34 OECD member countries and the United Kingdom's 18:1 ratio (OECD, 2013).

Table 2-2 Number of instructors and administrative staff

Year	Total number of instructors in higher education system	Instructors in private universities	Total number of administrative staff in higher education system	Total number of administrative staff in private universities
2006-2007	13,556	8,979	4,511	2,799
2007-2008	14,608	9,352	5,064	3,224
2009-2010	16,387	11,161	5,826	3933
2010-2011	17,279	10,303	6,332	4,260
2011-2012	19,186	12,485	6,478	4,327
2012-2013	20,082	13,042	6,455	4,273

Data compiled from CERD website, www.crdp.org

2.6.5 Academic classification of teaching staff

Academic titles exist in the Lebanese universities and are generally at four levels: instructor, assistant professor, associate professor and professor. There is no national system for the classification of the academic staff in Lebanon and this classification is done by each institution following internal institutional rules, usually taking into account the degree and years in tenure as the two main criteria. An "Instructor" classification is often reserved for lecturers who have no PhD. New PhD graduates are at "the assistant professor" level. With the development of their expertise the assistant professors will be promoted to the position of associate professors and then full professors.

2.6.6 Adopted systems and admission rules

The autonomy and freedom of education is guaranteed by the constitution in Lebanon. The universities are thus free to choose which system to follow. Most of these universities follow the American credit system. Few follow the European 3-cycle system (LMD).

The law mandates that to be eligible for university acceptance a student must pass the Lebanese Baccalaureate or an equivalent certificate, such as the American Scholastic Assessment Test I (SAT I) and the Scholastic Assessment Test II (SAT II). In addition, different requirements can

be set by the institutions, such as a local entrance test prepared by these individual higher educational institutions. In most times, the entrance test is a placement test.

The curriculum content of the different programmes and majors is defined at the institutional level. There is no national framework for the definition of the subjects. Only in the law faculties there are around 12 compulsory courses that must be included in the curriculum of all higher education institutions, whether they are private or public. The assessment of these courses is carried out nationally by academics from the Lebanese University.

2.6.7   Doctoral studies

Traditionally doctoral studies are offered in few institutions including the Lebanese University in a limited number of domains of the human sciences. More recently, some doctoral schools have been established; three at the Lebanese University, one at the American University of Beirut and, one at the "Saint Joseph University". Some joint PhD studies are launched with schools at the international level (co-tutelle with France, with Canada, with the USA etc.). In 2011, speaking at a workshop organised by the American University of Culture and Education (AUCE), the general director of the Ministry of Education and Higher education stated that graduate and Doctoral studies at the Lebanese universities are not up to international standards and that several countries have complained about the quality of their graduates (The Daily Star, 2011, p.3).

2.6.8   Research and international cooperation

The organisation of the research activities is the sole responsibility of the institution. At the national level, the National Council for Scientific Research (NCSR) offers some financial support for research projects. It also defines and supports associated research units. At the institutional level, several universities have established structures to encourage and promote the research activities. For example, at the University of Balamand a research council has been established since 2003 and supports reviewed and accurately selected research projects. Moreover, the Lebanese researchers participate in some regional and international projects including some projects with the European Union and USAID projects. Most of them cooperate

and publish with the research units they have visited during their PhD preparation (Tempus, 2012).

In terms of international cooperation, Lebanese universities in general participate actively in Tempus and Erasmus Mundus projects. The CEDRE programme has also been supporting research cooperation between Lebanon and France. The European Union 7th Framework Programme which ran from 2007 to 2013 saw Lebanese participation in a number of projects several of which dealt with quality assurance in higher education. Some examples are the Tempus-QAHEL and Tempus-LEPAC and, the UNDP-EQAIP.

However, there are no clear national policies regarding the organisation and development of the international dimension in the Lebanese higher education.

2.6.9   Services

Most universities establish an office of students' affairs or clubs for social and sports activities. The websites of most of the universities offer information about the services to the students and their parents. In addition, several universities have a clear students' support and tutoring strategy. Some universities have also offices of employment and there is often a strong relationship with the alumni.

Some universities provide students with a specific role in the committees at all levels. In most of the universities the students are requested to provide their feedback at the end of each course or module. This indicates their role in the internal quality assurance system.

Students associations exist in nearly all universities. However, there is no student union at the national level. Moreover, the elections of the boards of the associations are often politically oriented and one can notice the lack of discussions regarding the students' interest and the development of the higher education as a sector (Tempus, 2012).

Placement of students for internship and training are often part of the curricula in the different Lebanese universities. However, there are no clear and common regulations organizing their length of time and the process for their assessment. These placements are not often financed. Common projects with the business community exist but this aspect needs to be fostered. Nevertheless, efforts exist in this direction. For example the Lebanese Industrial Research

Association (LIRA) is an example of cooperation between the Lebanese industrialists and the universities mainly centred on the final year projects.

2.6.10 Financing

The state supports completely the Lebanese University at the financial level. The students enrolled in the Lebanese University pay a limited subscription fee. Private universities are free to set their tuition fees and do not receive direct financial support from the government. Tuition fees are the major source of funding for the private universities and few receive financial support from donors. It is worth noting that several universities have a scholarship system that supports the brightest students in reducing their tuition.

Some universities that follow the American model (mainly AUB – American University of Beirut- and LAU- Lebanese American University) benefit from endowments and gifts that finance buildings, equipment, programmes and scholarships. In 2015, USAID offered approximately 17 million dollars to the two American universities- LAU and AUB (USAID, 2015).

Foreign Governments give support to some universities and schools through the provision of professors or teaching material or the support of joint programmes. This is particularly the case with the French. Figures are not normally published. Many charitable and/or political foundations and some foreign governments grant scholarships to students (such as Rafic Hariri or Issam Fares or Walid Bin Talal foundations).

Finally, many universities belong to religious communities that provide not only the land but also the labour cost of the religious personnel who work as teachers or administrators (priests and nuns). It is not easy to assess the value of this complementary financing but an estimate of 120 billion Lebanese pounds (LBP) seems reasonable (Nahas, 2009)

Educational loans granted to students from the financial sector, i.e. banks and financial institutions, have increased significantly in recent years, especially as a result of the mechanisms introduced by the Banque du Liban. The data indicates that the value of educational loans rose from a low level - almost non-existent at the end of 2009- to about 236 billion pounds in 2016 benefiting 12,209 students (Eliktisad, 2017). It registered a 43.5% average increase between 2010 and 2015.

The government funding for education is both direct and indirect. Direct spending pertains to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Lebanese University, while indirect spending consists of educational allowances to cover the tuition of children of government employees. Direct public expenditure on education at all levels (general, vocational and higher) in Lebanon is low -at around 1.8% of GDP (Tempus, 2012). This percentage is also low by regional standards, considering that the average public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP for 18 Arab countries stood at 6.4% in 2003 (World Bank 2008). Moreover, in Lebanon, as much as 90% of this expenditure goes towards wages and salaries. However, private spending on education is high and far exceeds government spending. Household spending on education exceeds 10% of the household's total expenditure in 2004. Although this could make up for low public spending, private spending on education remains contingent on each family's financial position.

2.6.11 Governance

There is no single governance model adopted in the Lebanese universities. Each institution has its own governance model. The Lebanese University is governed by the Council of the University formed from its president and the respective faculties' deans. The deans are generally selected by the Council of Ministers from a list elected by the faculty members. Private universities, usually those adopting the American model, have a board of trustees that nominates the president and the deans. In these universities, the executive power is also in the Universities' Councils. Some private universities also have private owners who are in this case the members of the board of trustees.

2.6.12 Licensing a new institution or a new school or branch

The licensing of a new institution or a new school or branch in an already licensed and existing institution is regulated by the private higher education act (26/12/1961) and the decree 9274 (7/10/1996) (MEHE, 2017).
The main standards to be respected for this type of licensing include specifications for the buildings, scientific equipments, laboratories facilities and libraries, and specifications for the academic staff whereby a professor should be present for each 20 students including one full-

timer for each 30 students. 50% of the professors should hold a PhD or the highest degree in their specialization. 90% of the professors should be Lebanese. The support staff should have expertise in their domains.

The Licensing procedure for this type of licensing is as follows: 1. Presenting an application for licensing by the requesting legal entity; 2. The Directorate General (DGHE) verifies the licensing file and informs, in 15 days, the requesting entity if any missing element exists;

3. Once the licensing file is completed, the Directorate General transfers the file to the Technical Committee to study it and to report on it within a month.

4. The report of the technical committee is then studied by the Council of Higher Education and may decide on licensing, requesting modifications or refusal of the demand.

5. Where the licensing application is approved by the Council of Higher Education, the Minister will submit the file to the Council of Ministers for final approval.

2.6.13 Recognition and equivalence

To manage the recognition and equivalence of degrees, Lebanon has established the equivalence committee in 1955. It is formed of the presidents of the Lebanese University, the American University of Beirut, the "Université Saint Joseph", the Beirut Arab University, the "Université Saint Esprit Kaslik" and the "Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts", and an administrative judge. Its role is twofold; to recognize the diploma of private universities and institutions inside Lebanon and to give equivalence to higher education diplomas from abroad. The Equivalence Committee has complete independence and its decisions can only be discussed by the Council of Ministers. For the equivalence of diplomas, the diplomas of the Lebanese University are considered as reference. In 2011, The Equivalence Committee announced that it processes between 6000 and 8000 requests per year, 65% of which are Lebanese degrees (MEHE, 2011). Almost half of the requests for equivalence correspond to degrees in business administration.

Besides the Equivalence Committee there are profession-based committees that handle the degrees in specific domains. The Colloquium Examination Committee organizes colloquium exams twice per year to authorize the practice of health and medical professions. Students holding Lebanese or foreign degrees in health and medical sciences have to pass this exam. For

engineering, there is the Engineering Practicing Committee established in 1955 that advises the Ministry of Public Work about the authorization to practice engineering. For degrees from abroad the committee requests the university delivering the degree to be institutionally accredited (e.g. by ABET, CEAB, CTI, NAAB...).

2.6.14 Ranking

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS- University Rankings of Arab Universities) ranks AUB second in the Arab region (the only Lebanese university to rank among the region's top 10) and 228 globally (QS, 2016). Six other Lebanese universities were mentioned in the ranking of the Arab region: the Lebanese University, University of Balamand, Saint-Joseph University, Beirut Arab University, and Lebanese American University. QS studies the general performance of universities around the world through certain criteria, like the faculty-student ratio and the percentage of academic staff holding a doctorate. Also, in order to measure the impact of research, the ranking monitors the number of citations per research paper and the number of research papers published per faculty member.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2016-2017 places the American University of Beirut in the 501-600 rank. Whereas The Centre for World University Rankings places AUB at 651 in its global 2016 rankings; AUB is the only Lebanese university to make either of these lists. The Lebanese American University (LAU), according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, ranks second place in the field of scientific research; The American University of Beirut (AUB) came in fifth (Times Higher Education, 2016-2017).

2.6.15 The Place of quality assurance

Since the first Arab conference for quality assurance in higher education that was held in Cairo in 2000, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon was persistent in advocating the necessity to improve the quality of its higher education institutions and the need to establish a national body for evaluation and accreditation.

In 2001, a panel discussion was convened by the Education Committee in the House of Representatives to discuss the draft of a new law on higher education to replace the law enacted in 1996. Discussions continued until a draft law was issued in 2003 proposing the establishment

of an independent body to monitor and ensure quality in higher education (The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance- NAHEQA). The law was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2010 and forwarded to the House of Representatives for final approval. The law stated that:

> *All higher education institutions, public and private, with all their branches, operating on Lebanese territory, officially licensed, are subject to the provision of the quality assurance standards adopted by the agency. In case an institution or one of its branches or one of its programmes failed to undergo the external evaluation, this shall be considered as a violation to the provisions of the applicable laws of higher education, and the minister shall be informed to take the appropriate steps and measures, within the framework of laws and regulations in force (Law no. 285/2014.)*

However, the law did not specify any penalties nor any disciplinary sanctions in case of non-compliance, which may contribute to the reluctance of many universities to implement quality assurance.

Also in 2003, Decision No.49 of the Council of Ministers gave the green light to adopt the principle of auditing the licensed institutions of higher education in order to verify the implementation of the stipulated standards and to control quality. It commissioned specialized international bodies to carry out this role (APAVE, TUV-Hellas, SGS). Consequently, the Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) carried out the first audit of private universities in 2004. Then, it issued and published "the black list" of institutions that were not licensed, warning that their conferred degrees were not recognized.

During the years 2011-2013, the DGHE carried out a second audit and evaluation of new campuses opened by different higher education institutions. It verified the legal status of institutions to check the appropriateness of the material, administrative and academic aspects of the conditions imposed by the laws. The Director General of Higher Education (DGHE) presented a table showing the legal status of each private higher education institution (Khoury, 2013).

In 2014, the new higher education law was ratified by the parliament but the NAHEQA has not yet been established.

In its efforts to implement quality assurance, The Directorate General for Higher Education sought help from the World Bank and its closest neighbour- the European Union. Thus, the three partners engaged in several projects aimed at improving the state of higher education in the Lebanese private sector. The Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE), a group of local experts supporting the modernisation of higher education in countries neighbouring the EU, is one manifestation of the cooperation with the European Union. Their activities are financed through the Erasmus+ programme and coordinated at the local level by the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs).

Meanwhile, several institutions have established a clear internal quality assurance process with a quality assurance unit. Some of the institutions have undergone accreditation with international agencies. NEASC has accredited the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University at the institutional level. The "Université Saint Joseph" has been evaluated by AERES. The "Université Saint Esprit Kaslik" has been evaluated by IEP. Several programmes have also been evaluated by ABET such as the School of Engineering at the Lebanese International University (LIU).

2.6.15.1 Quality assurance in the private business schools

The first private business school in Lebanon was established in 1866 in the Syrian Evangelical College (currently the American University of Beirut-AUB). Today, 94% (33 of 35) of the private universities operating in Lebanon have an established business school. The business schools population in 2015 totalled 35% of their entire students' population. Their mostly offered academic programmes are in General Management, Marketing, Accounting, Finance and Hospitality Management. The majority confers Bachelor and Masters' degrees and only 4 of the 33 offer a doctoral level degree.

The primary type of responsiveness to adoption of quality assurance at a business school is an internal quality assurance system where the school submits to an internal process of review aimed at academic and administrative enhancement. The school sets up self-imposed standards and a self-assessment process to ensure conformity (Chahine et al., 2008).

A more advanced type of responsiveness to adoption of quality assurance is programme accreditation where the business school is interested in externally validating its academic programmes (Kaissi et al., 2008). An example is a business school acquiring the AACSB or FIBAA accreditation. The process usually involves a self-assessment process followed by a site visit by external peer reviewers from an accreditation agency, a report of that review, and a decision to either grant or deny accreditation, or to put the school on probation (or some other intermediary status) until full implementation of required standards (Hayward, 2006). The accreditation provides recognition that the content and quality of the programmes has been evaluated and that they meet the standards set by the profession (Jammal, 2015). Programme accreditation fosters programme accountability to the public and engagement in continuous peer review and improvement. Accreditation agencies will look at faculty, curriculum, students, resources and administrative structure to make sure that all students are offered the same standard of supervision, advising, support and access to relevant programme resources. Programmes that are seeking to become accredited are expected to have developed and implemented an overall plan in which the faculty members have the freedom and accountability to run the programme the way they see fit (Casile & Davis-blake, 2002).

Of the 33 business schools, 11 have an established quality assurance system. Three of these are externally accredited: two by AACSB (USA) and one by FIBAA (Germany). AACSB is regarded as the gold standard of achievement in business education around the world (Mckee et al., 2005; Espiritu, 2007; AACSB, 2012). The remaining 8 schools have implemented an internal quality assurance system.

2.7   Conclusion

The higher education system in Lebanon is facing tremendous challenges exacerbated by the absence of strict regulatory measures in relation to quality assurance and control.

The rapid expansion that the higher education sector witnessed during the nineties coupled with national, regional and international competition threatens Lebanon's reputation as an educational hub. Issues related to admission standards, curriculum content, assessment and research activities are not yet settled. Students' employability and the lack of necessary professional skills also need consideration. Research on the responses of institutions to the government's efforts to introduce

quality and initiatives to resolve any issues of implementation of quality assurance will provide valuable material for policy makers concerned with the development of Lebanese higher education.

Chapter 3   Quality Assurance in Higher Education

3.1   The rationale for quality assurance in higher education

The impact of globalisation, the opening of the markets, technology, economic and financial crises in addition to an increased demand for education had a toll on higher education. Competition among universities has heightened as students can apply to and access an array of universities and programmes around the world that fit their tuition-payment capacity and their requirements. Academic faculty members now have a wide choice of institutions from which to choose. Technology, in particular, changed the way education is provided through distance and online learning. Furthermore, the emergence of political and economic conglomerates, such as the European Union, imposed obligations and restrictions by which higher education institutions must abide. Governments, the society, employers, and parents are therefore calling upon universities to provide skilful and knowledgeable graduates able to face the challenges and demands of the market. In view of such a turbulent, dynamic and highly competitive environment (Baker, 2002; Mok, 2005; Alashloo et al., 2005) institutions of higher education feel compelled to increase their level of effectiveness across functions and processes. Consequently, starting in the 1980s (Papadimitriou, 2011) they resorted to the adoption and implementation of quality assurance systems that have been more known to be implemented in the industrial arena. Although this adoption was faced with scepticism, quality assurance in higher education constitutes a quality improvement initiative that continues to be established in higher education today (QAA, 2017) as an indispensable intervention to realise the objectives of effectiveness and competitiveness (Baidoun, 2003).

Aly and Akpovi (2001) affirm that quality assurance implementation improves higher education processes in many aspects including students' services, administrative practices, staff morale and teamwork as well as the quality of academic programmes. Brennan (2012) argues that reputational enhancement, improved self-understanding, changes in practices and relationships and better information for promotional purposes are some of the advantages that quality assurance can bring to a university. In the case of the UK, Brown (2012) agrees that the

systematic approach to protecting quality (through quality assurance) has benefited students and other stakeholders immensely. Newton (2013) concurs that "it is indisputable that there have been substantial benefits deriving from quality assurance" (p.9) in higher education. There is then consensus that the implementation of quality assurance is a winning strategy providing a competitive advantage and sustaining the survival of the university.

3.2 Defining quality

The plethora of definitions that attempt to capture the meaning of quality in general is proof of its elusiveness. For some researchers, the definition's focal point is the customer. Thus, for Gilmore (1974) and Crosby (1979) it is the conformity to the specifications and the requirements identified by the customers. Parasuraman et al. (1985) went further by affirming that quality is exceeding customers' expectations. Others define quality in a more mystical way leaving its interpretation to the reader. They say it is *excellence* (Peters and Waterman, 1982) or simply *value* (Feigenbaum, 1951). Crosby (1979) and Juran and Gryna (1988) take a more concrete approach stating respectively that it is *defect avoidance* and *fitness for purpose.*

This profusion of definitions confirms that quality is a multi-dimensional concept. Its definition depends on the context of its implementation and the perceptions of the stakeholders. Service quality, in particular, is challenging to define and measure (Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1982) due to its reliance on human labour and the simultaneity of its production and consumption where the customer plays an integral part in its delivery (Yeo, 2008). Additionally, services are intangible and their definition includes behavioural attributes such as performance and effort (Rossi et al., 1999) and activities or processes (Gronroos, 2001). Services are also perishable. They cannot be stored nor exchanged. Consequently, mistakes committed during their delivery are costly in terms of customer dissatisfaction and loss. In contrast, firms offering superior service, as perceived by customers, attain increased market share (Buzzell & Gale, 1987) and subsequently high profits (Gummesson, 1991), customer satisfaction (Dohert, 2008), and word of mouth recommendation (Parasuraman et al., 1991).

3.3 Quality in higher education

Education services are difficult to measure, since the outcome is reflected in the transformation of individuals' knowledge, their characteristics, and their behaviour (Tsinidou et al., 2010). Therefore, there is no commonly accepted definition of quality that applies specifically to the higher education system (Michael, 1998). It is generally accepted that the concept is problematic and contested due to the perceptions of different stakeholders (Houston, 2008). Some stakeholders take an economic perspective, seeking to increase financial profit, whereas others operate from more societal perspectives, aiming to advance education and society's welfare (Eagle & Brennan, 2007). For example, students want a curriculum that responds to the challenges of the current knowledge-based environment, faculty need research facilities, parents want value for money and employers seek workplace skills.

Additionally, quality in education is hard to measure due to the complicated nature of the educational product (Becket & Brooks, 2008). Harvey (1995) argues that there is no discernible end product of higher education as the transformative process continues to make an impact long after the completion of higher education. Edward Deming, the Guru of quality management, did not give quality one definition. Rather he stated what quality is not. It is not variability and uncertainty in delivering the service (Deming, 1993). Consistency, then, is significant. Deming proclaimed continual improvement and advocated teamwork in doing so. His model of quality improvement constitutes a road map for institutions in their pursuit of advancing academia. He maintains that the main principles of quality assurance are: "Fit for purpose" (the service should be suitable for the intended purpose); and "right first time" (mistakes should be eliminated before delivery)(Deming, 1994). For higher education, this indicates that teaching should attend to the needs of the stakeholders (students, parents, society...) and that mistakes are not tolerated. This is not a requirement for the teaching process only but also for other processes supporting teaching such as the administrative processes.

One of the most clearly defined sets of dimensions of quality for higher education has been identified by Harvey and Knight (1996), who argue that quality can be broken down into five different but related dimensions:

- Quality as exceptional (for example, high standards of teaching and evaluation)
- Quality as consistency (for example, zero defects/mistakes in administrative processes)

- Quality as fitness for purpose (for example, satisfying employers' needs)
- Quality as value for money (for example, education that is worthy the fees).
- Quality as transformative (for example, a process of improvement and growth in career opportunities).

Considering that education as a process requires inputs and delivers outputs, its functional quality depends on the quality of its ingredients. Examples of input include the selection of students, faculty qualifications, entry requirements, etc. Outputs include a financially rewarding job, academic performance, service to the society, etc. The process which binds the two together includes teaching and learning, instruction mediums, assessments, etc. A study by questionnaire conducted by (Chua, 2004), found that the students' perspective of quality falls into mainly the process and output category. However, parents seemed to consider that quality should be in terms of input and output. Faculty's perception of quality was more comprehensive including all the aspects of education. The employers considered quality in terms of process and output. From the viewpoint of the state, Harvey (2005) indicated that higher education quality revolves around its expectations that higher education be more responsive to social and economic needs, more accessible to the public, more accountable for public money and more able to keep up with the increased globalisation of higher education (Brennan & Shah, 2000). Robertson (1997) concurs that the state considers higher education activities as directly related to the national economic success.

Then, quality is an elusive concept and cannot be framed within one definition. Instead of being preoccupied with the attempt to capture its meaning, universities need to pursue a comprehensive strategy of dealing with all of these demands, and plan to prioritise where to start; Deming (1993) advises a staged implementation of assurance of quality: start in one place, improve, and then move to the other.

In conclusion, universities have seen the provision of higher education becoming a product and have been driven by competition to examine the quality of their services, to redefine their product and to measure customer satisfaction in ways that are familiar to service marketing specialists (Kotler, 1985). They have realized that their long-term survival depends on how good

their services are and that quality sets one university apart from the rest (Kanji et al., 1999; Aly and Akpovi, 2001).

3.4   Quality assurance in higher education

Quality assurance, as a managerial approach, is amongst many systems and approaches developed for monitoring quality. These include quality control, quality audit and indicators systems approach. Quality assurance, in contrast to the others, is a proactive approach to quality: doing what is needed before the provision of education while control and audit are executed afterwards. It comprises the implementation of administrative and procedural activities so that the requirements and objectives for education will be fulfilled (Tam, 2001). It is the systematic measurement, comparison with a standard, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback loop that confers error prevention (Tam, 2001). Its main premise is that all internal stakeholders (academic and administrative) are responsible in maintaining and enhancing the quality system. An internal quality assurance system must involve all the participants of the process actively, i.e., teachers, researchers, administrators, students, social partners and high school graduates (Stumbrys, 2004). It is a holistic management system requiring the development of a system-wide culture where everyone, whatever his/her role, task or position in the organisational hierarchy is responsible for the management of his/her contribution to the whole (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002; Csizmadia, 2006).

Quality assurance is also a measurement tool and a methodology for judging the degree to which macro and micro organisational aims, objectives and outcomes have been achieved. For example, performance indicators are set to evaluate the success of a degree programme in attaining its objectives and to make comparisons of performance over time and across other programmes. According to McCormak (2007), strong quality assurance measures ensure that the expectations are fulfilled and the programmes continue to grow.

Additionally, quality assurance is a managerial tool, which can make an effective contribution to improving performance at the institutional level or at a subject or departmental level within an institution (Doherty, 2008). The institutional management and internal processes must be integrated into the quality assurance system (Kettunen, 2015). For example, Quality assurance is seen as a risk management strategy. It collects feedback that allows judgments to be made

relating to the degree of compliance against standards. Without adherence to the quality assurance system, it is impossible for any institution to know how well it is performing (Beckford, 2002).

The administrative and academic staffs are considered to be internal customers. As organisations are interested in getting feedback from their customers (external end-users), internal customers are equally important in the assessment of quality. Their perception of what constitutes quality is a moderating factor in delivering the service. Bitner et al. (1990) observed that in service encounters, employees' behaviour will affect the customers' perceptions of service quality. It is therefore crucial to understand employees' needs, demands, and wishes and not only those of the customers (Edvardsson et al., 1997). As an extension to the latter statement, employees' perception and attitude toward any future change shall affect the potential for success or failure. Therefore, for the concerned universities, to develop, implement, and maintain a quality assurance system means internally organizing themselves in preparation for the development and implementation of the system and training their staff about quality assurance, in addition to effecting necessary changes to their structure and processes. Thus, successful implementation efforts must include "a diverse, cross-functional planning and implementation team; a broad commitment to the effort; a well defined communication plan; and a willingness to have smaller, pilot implementations to build credibility and success" (Quinn et al., 2009, p.139).

3.4.1 The dimensions of quality assurance in higher education

A review of literature about the dimensions and facilitating factors of quality in higher education reveals that researchers share similar views on the ingredients of quality in higher education. The following is an integration of the most widely cited dimensions.

1. Top management commitment: As leadership is the precursor of process improvement (Flumerfelt and Banachowski, 2011), and as continuous support of top management is a prerequisite to successfully implement quality assurance (Sureshchandar et al., 2001; Sakthivel and Raju, 2006), many studies mentioned this dimension, using similar terminologies, as one of the main quality determinants. Sakthivel (2007) labels it as commitment of top management and leadership, Sayeda et al. (2010) identify it as top

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management's commitment and support, whereas Bayraktar et al. (2008) characterise it as leadership.

Top management commitment is expressed through the articulation of an organisational mission and vision statements which include quality as a strategic option in addition to the provision of necessary resources and activities to facilitate its implementation such as the training of staff.

2. Internal stakeholders' involvement: Central to the implementation process and one of its success factors is the stakeholder engagement and involvement in the implementation decision and activities. The empowerment of staff (academic and administrative) is considered an important dimension of the majority of quality management systems (Psychogios and Priporas, 2007). Top management initiates and motivates the quality process but "the department is still the primary activity system in higher education" (Kleijnen et al., 2011, p.143), thus it is of utmost importance that all hierarchical levels in higher education institutions share the same vision of excellence and participate in achieving effectiveness (Sakthivel, 2007). Staff involvement leads to higher levels of commitment and reduces resistance to change.

3. Teaching and learning process: the purpose of a university is to contribute to society through its learning, research and service activities (Seymour et al., 2004). Teaching and research are considered to be inter-dependent. Student learning is at the centre of any quality assurance system. Previous studies have adopted some descriptions such as teaching standard (Thakkar et al., 2006), educational quality (Duque and Weeks, 2010) and course organisation (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2010).

4. Campus amenities which Sakthivel (2007) calls campus facilities, termed also as infrastructure (Sayeda et al., 2010), learning facilities (Ndirangu and Udoto, 2011) or simply facilities (Sirvanci, 2004) are prerequisites for any educational institution to perform its activities in an effective way (Sayeda et al., 2010). Campus amenities include laboratories and libraries as well as information systems, hardware and equipments.

5. Behavioural antecedents: these include behaviours and attitudes exhibited by faculty and administrative staff towards students. They include politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness (Parasuraman et al., 1985) and courtesy (Sakthivel et al., 2005, Sayeda et al., 2010). These behavioural antecedents form the base for a healthy community and are mutual between university staff and students. Faculty and staff members can serve in such roles as consultants, role models, and tutors. Students can provide community service as volunteers and within the context of their coursework (Seifer, 2000).

6. Customer feedback and improvement: Although the concept of customers and who they are (parents, society, students...) has been extensively debated in the literature, Douglas et al. (2008) affirm that student satisfaction is particularly important for universities and their management. Other studies (Reid, 2010; Law & Meyer, 2011) have also cited this dimension. Customer feedback is used to suggest corrective actions to academic and administrative practices that might diverge from the principles advocated by quality assurance.

7. Employees' receptive attitudes and positive perceptions: Attitudes are precursors of intentional behaviours (Zhao et al., 2007), and consequently, employees' attitudes are important to understand, especially when strongly felt (Davis & Silver, 2004) because strong negative affect can lead to counterproductive, even subversive behaviours in organisations ranging from absenteeism to various forms of retaliation (Workman and Gathegi, 2007). Negative attitudes can stem from perceptions of privacy invasion and the erosion of mutual trust (Allen et al., 2007). In higher education this can be translated into invasion and erosion of academic autonomy and freedom. University management is encouraged to pay attention to the staff attitudes before any change initiative such as the introduction of quality assurance.

Perceptions are known to trigger corresponding behaviour (Bargh et al. 1996). Thus, the positive perception of a concept encourages and supports its implementation. Robbins and Judge (2009) say that the study of people's perception is important because their

behaviour is based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself. The internal stakeholders in a university are the academic staff (the faculty) and the administrative staff. Their perceptions of quality assurance will affect the extent to which the institutions will advance in terms of implementation. For the academic faculty, Laughton (2003) argues that their support for quality is crucial to its successful implementation and a factor influencing the accuracy and meaningfulness of the results achieved. Therefore, their perceptions of the system would translate into different levels of resistance to (or acceptance of) the implementation procedures (Newton, 2002; Watty, 2006; Westerheijden et al., 2007; Cartwright, 2007).

8. Supportive organisational culture: The organisational culture affects organisations in various contexts and it has been recognized as one of the most influential factors when considering organisational performance (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Culture is viewed as the glue that binds together all of the key elements of a quality management system (O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012). The culture of an organisation impacts and alters the quality perceptions of employees and may support or inhibit the implementation process. Particularly in higher education, the organisational culture, described as strong, inflexible (Trowler, 2005), bureaucratic and political (Csizmadia et al., 2008) acts as a barrier or a filter for major quality improvement initiatives. Nevertheless, other characteristics such as openness to change and flexibility (Brennan et al., 2014) are witnessed in universities embracing quality assurance. Thus, Asklang & Stensaker (2002) observed that in order to succeed, quality improvement in higher education institutions should take place through social construction of a supportive culture rather than being imposed or mandated.

A supportive organisational culture supports the effective implementation of quality management systems (Corbett & Rastrick, 2000) and leads to practices and procedures that are focused on enhancement instead of mere compliance (Hodson & Thomas, 2003). An organisational culture that advocates quality is naturally connected to elements such as the organisation of work, technology, organisational structure, business strategy and financial decision-making (Ehlers, 2009).

3.4.2   Resistance to quality assurance

Although quality assurance systems have been implemented in higher education, the fact that they have been primarily developed and used in industrial and business applications brings some resistance from academics. Quinn et al. (2009) concur that the academic/teaching settings have proved to be the most difficult areas for implementation, while more success has been shown in administrative and auxiliary service settings.

Teaching faculty may consider that academic values are far superior to quality assurance's market-derived values, and that the managerial control espoused by quality assurance conflicts with their academic freedom (Doherty, 2008) and their professional autonomy; within departments individual faculty may operate largely as independent entrepreneurs, enjoying a measure of freedom from supervision with regard to how they do their work (McRoy & Gibbs, 2009). Williams (2008) argues that the notion of academic freedom is a potential barrier to the implementation of quality assurance.

Harvey (2009, p.1) reports that academics perceive quality assurance as a thrust to the "heart of the academic endeavour" which may result also from their perception that it contradicts the most cherished value of academic culture, namely academic freedom (Luke, 1997; Laughton, 2003; Lomas, 2007;). Nevertheless, academics, particularly with managerial roles, adhere to quality assurance systems when they are implemented at the institutional level (in contrast to departmental) (Laughton, 2003) because they perceive quality assurance as providing the opportunity to achieve excellence (Bell & Taylor, 2005) in teaching and learning, and to improve the university's social public image (Cardoso et al., 2013) and consequently increase students' enrolment. As for the administrative staff, they perceive that quality assurance implementation generally enhances the university position as a whole and delivers positive results (Rosa et al., 2006; Stensaker et al., 2011; Veiga et al., 2012).

Moreover, quality assurance systems in higher education have been criticised for neglecting the learning and teaching aspect of higher education and emphasising quality for accountability purposes thus focusing on implementation of processes and ignoring the academic end result- the quality of learning (Carmichael et al., 2001). Clark (2006) claims that quality systems are imposed rather than negotiated and socially constructed and that most of the time academics are not consulted and involved in the implementation process.

Other researchers (Midgley, 2000; Ulrich, 2001) contend that the issue with quality assurance systems stems from decision-makers in higher education who perceive the institution as a "business" thus implementing the concept of "managerialsim" and reinforcing control, which results in the reduction of discretion and advances strategic objectives that focus on a very narrow range of stakeholders. Additional issues highlighted in the literature include the possibility of control due to the subjective human contribution factor as opposed to manufacturing (Motwani and Kumar, 1997) and that quality management systems have greater relevance to academic service departments than teaching areas. This is the reason Houston (2010) expresses significant scepticism about the achievement of quality assurance systems in a higher education context.

Based on the views expressed above, the implementation of quality assurance systems in higher education could lead to desirable outcomes on both the managerial and academic level if it is effectively planned and executed (Welsh & Dey, 2002; Wiklund et al., 2003) taking into consideration the concerns of the stakeholders and the contextual factors pertinent to academia. According to Lewis and Smith (1994), the principles and concepts of quality are compatible with the best tradition and practices of higher education. Thus, Ping (2009) claims that quality management experts recommended that higher education institutions implement quality assurance systems due to the successes enjoyed in business organisations.

3.5   Studies about quality assurance in the Lebanese higher education

A small number of research studies have dealt with the subject of quality assurance in the Lebanese higher education system since the start of the national debate about the topic in 2001. It is quite important to mention here that none of them have discussed the drivers for quality assurance, and particularly in the business schools, through the lens of institutional theory; moreover, none have considered quality assurance as a management innovation and the process through which it is diffused and implemented. Quality assurance in these studies was tackled as a secondary topic to the main investigated concepts and processes such as registration (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2002) and students ratings of instruction (El-Hassan, 2009). These research studies are reviewed below in a chronological order.

El-Hassan (2009) research aimed at exploring faculty and students' perceptions of students' ratings of instruction, in terms of their usefulness in increasing academic quality and their appropriateness for evaluating teaching effectiveness. More specifically, the study aimed at identifying the consequences, both intended and unintended, of using the evaluations, in addition to better understanding the process students use in responding to evaluations and what use faculty members made of them. Two surveys were developed and placed on the website of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at the American University of Beirut. Emails were sent to all students and faculty participating in evaluations soliciting their cooperation and requesting their input. Faculty and student perceptions were compared qualitatively and quantitatively. The results of the study revealed that students thought that their ratings might help the teachers improve the quality of their teaching methods while faculty believe in the effectiveness and usefulness of the system with the need to overcome some negative consequences and biases inherent in its application at the University. The study did not conclude whether an improvement of the academic performance results from the use of the ratings or how they contributed to the advancement of the overall status of the university.

Abouchedid & Nasser (2002) looked at the registration and advising services at a university using a quantitative approach to explore students' perceptions of the quality of the two processes. The research showed that students were not satisfied and it concluded that the improvement of the two processes in general will reflect positively on the general attitude of students and the university image.

Kaissi et al. (2008) conceptual paper outlines and describes the situation of higher education in Lebanon, the Tempus project "Quality Assurance for Higher Education in Lebanon (QAHEL), and the future plans for quality assurance in Lebanon. It is mainly a descriptive account of the Ministry of Education proposals and recommendations for the improvement of higher education.

Nasser et al. (2008) research surveyed students' satisfaction with university services and programmes in a Lebanese Catholic higher education institution starting with the assumption that satisfaction is a strong indicator of overall quality. The results of the study indicate that senior level students were less satisfied than their freshmen counterparts. It concludes with recommendations to use such types of research to improve service provisions in universities without offering specific suggestions.

Choueiri et al (2012) also published a conceptual paper which presents the basics of quality management and the tools that could be used to facilitate its implementation. It concludes that the higher education system needs to use all means to introduce quality assurance in order to sustain competitiveness.

El-Hassan (2013) is a conceptual paper reviewing the status of quality assurance in higher education in 20 MENA region economies including Lebanon. It relies mainly on reports published by Arab and international association such the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE), the UNDP, the UNESCO and the World Bank. The paper charted some of the major efforts to address the challenges faced in improving the quality of higher education and then concludes that despite efforts, tangible achievements are mediocre. Moreover, it ends by stating that these efforts are insufficient in today's world of knowledge, competitiveness, rapid transformation and the increased demand for tertiary education. Finally, the author offers improvement recommendations.

The last paper is more recent and relevant to the current research. El-ghali et al. (2016) presented both a retrospective and concurrent policy analysis aiming at generating in-depth insights about how policies are made in Lebanon and the influence over policy-making. It mapped the development of the higher education policy on quality assurance over 11 years. It explores how and why the policy on establishing a national agency on quality assurance in higher education in Lebanon was developed, and why it was held back so far. Based on interviews, the findings show that personal interests (embodied by the interests of some institutions of higher education) led to political influences during the discussions of the law as it was being developed. Many owners of universities in Lebanon used their connections to attempt to modify the draft quality assurance law. In addition, the political context referred to in this study extends beyond the content of the draft law to encompass the overall politicized environment of legislation in the country. The research revealed that the regular changes in the government and the inactivity of the parliament hindered the passing of the draft law. While the strong network of experts formed as a result of the process of formulating the draft law provided a forward push against the pressure that was exerted to amend it, particularly the governance structure of the proposed National agency for Quality Assurance. The mandate of this agency would hold (private and public) institutions accountable for the services they provide to the public. The research

concludes that regulating quality in Lebanese universities comes as a natural response to maintaining its competitive niche.

3.6   Conclusion

The impact of globalisation, the opening of the markets, technology, economic and financial crises in addition to an increased demand for education requires institutions of higher education to examine the quality of their services, to redefine their product and to measure customer satisfaction in order to increase their level of effectiveness across functions and processes. Quality assurance in this regards is considered to be a holistic proactive administrative system that comprises the implementation of processes ensuring that the requirements and objectives for education will be fulfilled (Tam, 2001). Although it has been implemented primarily for industrial and business applications and has been reluctantly considered by academics, it can make an effective contribution to improving performance at the institutional level or at a subject or departmental level within an institution (Doherty, 2008); thus setting one university apart from the rest (Kanji et al., 1999; Aly and Akpovi, 2001). In Lebanon, the concept has been minimally researched which provides an additional rationale for the current study.

Chapter 4   Theoretical and Empirical Review

4.1   On institutions and organisations

"Institutions are systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions" (Hodgson, 2006, p.2) and guide actions. They help make sense of the world and provide expectations of stable and consistent behaviours. Language, marriage, the law, metric measures, table etiquettes and firms (and other organisations) are thus all institutions. They are both a constraint and an enabler of behaviour. Wells (1970) agrees that social institutions are a distinctive type of social structure that emerge as the result of the collective agreement of the social entities interacting within a social (or organisational) context on what is acceptable and expected. Thus, they are social understandings (Greenwood et al., 2008) or rationalised myths (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) that impose order.

Institutions are "the rules of the game" (North, 1995, p.3) and people, employees, organisations and society in general are the players. These rules draw constraints on what is acceptable and the way it should be performed thus facilitating the flow of matters. Institutions also encompass norms, the collective mutual agreements between individuals. They are socially transmitted by various types of carriers, including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines and artefacts (Scott, 2001). People transmit them consistently because they confer stability. People do not want to think what to do every time they face a situation thus they revert to institutions for guidance. Their continued use leads them into becoming self-reinforced habits (Hodgson, 2006). However, this does not undermine the role of the people enacting them. Consequently, institutions and agents are mutually dependent on each other; a mutually beneficial situation of interaction and interdependence (Zenger et al., 2002; Hodgson, 2006). Nevertheless, institutions exhibit different degrees of agent sensitivity and insensitivity.

An agent sensitive institution is one in which the rules of the game can be considerably changed according to the preferences or dispositions of the concerned agents. Thus, the propensity to break the rules will partly depend on the preferences and dispositions of each individual agent. If

the constraints are soft, then the agents would have more discretion and it would be likely that the personalities of the agents would have to be taken into account.

Alternatively, when there are relatively high incentives to conform to the rules, the institution is agent insensitive. The players have an incentive to conform to the reigning rules, even if they are not their most favoured options regardless of their inclinations.

Institutional rules are shared implicitly or explicitly (Hodgson, 2006). In some instances they are codified such as the law and could be easily recognised if breached and consequently are followed by sanctions. While in other cases they are enacted out of a collective implicit agreement on their features. In this case, this suggests that there exists a possibility for interpretation and deviance which asserts the role of agents.

It has been shown that some institutional rules require other institutions for their enforcement (Hodgson, 2006; Cao & Mehari, 2015) such as when the police are called upon to enforce law. Whereas when institutions are implicit, their implementation is sought out of moral legitimacy. In both cases the existence of incentives and disincentives is important. When there is a perception that transgression may yield benefit, institutions are not implemented and thus enforcement is required as in the example of evading paying taxes.

For new laws to become rules, they have to be enforced to the point that the avoidance or performance of the behaviour in question becomes customary and acquires a normative status.

But over time, laws and rules can change, and new ones come in place which requires a renewed effort for adjustment; such is the case of a technological development that can facilitate the flow of work or when institutional developments are triggered, for example, by the law (such as the case of quality assurance in higher education).

Searle (2005) argues that institutions are formed as mental representation, thus agreeing with Meyer and Rowan's (2006, p.793) idea of "cognitive schemata", and are observed through behaviour.

Organisations differ from institutions in that they involve specific boundaries that distinguish their members, have principles of governance indicating who is in charge, and in that they persist through chains of command delineating responsibilities within the organisation. However, (Hodgson, 2006) and North (1990) argue that the existence of rules within organisations means that organisations must be regarded as a type of institution. Thus, the organisational field

constituted from different universities, called the higher education system, is an institution. This standpoint is further elaborated in the next section.

4.1.1 Higher education and institutionalism

In institutional theory terms, higher education is an institution because it has rules that structure, organise and facilitate the interaction within and between its constituencies. The tenure system and the process of conferring degrees are both examples of rules in academia that structure the university internally and legitimise it in the eyes of external stakeholders.

Nevertheless, the effect of higher education as an institution extends beyond its internal boundaries.

Higher education has a legitimating effect (Meyer, 1977). It classifies people according to their level of knowledge and defines both their roles and statuses in society. It creates professionals with authoritative knowledge that others respect and determines their rights and obligations. Economists, physicists, MBAs are professionals with determined roles and statuses.

Education confers the authority of specialized competence. It grants power and authority to an elite group (such as doctors, faculty...) that must be taken into account by others at the risk of being judged negligent or irrational.

Education also has an allocation effect through which it determines who can access specific positions and what are the directions and outcomes of their occupational progression (Blau & Duncan, 1967). Thus, status positions in modern societies are assigned on the basis of education.

Education also affects the society at large through the construction of competencies and the production and dissemination of new ideas, imaginative thinking and challenging frameworks (Barnett, 2004). It helps in creating new classes of knowledge and personnel which then come to be incorporated in society. Furthermore, Bendix (1964) claims that education in general builds the nation and allocates citizenship.

Meyer et al. (2005, p.34) conclude that "higher education is, and has been, the central cultural institution of the modern system". Meyer (1977) describes it as "a system of institutionalized rites transforming social roles through powerful initiation ceremonies and as an agent transforming society by creating new classes of personnel with new types of authoritative knowledge" (p.56).

Meyer & Rowan (1977) regard universities and other educational organisations as institutionalized organisations constrained by legitimacy and not by efficiency held together by shared beliefs—"myths"—. Their legitimacy is maintained as long as they hold the trust and confidence of the public at large by conforming to institutionalized norms, values, and technical knowledge. Although in 1977 Meyer and Rowan described universities as "loosely coupled systems" where the conformity to institutional pressures is ceremonial, in 2006 they argue that institutions of higher education are becoming more tightly coupled due to changes in the environment of higher education (Meyer & Rowan, 2006). They contend that three changes in particular have altered the institutional reality of education:

1. The proliferation of private provision of educational services, also cited by (Kohoutek, 2009), which excluded the government monopoly of the system, and which seeks to protect private interests without much accountability to the public. The private providers may become dominant and work to delay institutional change that is perceived to affect their status.

2. Increasingly knowledge-dependent economy: this fact gives higher education a more central role in determining the advancement of society.

3. Demand for accountability and a heightened concern with educational productivity (Meyer & Rowan, 2006): the previous two changes in the state of higher education gave momentum to calls for more controlled practices. As a result, the society, parents, employers, non-governmental organisations are taking a stronger role in the governance of education.

4. Globalisation: A major driver for quality assurance adoption has been factors associated with globalisation. These factors include intense competition, the expansion of international trade, the removal of trade protection, deregulation, labour reforms, and rapid technological changes (Hatzichronoglou, 1999). Globalisation has resulted in the internationalisation of higher education and the growth in transnational provision (Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007) and as a result universities across different countries and continents increasingly have similar curricula, teaching methods, administrative practices, financial objectives and management systems (Meyer et al., 2005).

Additionally, cross-national comparisons in the form of rankings are the outcome of globalisation. The Times QS and ARWU represent the global competition and the globalisation of higher education (Dosbergs & Borzovs, 2009).

4.1.2 Institutional theory and institutional analysis

The beginnings of institutional theory can be traced back to Sleznick's work in 1957. It challenges classic organisation theory that explained the adoption of a course of action by an organisation as the result of a rational decision to increase coordination and control of work activities (e.g., Taylor, 1911; Weber, 1946) in order to increase efficiency. Selznick argued that organisations operate in response to internal issues of influence, coalitions, and competing values, norms, and attitudes where conflicts of interest and vested interests are central; and the individual organisation is the primary unit of analysis. Thus, at the time, Selznick (1957) asserts that an organisation is a "social organism" (Selznick, 1957, p. 139) decisively affected by its internal context, which he called institutions; this strand came to be known as the old institutionalism (Cai & Mehari, 2015).

Selznick (1996, p.272) also suggests that "perhaps the most significant aspect of institutional theory is its infusion with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand... and that it speaks to issues of social concern and does so without accepting conventional models of organisation or the unreflective premises of management".

Twenty years after Selznick (1957), the publication by Meyer and Rowan's (1977) seminal work marked the beginning of the new institutionalism. The focus of the theory moved from the details of individual organisational behaviour divergence to the causes of convergence and stability of an organisational field, caused by isomorphism, and focusing more on the issues of legitimacy and the effect of the external context. Meyer & Rowan (1977) proposed that organisations submit to the rule of institutions outside the organisation for the purpose of seeking legitimacy. Therefore, their institutional theory adopts the view that the organisation operates in an "open system" (Scott, 1981, p.22) that responds to institutional forces for the sake of gaining legitimacy and beyond efficiency-seeking objectives. That is, organisations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organisational work and institutionalized in society to increase their legitimacy and their survival prospects, independent of the immediate efficacy of the acquired practices and procedures. Csizmadia (2006), studying the introduction of quality management in Hungarian higher education, claimed, for example, that "management techniques implemented, i.e. quality improvement programmes, may help

higher education institutions to manage the impression that outsiders have about them, even if they exist more on paper than in practice" (Csizmadia, 2006, p. 40).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) contend that organisations submit to the influence of their institutional context that they termed "rationalized myths" (p. 343) and explained it as "the rules, norms, and ideologies of the wider society". Organisations do so to reflect a state of conformance and gain legitimacy in the eye of external constituencies such as the government and society. Tolbert & Zucker (1983) and Meyer and Scott (1983) also stressed the role of shared meanings and institutional conformity driving the organisational field into a state of isomorphism. Nevertheless, the implementation of the rationalized myths may conflict with the necessities of production and efficiency. Hiring costly professional consultants to improve an organisation's reputation and prestige may not be justified in terms of increased productivity. Thus, organisations face a dilemma: they need to preserve their conformity image and at the same time maintain efficiency. Consequently, they resolve the issue by reverting to the process of decoupling in which the organisation maintains the appearance of conformity while effectively its day-to-day operations diverge from its real rules (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008). So, a university may proclaim and celebrate the implementation of quality assurance in its publications and documents even if technical inconsistencies exist in real practice. To maintain such a position, the internal stakeholders of the university engage in a ceremonial display of rule-binding performance. At the level of an organisational field- the higher education system- decoupling leads to the similarity of formal structure but to diversity in actual practice.

DiMaggio & Powell (1983) referred to the process of organisational field isomorphism as "homogenisation" (p.147) and specified that it takes place as a result of three mechanisms: coercive, mimetic and normative.

Coercive isomorphism results from the formal and informal pressures enforced by organisations that control resources and legitimacy and by cultural expectations of the society (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mandates imposed by a state or a government are an explicit example of such a source of pressure that drive organisations to succumb. Outside of the governmental arena, organisations find themselves obliged to implement standardised rules and procedures imposed by a parent company or donor organisations. For example, many universities in Lebanon receive

funding in the form of grants or donations, or sometimes as a contribution for the university's participation in research projects funded by The World or The Erasmus+ programme. The eligibility to take part in these projects rests on the extent to which a university has achieved progress on quality assurance implementation. Furthermore, some universities receive donations from foreign countries that require the national university to conform to their standards of higher education.

Mimetic isomorphism results from the environmental uncertainties in which an organisation operates and the pressure exerted by competition (Beckert, 2010). It entails the process of modelling leading organisation to gain status and legitimacy. Thus, new or poorly performing organisations follow the lead of more successful ones. This saves them the time and cost to search for their own solutions to counter the conditions of changing technology, students' modified needs and demands, employers' requisites, faculty shortage or income deficiency (Braunscheidel et al., 2011). The process of observing and copying practices of leading institutions is referred to as benchmarking.

Normative isomorphism is associated with professionalization (Lipincka & Verhoeven, 2014). Educational and professional networks create a common set of practices that are considered to be favourable and, if implemented, may increase the legitimacy of an entity. An example in the higher education sector is the AACSB that sets the standards for business schools. Universities and other organisations conform to the norms with the aim of improving their public image and reputation through gaining a "seal" of confidence which provides their students and their customers' reassurance. Conforming to the normative pressure is therefore considered a proper course of action, or even "a moral duty" (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008, p.80). In Lebanon, for example, The Majority of universities in Lebanon are engaged in educational agreement and affiliations with foreign universities which require them to follow their practices. Also, The Bologna process (1998) has been a major driver for the Lebanese government to improve its higher education system; Lebanon as a former French colony has adopted many practices from France and higher education was not an exception.

Whether exerted in combination or individually, these isomorphic pressures work to homogenise an organisational field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) although with different levels of effect according to the individual characteristics of the organisations (Scott, 2001). Thus, DiMaggio &

Powell (1991) called for the recognition of the discrepancy in institutional effects by considering the role that human agency and motivation to change played in the institutionalisation process in addition to issues of power and interests.

Consequently, from the 1990s onward a renewed interest in understanding how organisations interpret their contexts and why they respond differently emerged. Scott (1995) argued that three pillars underpin institutions: the regulative, the normative and the cultural-cognitive and that the latter provides "the deeper foundations of institutional forms... the infrastructure on which not only beliefs, but norms and rules rest" (Scott, 2004, p. 5). So, in order to understand the differences in the institutionalisation process issues of culture and cognition should be explored.

Also new to institutionalism was a focus on the role of institutional entrepreneurs "who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones" (Maguire et al., 2004, p.657). Lawrence & Suddaby (2006) and Lawrence et al. (2011) confirm that institutional entrepreneurs are pivotal to institutional processes, given that new institutions arise when organized actors with sufficient resources identify in them opportunities to achieve highly valued objectives. Battilana et al. (2009) suggest that institutional entrepreneurs respond to and implement changes through the creation of a vision for change, the allocation of resources and by motivating others to achieve and sustain the vision. Thus, to understand how organisations respond to their institutional context, the role of organisational entrepreneurs has to be explored.

The above concepts will be discussed further in chapter three, but it is wise to say that an institutional analysis of an organisational field will be more comprehensive when all of these concepts are taken into consideration.

Conducting an institutional analysis reveals why a specific form of institutions is (or is not) selected, to whose interests and how the process unfolded. Although Ledford et al. (1989, p.8) contend that institutional theory offers little in terms of explaining change, Dougherty (1994) and Greenwood & Hinings (1996) affirm that the theory holds a tremendous potential for understanding change. Scott (1987) suggests that much benefit could be drawn out of the different institutional strands when they are both- new and old- combined in the study of change. This is the stand that the current research will take to conduct the institutional analysis of higher education and its response to the inclusion of quality assurance that is perceived as a process of change.

The following section reviews some of the institutional research conducted in higher education.

4.1.3 The use of Institutional theory in higher education research: A quality assurance perspective

Since the turn of the new millennium, institutional theory has become widely used in higher education research (Cai & Mehari, 2015). The interesting study by Cai and Mehary (2015) reveals that the first case of applying institutional theory in higher education appeared only in 1990. The researchers reviewed the nine mostly cited journals in research on higher education and that enjoyed relatively high prestige (Bray & Major, 2011) from the time the first issues of the journals were published until the end of 2014. They excluded book reviews and some articles that did not actually employ the insights of institutional theory, or that discuss institutional theory at a very superficial level.

The authors collected 93 articles with the majority dealing mainly with policy and management issues. 83 articles applied new institutionalism, four intended to combine old and new institutionalism, four employed institutional entrepreneurship and institutional work, and two took into account the insights of institutional logics. The articles also were differentiated by the research methodology used showing that the majority (n=66) used the qualitative approach, 19 used the quantitative approach and only four used the mixed methods approach. David and Bitektine (2009) explain that the shortage of the use of the quantitative approach is due to the difficulty of quantifying some institutional elements such as the environment. One important observation of the research is that some studies combined the use of new institutionalism with other theories in order to overcome its limitations namely the role of human agency in institutional change.

Following Cai and Mehary (2015) this section reviews some research that used institutional theory in higher education starting in 1990 till the present and in particular when quality assurance is implemented.

In their research on the take up of accreditations across UK business schools, Cooper et al. (2014) agree with DiMaggio and Powell (1991) that change will occur when the "taken-for-granted rules" are challenged alongside the support of powerful interests and strong leadership through high-level internal champions as key drivers of change. They also confirm that when external and internal pressures increase to the point of creating organisational non-conformity

resistance to change diminishes and agents are motivated to act. The researcher analysed the case of Aston business school to demonstrate the response to the requirements of quality assurance as prescribed by the accrediting bodies and in particular the stakeholders' engagement with the topics of ethics, social responsibility and sustainability that are linked to the accreditation process. Documents produced by Aston Business School were analysed in addition to eight semi-structured interviews that were undertaken with key faculty and staff. Although the researchers acknowledge the limitations of a case study approach they argue that its value lies in introducing and exploring accreditation as an institutional pressure that may lead indirectly to organisational change, in addition to analyzing the role of institutional contradictions and human praxis that engender organisational change. They concluded that although accreditation provides an external dynamic for change, alone, however, is not sufficient and that internal dynamics such as human praxis, interests, power dependencies and capacity for action are necessary to affect the change. These dynamics happened at Aston in the late 1990's with the appointment of a new Dean who was firmly fixed on gaining the "Triple Crown" of accreditations. This change of Dean saw a "redistribution of power dependencies" (p.241) and a subsequent increased commitment to organisational change. Also, in 2006, the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor at Aston with specific interests in sustainability led to the establishment of the "Sustainable Aston Working Group" and to significant changes in estates and campus based activities. In 2007 the appointment of a new Dean in the business school raised the interest in ethics, social responsibility and sustainability within the school which resulted in the formalisation of school roles (such as the Directors of Social Responsibility and Sustainability) and the development of a strategy in this area.

Nevertheless, While, the "adherence to accreditation requirements" culture at Aston and the appointment of key leaders and champions significantly assisted the integration of ethics, social responsibility and sustainability, there were challenges with barriers that are highlighted. In this case, the role played by a number of powerful interests within both the business school and the university has been of fundamental importance. In particular, the discipline/subject based nature of teaching and research that contradicts with the assumption that social responsibility and sustainability require more trans-disciplinary approaches.

Casile & Davis-blake (2002) also studied the accreditation process but in the US. They examined how technical and institutional factors affect the responsiveness of unaccredited public and private business schools to a change in accreditation standards by conducting interviews with the head of the business programme at each institution, typically the dean of the business school or the chair of the business department. The respondents were asked about their familiarity with the revised AACSB standards, whether the institution was considering seeking AACSB accreditation during the next five years, and what fact-finding or decision-making processes, if any, the institution was involved in (for instance, forming a committee to consider accreditation). The research results revealed most importantly that the high percentage of business students in a university, high proportions of out-of-state students, high tuition levels and high levels of admission conditions are the drivers of a higher responsiveness to accreditation pressures. Additionally, the study shows that these technical factors have a larger effect on private than on public universities.

Csizmadia (2006) research in Hungarian higher education focused on the topic of legitimacy. The study confirmed that the implementation of management techniques such as quality improvement programmes, may help higher education institutions to manage the impression that outsiders have about them, thus gaining legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) "even if they exist more on paper than in practice" (Csizmadia, 2006, p. 40). Normative isomorphism was confirmed to be the main driver for the symbolic compliance playing a key role in the institutionalization process. Csizmadia (2006) also suggested that there is a need to study quality management implementation (institutionalization) as a process and not only as an outcome; Quality management implementation as an outcome that is observed only over a short time may hide many of the dynamic processes that should interest policymakers, experts, and academics. Furthermore, organisational characteristics, such as leaders' commitment to quality management, institutional reputation, and bureaucratic and political decision-making processes, were found to matter for the organisational responses to quality as well as the inclusion of external consultants.

Papadimitriou & Westerheijden (2010) studied the extent of use of the ISO standards in Greek universities till 2006 in addition to the evaluation of whether adoption of ISO-oriented quality management tools is consistent with DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) notions of isomorphism (coercive, normative, and mimetic). The research used the mixed method approach. The first

quantitative phase found that ISO-oriented quality management system was fruitfully adopted in units only if all three types of neo-institutional pressures (coercive, normative and mimetic) are present. These results and the high response rate suggest that there is a quality movement at the micro level in Greek higher education.

The second qualitative phase was conducted through telephone interviews with the executives (directors) of each unit in the responding universities. It focused on explaining isomorphic pressures and the adoption of ISO standards thus questions were asked about neo-institutional pressures: coercive, normative, and mimetic. If these types could be identified within the interviews, an isomorphic pressure was assumed to be employed. And this is what actually the study revealed. If these types did not exist, a neo-institutional pressure was deemed not to exist in the particular ISO case. The questions asked about particular pressures from existing laws and regulations, and if they experienced any pressures on funding in order to adopt ISO standards. In order to find out if there was normative pressure, the study asked about professional networks, directors' involvement in ISO adoption, and decision-makers' demonstrated commitment to ISO standards. The final questions were designed to define consequences of the adoption of ISO standards, whether beneficial or negative to the university as a whole and in what ways it is connected to the quality of the university. Probing questions were added to each open-ended question to ensure all aspects of the complex phenomenon were discussed during the interview. The last research question asked participants for any additional information they might add in regards to pressure and the adoption of ISO standard as a quality management system. In the majority of the universities, leadership appears to have played a crucial role in the adoption of quality management along with isomorphism.

In the Arab world, Albaqami (2015) researched the factors that either support or hinder the implementation of quality assurance in a university in Saudi Arabia. The case study approach was used and data was collected using semi-structured interviews at both the meso (Deans of schools) and the micro (head of schools and faculty) levels, in addition to observation and document analysis.

The key elements supporting quality assurance at the meso level were found to be management and leadership attitude in addition to the support provided through orientation workshops to increase the awareness of faculty about quality related issues. This comes in agreement with the

research findings of Csizmadia (2006). The respondents to the research also cited the importance of having a quality culture within the organisation as critical to supporting the formulation and implementation process of quality assurance,

At the micro level, the importance of the role of leadership and management was also highlighted by the respondents. As, quality awareness is an important factor influencing quality implementation, one of the ways to support this type of awareness among the faculty is through orientation. This was explained specifically by one participant, who described the importance of such orientation to all stakeholders, not only faculty members. Another commonly cited factor supporting quality assurance is having motivated and supportive faculty fully participating in the culture of quality at the university. The main factor inhibiting quality assurance implementation at the meso level was the general resistance on the part of faculty.

At the micro level also, the participants described the limited resources due to the university small size as the main limitation. The respondents described the resource limitations of the school, highlighting financial constraints, which were perceived to delay implementation. Delays also resulted because of bureaucracy- approval of budget, for example.

Finally, the study concluded that the fact of being a private university played a significant role in implementing quality assurance which was crucial in gaining legitimacy. The age of the university is also found crucial which is consistent with the argument that new universities have a more positive view of the self-evaluation process and consequently more adaptable in compliance with the external demand for quality.

In Syria, Hodson et al. (2008) examined the introduction of a quality assurance system in a new, private university assisted by a British university which follows the QAA on matters of academic policy, curriculum development and quality assurance systems. The study considered the extent to which the theoretical model based on institutional theory and isomorphism is reflected in practice through a five year longitudinal study which reviews the design, implementation and embedding of a quality assurance system at key points throughout the existence of the institution. The findings show that for any organisation or institution which is adopting a new management model outside the conventional or prevailing models of the sector, there will be multiple challenges. At the beginning of QA implementation, the frequent staff changes and part-time academic contracts influenced the ability of the Syrian university to adopt new practices.

Additionally, the majority of academic staff was strongly influenced by their previous experiences within the state sector, where formalities prevailed and innovation and change were not strongly evidenced or necessarily encouraged. Nonetheless the commitment from the most senior management to achieve their vision of esteem and international recognition was clearly demonstrated on many occasions. Thus, for example, several quality assurance workshops were delivered to a wide range of staff and academics including those from other institutions in the region. Nevertheless, whilst all staff expressed support for the ideas and concepts promoted, the routine practices did not always provide the evidence that wide-scale adoption had been fully achieved. For example, the principle of cross-checking assessments and marking was understood, but not widely practised. Another example relates to the validation of new programme designs. Although validations were recognised as good practice, such events were not always evidenced by an auditable trail that would reflect robust and defendable processes. Thus, the rationale and desire to follow a quality assurance agenda was operating at a variety of levels ranging from compliance set in the context of normative isomorphism to a clear commitment to the institutional vision of international recognition. Afterwards, during the last quality assurance workshops there was a widespread understanding by the majority of participants of the key quality assurance issues. There was recognition of the role of quality enhancement based on self-critical review amongst the staff, with strong evidence of a desire to promote such values. To create a mimetic and normative isomorphism conditions the British staff joined in teaching some of the provision. But it was recognised that with the prevailing culture in the region, coercive isomorphism remains a powerful dimension when changes in staff participation and adoption of policies were introduced. The study concluded that in establishing policy and operational procedures to deliver a new agenda, the potential for slow adoption is present, and will vary depending upon the cultural context.

4.2   Diffusion of innovation and quality assurance

Rogers' 1962 book *diffusion of innovation* presented what is considered today as one of the most popular theories depicting the process of adopting new innovations (Sherry and Gibson, 2002). Studies from a variety of disciplines, including education, have used the model as a

framework. The theory, also called *the theory of attributes*, takes a sociological approach in explaining how an innovation is perceived, accepted and diffused.

Rogers (1995) identified five attributes and stated that their perceptions affect the rate of diffusion of any innovation and its potential adoption. He wrote

> *It is the receivers' perceptions of the attributes of innovations, not the attributes as classified by experts or change agents, that affect their rate of adoption. Like beauty, innovations exist only in the eye of the beholder. And it is the beholder's perceptions that influence the beholder`s behaviour (Rogers, 1995, p. 212.).*

Rogers (1995) defines diffusion as "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p. 5). Adoption is the stage at which a rational decision maker considers the innovation as the best available choice and thus decides to fully use it.

Rogers considers that the process of diffusion, and consequently adoption, takes place within the frames of four variables: the characteristics of the innovation per se, the existing communication channels through which people are informed about the innovation, the time at which the innovation is introduced or that individuals got notice of its existence and the social system that forms the context (the place) where the innovation is introduced. A very important point to make here is that the innovation is not only "new" because it has just been conceived. The character of "newness" is the perception of the individuals involved (Rogers, 1995). So, for example, quality assurance has been in use fifty years ago, but it is an innovation for those organisations that did not yet implement it. It is also an innovation because it requires managerial and structural changes in the organisation.

Rogers (2003) affirms that the decision to adopt an innovation is preceded by a process of searching for information about the particular characteristics of the innovation after which a process of analyzing the obtained information is executed. Both the searching and the processing phases aim to reduce uncertainty and to uncover the advantages and disadvantages of the innovation. Nevertheless, sometimes the decision to adopt is authoritative (as opposed to optional) and the individual has little choice in rejecting it; as is the case when a government

imposes new legislation. Generally, the fastest rate of adoption of innovations results from decisions made by those in authority (Rogers, 1995).

For Rogers (2003), the innovation-decision process is comprised of five sequential time-ordered steps: (1) knowledge, (2) persuasion, (3) decision, (4) implementation, and (5) confirmation. Passage through these individual stages is postulated as being influenced by prior conditions (such as previous practice and innovativeness) and mediated by characteristics of the decision-making unit, the perceived characteristics of the innovation, the communication channels involved, and the role of change agents and opinion leaders in promoting the innovation (Nutley et al., 2002).

The time during which the process is completed is called "the rate of adoption". It is directly affected by the attributes of the innovation. Rogers (1995) reported that 49-87% of the variance in the rate of adoption is explained by the following five attributes of an innovation:

a. *Relative Advantage*

Relative advantage refers to the degree to which an innovation offers an added gain or benefit that could be expressed financially or non-financially (e.g. higher social status) and that could grant its adopters an added advantage on a personal, professional, or institutional level (Rogers, 2003). Thus, if quality assurance is perceived by the School staff to offer a competitive advantage over other Schools and to advance its status financially and academically it is more likely to be adopted. McQuiggan (2006) affirms that relative advantage shows a significant difference between those who intend to adopt an innovation and those who intend to adopt later or who do not intend to adopt at all. Moreover, Delone and McLean (1992) affirm that relative advantage is the most powerful predictor of continued use of an innovation.

The relative advantage that quality assurance provides to an institution can be defined as the enhancement of its reputation, the overall estimation in which the particular institution is held by its various stakeholders (Csizmadia, 2006). Reputation indicates legitimacy and it correlates positively with performance (Fombrun, 1996; Deephouse, 1997).

b. *Compatibility*

Compatibility refers to the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the potential adopters' existing values, work habits, past experiences, and perceived goals (Rogers, 1995). Along the line with relative advantage, compatibility is deemed to be an important characteristic of innovations in explaining and predicting the rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003). Schultz and Slevin (1975) state that attention needs to be given to the basic design of quality assurance activities and their compatibility with the characteristics of the implementing organisations, in other words the "fit" between the innovation and the organisation. Therefore, if potential adopters perceive that quality assurance will be well-matched to their existing work practices with a degree of improvement, and that quality assurance values correspond with higher education values, they will adopt it. Harvey (2009) argues that quality assurance is seen by academics as generating reports that "do not engage with the heart of the academic endeavour" (p.1). This can be related to the fact that academics are not always effectively integrated in the development of quality assurance procedures (Loukkola & Zhang, 2010; Veiga et al., 2012). Innovations are more likely to be successfully adopted if they address context-specific problems (Cohen-Vogel & Ingle, 2007; Wolff, 2008) or are relevant to what an institution or individual is being asked to use or do (Ozdemir & Abrevaya, 2007; Bauer & Fischer, 2007; Heilesen & Josephsen, 2008). The innovation has to be compatible with perceived needs (Bourner et al., 2000; Penberthy & Millar, 2002; Elton, 2003; Ozdemir & Abrevaya, 2007; Chang & Tung, 2008), current practices (Martin & Treves, 2007) and be pedagogically sound (Solem, 2001; Uys, 2007). The innovation has to be something that practitioners are interested in (Penberthy & Millar, 2002; Roberts et al., 2007), believe in (Vongchavalitkul et al., 2003) and that resonates with future directions (Solem, 2001).

c. *Complexity*

Complexity refers to the degree to which an innovation is perceived as relatively difficult to understand and to use (Rogers, 1995) and is therefore negatively correlated with the rate of adoption. In other words, excessive complexity of an innovation is an important obstacle in its adoption (Damanpour, 1991). Perceived complexity is also the degree to which the organisation's members perceive that they possess relatively high level of knowledge, expertise

and skills necessary to implement a change initiative. Quality assurance as an innovation can be perceived complex because it takes a relatively long time to be implemented and requires an overall change of the way an institution is managed (Brennan, 2012).

d. Observability

Observability refers to the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others. The observability of an innovation, as perceived by members of a social system, is positively related to its rate of adoption (Rogers, 1995). Observability relies on inspecting how the innovation under study has been efficiently used within an organisation (Moore & Benbasat, 1991). If an innovation or its results are easily observed and/or can be described easily, then its likelihood of adoption is increased (Tornatzky and Klein, 1982; Rogers, 2003).

e. Trialability

Trialability refers to the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis or the degree to which the innovation can be easily divided for experimentation (Simard & Rice, 2007). The trialability of an innovation, as perceived by members of a social system, is positively related to its rate of adoption (Rogers, 1995). Thus, if quality assurance can be perceived as prone to be tested in one department or one process at a business school before wider implementation, staff will tend to adopt it. Giving staff time (Seels et al., 2003; Brzycki & Dudt, 2005; Sahin & Thompson, 2006; Pundak & Rozner, 2008) or space to experiment with the innovation (Bourne et al., 2000; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008) is helpful (Smith, 2012). Heilesen & Josephsen, (2008) and Brzycki & Dudt, (2005) argue that the embedding of new working practices will not happen overnight and should be introduced gradually (Kilmon & Fagan, 2007; Penberthy & Millar, 2002). Also Deming (1993) advises a staged implementation of assurance of quality: start in one place, improve, and then move to the other.

A review of literature reveals that the dimensions of innovation attributes were employed to examine participants' perceptions and attitudes toward management and education innovations in several studies. To name a few: the adoption of e-learning (Chen, 2009), the adoption and diffusion of a course management system (CMS) (McQuiggan, 2006), the adoption of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software (van Everdingen & Waarts, 2003), the adoption of innovative

quality assurance technologies in health care (Storey, 2013), and the implementation of TQM as an organisational innovation (Ahire & Ravichandran, 2001). Scheirer (1990) argues that based on the verified validity and appropriate accountability in explaining adopters' perceptions of the adoption of an innovation, the dimensions of innovation attributes are suitable for evaluating the diffusion of a quality framework.

In conclusion, perceptions are known to trigger corresponding behaviour (Bargh et al. 1996). Therefore, to assess the potential and motivation to implement a new management concept in higher education, such as quality assurance, requires understanding of how the stakeholders perceive its characteristics, its expected outcomes and whether it is addressing a perceived need on the part of those within the system. Exploring and understanding potential adopters' perceptions ensures the potential for the project implementation success by uncovering related limitations and, therefore, what processes and activities are needed to correct misperceptions and counter resistance (Rogers, 1995). In general, innovations that are perceived by adopters as having greater relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, observability, and less complexity will be adopted more rapidly than other innovations.

4.2.1 Institutional theory and diffusion of innovation research

Klein & Sorra (1996) state that innovation implementation within an organisation succeeds when employees' level of competency and commitment to the use of an innovation is achieved. They define implementation effectiveness as "the quality and consistency of targeted organisational members' use of an adopted innovation" (p. 1056). The two determinants of implementation effectiveness are the organisation's climate for implementation and the perception of fit between the intended innovation and the values of the targeted organisation's members. This assertion of the role of agency was evident in Jan et al. (2012) research investigating the social factors that influence employee's attitude and intention of e-learning adoption during on-the-job training drawing upon the institutional theory. The research was quantitative using a survey. The sampling methods used in this survey were convenient sampling and snowball sampling. Respondents were chosen from different organisations of various size and sectors such as private, research institutes, and the public sector. Each organisation had implemented e- learning and most respondents had experience in using it. The results indicate

that although both types of institutional pressures, normative and mimetic, have a significant influence on attitude and intention to use e-learning, it is the mimetic pressure that has the highest influence. Whereas coercive pressure did not affect intention rather it influences the decision to adopt directly. Furthermore, the control variables of age, gender and income demonstrate no significant impact on the intention to use e-learning.

Braunscheidel et al. (2011) utilized institutional theory to assess the motivation for the adoption of Six Sigma quality management innovation which is closely related to total quality management (TQM) initiatives (Goeke and Offodile, 2005). The study also aimed to determine the role played by an organisation's climate and values on the implementation process. In its last stage the research investigated about whether the adoption and implementation of Six Sigma had an impact on organisational performance. Seven case studies in different manufacturing organisations were used. The research methodology consisted of four elements: a structured questionnaire, focused interview process with a minimum of three respondents in each company in order to improve validity. Evidence from four of the seven companies indicates that coercive pressure and mimetic pressures played a key role in the decision to adopt Six Sigma. An interesting phenomenon was that normative isomorphic pressure was not immediately evident as were coercive or mimetic pressures. What was observed is that normative pressures played a role after the decision was made to investigate the feasibility of adopting Six Sigma. The research concluded that Six Sigma implementation will be influenced by an organisation's climate for implementation and the targeted user's innovation-values fit. The implementation climate was evidenced by extensive training provided to all employees in addition to promotional opportunities that are directly tied to demonstration of savings through Six Sigma projects. The respondents said that Six Sigma enabled them to better solve problems and make their products in a more efficient and effective manner. While each of the organisations interviewed for this research was at a different stage of implementation of Six Sigma, it was evident that Six Sigma had a positive impact on the performance of each organisation in terms of project savings, process and on-time delivery improvements, reduction of inventory and setup time reduction. None of the organisations directly measured customer satisfaction. However, the researchers assert that from comments made during the interviews, it can be determined that the Six Sigma initiatives indeed had a positive impact on the customer.

Burbach & Royle (2014) studied the diffusion of e-HRM practices in multinational corporations (MNC). The research was based on the analysis of 25 semi-structured interviews with 15 key stakeholders in the German and Irish subsidiaries of a single US-based MNC as well as two interviews with a senior manager with one of its main competitors.

The research gave specific attention to the critical success factors of e-HRM implementation namely leadership, planning, change management, communication, training and stakeholder involvement. The findings agreed with Leonardi (2008), who suggests that the actual outcomes of the implementation of technology to facilitate business practices are largely indeterminable despite management's efforts to justify it. Additionally, the study revealed that political power relationships and resistance to change are key factors in diffusion. This research also revealed that although low levels of institutionalisation may yield efficiency, only higher levels of institutionalization could lead to higher-level transformational effectiveness gains. Nevertheless, this former objective is contingent on both the organisational and the institutional fit of the practice to be implemented with the organisational values.

4.3 Leadership characteristics and quality assurance in higher education

In higher education institutions, the implementation of a quality system, seen as an instance of organisational change (Papadimitriou, 2011) is a difficult task (Meister-Scheytt & Scheytt, 2005; Shattock, 2005); the university is "a complex and adaptive system consisting of a large number of agents, each of which behaves according to its own principles of local interaction" (Stacey, 2000, p. 42). Faculties and programmes of study operate in various ways and the differences between them are likely to be significant. Individual departments exercise largely unquestioned authority over curricular and pedagogical decisions, even when these affect other departments. Thus, no individual agent (e.g. teacher or administrator), or group of agents (e.g. teaching team or department) determines the patterns of behaviour that the system as a whole displays or how these patterns evolve, and neither does anything outside the system" (Stacey, 2000, p. 42). Therefore, interventions aimed at securing organisational change depend heavily on effective leadership (Buchanan and Badham, 1999; Carnall, 2003). Burns (1978, p. 425) defines leadership as "the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in context of competition and

conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers". Furthermore, Davies et al. (2001, p. 1026) argue that "leadership in the process of change is highlighted as the critical factor in ensuring successful change and "essential in order to create vision, communicate policy and deploy strategy". The results of the research undertaken by McRoy and Gibbs (2003) in the higher education sector suggest that leadership plays a central and important function in the change management process. Leadership, in the context of higher education, includes presidents, provosts, chancellors, and the board of trustees (Dew, 2009). Birkinshaw et al. (2008) identify them as internal change agents that proactively create interest in, experiment with, and validate the management innovation in question (DiMaggio, 1988; Howell & Higgins, 1990). Dill (1995) added that quality must become the responsibility of all academics, but he too noted the need for strong and committed leadership to make that happen. Nevertheless, the review of research on the introduction and implementation of quality assurance in higher education suggest that the president's influence was the major driver for such a change (Csizmadia, 2006; Papadimitriou, 2011; Kahsay, 2012; Cooper et al., 2014).

The act of leadership requires the ability to communicate the desired vision, model the roles that lead to effective implementation, and to possess the managerial skills to deal with aspects of change such as barriers and fear, as well as being endowed with the ability to recognize and engage with informal power agents who may resist the change process. Leaders can support and legitimise the implementation because they have authority to allocate resources.

As such, management commitment to quality must be visible, permanent and present at all levels and must translate into clear values that are disseminated throughout the institution (Calvo-Mora et al. 2006). Lomas (2004) investigated the views of a sample of senior managers and academics on the most influential factors in effectively embedding quality in higher education. They highlighted the importance of transformational leadership in implementing effective change management strategies (Zachariah, 2007) affirming that the leader's perspective on quality and the attention that he or she gives this issue will drive everything that happens in the organisation. Both the diffusion of innovation theory and institutional theory consider the process of quality assurance implementation as a change process requiring changes in organisational structures, policies, practices, and values. Also, both of them consider the role of leadership as essential to drive such a process; the diffusion of innovation theory calls it *change agents' role* and opinion

leaders and the institutional theory calls it *institutional entrepreneurship.* Both of these concepts are reviewed next.

4.3.1   The role of change agents and opinion leaders in the diffusion of innovation

Rogers (2003) proposes that a change agent's promotion efforts determine the rate of adoption of a management innovation. A change agent is "an individual who influences a client's innovation decision in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency" (Rogers, 2003). Typically, change agents wish to speed up the process by which innovations are adopted. They need to identify the adopter types of individuals, the opinion leaders within the group, and the communication channels that exist to be effective in facilitating the diffusion of an innovation. Nevertheless, they may also attempt to slow down diffusion and prevent the adoption of what they believe are undesirable innovations. Change agents use opinion leaders within a given social system as aids in diffusion campaigns. Both of them facilitate the flow of innovations from a change agency (for example the government) to an audience of clients (the university). For the change agents to achieve the intended result of adopting the innovation, power is needed. Usually, such power is either financial or managerial.

The major role of the change agent is to create a need for change even if the innovation adoption decision is authoritative; the change agent points out new alternatives to existing problems, dramatizes the importance of these problems, and convinces the clients that they are capable of confronting these problems. It is also important that the clients find the change agent credible in his or her competence, trustworthy, and that he/she empathises with their needs and problems. Opinion leaders provide information and advice about innovations to many in the system.

Opinion leadership is "the degree to which an individual is able to influence other individuals' attitudes or overt behaviour informally in a desired way with relative frequency (Rogers, 1995). Although opinion leadership can be informal, it can be part of a formal position held by high status individuals in the organisation (Rogers, 1995). Opinion leadership is earned and maintained by the individuals' technical competence, social accessibility, and conformity to the system's norms. These influential persons can lead in the promotion of new ideas, or they can head an active opposition. In general, opinion leaders are more exposed to all forms of external communication, are more cosmopolitan, have somewhat higher social status, and are more

innovative (Rogers, 1995). But one of the most striking characteristics of opinion leaders is their unique and influential position in their system's communication structure: they are at the centre of interpersonal communication networks. The opinion leaders' interpersonal networks allow them to serve as social models whose innovative behaviours are imitated by many other members of the system. Thus, an effective strategy aimed to introduce innovation in an organisation would work successfully through opinion leaders (Enfield et al., 2012).

4.3.2 Leadership in institutional theory

Institutional theory stresses the role of human agency in institutional change (Greenwood et al., 2008). Thus, institutional entrepreneurship, which was introduced by DiMaggio (1988) refers to the activities of institutional entrepreneurs, who not only initiate diverse changes in the institutional environment but also actively participate in the implementation of such changes (Battilana et al., 2009). Battilana et al. (2009) suggest that institutional entrepreneurs implement changes by three means: creating a vision for change, mobilising resources and motivating others to achieve and sustain the vision.

Garrison and Vaughan (2013) argue that with strong leadership and awareness-raising activities, many of the institutional challenges can be mitigated. They emphasise the importance of a sustained top-down effort over a significant period of time by a powerful institutional leadership that built up a strong team of management support to carry the initiative forward. Whether an institution engages in academic programme reviews, organizes a task force, or utilizes a standing committee structure, leadership must make a conscious effort to encourage and support improvement. Leadership must set the expectation of studying processes, empowering faculty or staff with time and resources to analyze their processes, and working to implement proposed improvements. Brennan & Shah (2000) suggested that in the changing environment, strong institutional management and leadership is needed because of the greater complexity of the external environment and the need for faster decision-making to affect the changes essential to ensure future institutional success and survival. Krücken, (2007) examined the implementation of the Bachelor and Master reform in German universities by using the new institutional theory. He found that leadership became an important organisational factor for understanding organisational transformation.

4.3.3　Shared leadership

University leadership is characterized as a crucial topic in establishing an institutional quality management system (Csizmadia et al., 2008). However, Weber (2008, p. 263) argued that "even the most visionary and charismatic leader cannot drive change alone; he/she needs help to govern his/her institution". The author noted that this help "comes obviously from colleagues co-leading the institution with him or her and through the use of powerful management tools" (p. 263), which indicates that leadership, as a function, can be performed by several individuals (rector, vice-rectors, etc.). Therefore, Simmons (1997, p. 274) argues that a basic job for the leader is to engage stakeholders and instigate the energy and commitment of people "at all levels of the enterprise towards improving the performance of the organisation as a system".

Similarly, Birnbaum (2000) emphasised that leaders in higher education institutions are often unable to decide independently how to adopt or develop a quality assurance mechanism. Therefore, leadership needs to be in place at different levels within the organisation (Middlehurst, 1995). Therefore, Gregory (1996) argues that owing to the complexity of change and the necessary activities that are required, leadership should be shared.

Further, Dill (1995) noted that quality must become the responsibility of all academics, but he too noted the need for strong and committed leadership to make that happen. Johnson et al. (2003), writing about change in the modern university, stated that vision for change must come from inside the institution, at the department and college levels.

In conclusion, the literature confirms that leaders play a crucial role in the process of quality assurance implementation The following indicators are highlighted in the literature as crucial with regard to the commitment of leaders to implement quality assurance. Firstly, it can be measured through leaders' openness to new ideas (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002), constant monitoring for innovation (Armbruster et al., 2008) and their consideration in order to improve academic as well as administrative performance. Secondly, commitment can be observed through the assurance of appropriate resources for quality implementation; this may include the provision of financial resources and training and the establishment of a reward system (Simard & Rice, 2007) that compensates the introduction of innovation into the university. Training provides a broader understanding of quality assurance goals and objectives, and prepares employees for their individual participation in quality efforts (Ahire & Ravichandran, 2001).

Incentives for participation, and rewards for effective participation in quality efforts are equally important (Hayes & Wheelwright, 1984). Thirdly, management commitment can be detected through its constant communication, through a variety of channels, of the importance of implementing any innovation leading to the university overall improvement.

The more these leaders' activities mentioned above are observed within a university, the more positively the university responds to quality assurance implementation.

4.4 The organisational characteristics of the business school and quality assurance

Universities, and subsequently business schools, are viewed as complex organisations with unique characteristics that may influence the adoption and implementation of policies such as quality assurance (Baldridge & Deal, 1983; Dill, 1992; Csizmadia, 2006). Gornitzka (1999), following Clark (1983), particularly emphasised that the consideration of the high degree of structural differentiation is of vital importance for understanding why and how higher education institutions respond to environmental pressures, and why and how policies fail or are implemented successfully. A review of literature reveals that the following elements differentiate higher education institutions and thus influence the decision to implement quality assurance.

a. The type of business

The type of business affects directly the way the generated profit is used or spent. All of the money earned by or donated to a not-for-profit organisation is invested in pursuing the organisation's objectives and to keeping it running. The generated money is invested back into the university in the form of services and aid for students. For-profit universities are run by a private, profit-seeking business and money at a for-profit university is either put back into the college or is retained by the owners/shareholders as profit. Not-for profit universities receive financial support from donations and gifts. For-profit universities solely rely on students' tuition for revenue.

The type of business is relevant to responsiveness to quality assurance because the implementation process is costly (Woolston, 2012), and questions arise as to whether the ownership is able and willing to dedicate funds for the endeavour.

The cost of institutional accreditation, comprised of both direct fiscal costs and indirect personnel costs, is significant (Ewell, 2008). Direct costs associated with institutional accreditation include document costs and site visit costs. Document costs are comprised of the costs of software, materials, copying, printing, mailing, and fees for professional services such as writers and consultants associated with the preparation of the self-assessment report. Site visit costs are comprised of the costs of travel, accommodations, food, stipends, and gifts provided to the visiting accreditation team (Woolston, 2012). Indirect costs associated with institutional accreditation include the time spent on accreditation-related activities by anyone from the campus community. Accreditation is an expensive activity requiring a strategic, methodical approach in order for an institution's practice to be effective and sustainable (Willis, 1994). Freitas (2007) noted that the indirect costs constitute a much greater portion of the actual financial cost of accreditation to institutions than do the more easily measured direct costs. Willis (1994) explored many of these costs and observed that indirect costs are "many times greater than the direct costs due mainly to the personnel time required at the institution" (p. 40). Lasher and Greene (2001) recognized the growing demands of accreditation as "an increasing amount of faculty, staff, and financial resources are necessary to develop and update costly databases and tracking systems that are requisite to maintain compliance" (p.538).

b. Age

From a neo-institutional perspective, an organisation's adoption of policies and programmes is constrained by the rules, requirements, and values shared by its members on what constitutes appropriate organisational forms and behaviour (Scott, 1995). Therefore, it is a challenge for a university to balance its historic traditions and heritage with powerful societal forces for change (Papadimitriou, 2011). Traditionally, academic freedom and professional autonomy have been the main values underlying the higher education system. The introduction of quality assurance principles into the academic field is seen as a constraining process fostering "managerialism" and control (Kleijnen et al., 2011). Thus, old universities and business schools may find that quality assurance conflicts with their long-lived values and therefore may be less prepared to adopt it. Indeed, Cameron and Quinn (1999), following extensive field research, concluded that quality management strategies frequently fail because they contradict with the

organisational culture and values fostered throughout history. Rosa et al. (2006) analyzed the opinions of Portuguese university rectors and academicians on the quality assessment system and its consequences at the institutional level. They maintained that academic values and norms are better established in older universities than in newly established institutions. Therefore, it is expected that the former will be less open to the implementation of a quality assessment process than the latter (Rosa et al., 2006). Rosa et al. (2006) further discussed how new universities have been more adaptable to the environment than traditional universities, trying to dominate market niches related to local or regional demands in order to escape competition from traditional universities. This has also been reflected in the finding that rectors of new universities had a more positive view of self- evaluation processes. On the other hand, age has been found to be associated with the experience and the capacity of organisations (Kahsay, 2012). Thus, the older the school, the more experience and knowledge it possesses to assimilate and implement a new management paradigm such as quality assurance.

c. Size

Rogers (2003) observed that the size of an organisation had consistently been shown to predict innovation and the adoption of innovation. The size is defined as the number of employees and is considered to be one of the most important factors affecting the structure and processes of an organisation (Damanpour, 1991). In this research, the size of the business school is defined as the number of students as supported by Papadimitriou (2011) and Csizmadia (2006). Hitt et al. (1990) contend that large organisations have more slack resources for experimentation and innovation; they are financially able to engage in new projects and can withstand operational failures. However, others argue that large organisations are more bureaucratic and less flexible, and thus unable to change and adapt quickly; they rely heavily on routinized processes and often fail to react quickly to environmental changes and respond too slowly to implement an innovative practice successfully (Dougherty, 1996). Their stability tends to hold back the need to change (Winter, 1994). On the other hand, small organisations are said to be more innovative because they are more flexible and have greater ability to adapt and improve, and thus demonstrate less difficulty accepting and implementing change (Aldrich and Auster 1986; Damanpour, 1996).

d. *Complexity of the institution*

'Complexity' refers to the fact that organisations have separate functional groups and units, each of which is focused on specialised tasks. Hall and Tolbert (2005) contend that "complexity is crucial in understanding how and why processes, such as [implementation of quality assurance], occur" (p. 62). Complexity is thus expected to influence the possibility for implementing management mechanisms and the ways in which these mechanisms are implemented. Pollitt et al. (1998) confirms that "complexity affects the speed and nature of the diffusion of reforms such as quality assurance" (p. 174).

Complexity is commonly identified as the combined effect of three elements: horizontal differentiation, vertical or hierarchical differentiation and geographical dispersion (Hall & Tolbert, 2005). Horizontal differentiation refers to the subdivision of the tasks performed by an organisation (Hall, 1982). Csizmadia (2006)) argues that within higher education institutions, it refers to the number of departments, schools or faculties according to which disciplines are categorised. These entities are differentiated in terms of culture, beliefs and processes which compel them to respond differently to new management innovations such as quality assurance (Clark, 1983). Vertical differentiation is defined by Csizmadia (2006) as the hierarchy of the conferred degrees, bachelor, master, and PhD and geographical dispersion refers to the number of locations where a university has campuses.

Damanpour (1991) and Greening and Gray (1994) have pointed to the primary importance of specific structural characteristics of organisations—in particular horizontal differentiation—as determinants of implementation. Gornitzka (1999) emphasised that a high degree of structural differentiation and complexity affects the capacity and capability for collective action within universities and colleges. Csizmadia (2006) concurred that the more complex a higher education institution is the more difficult it is to implement quality management mechanisms; Complex institutions tend to reinforce pre-defined roles (Dougherty, 1996) which prevents organisational members from experimenting with a new practice. Nevertheless, complex organisational structures have the advantage of including a greater pool of knowledge and more resources to devote to the implementation of best practices (Csizmadia, 2006). Therefore, they are more likely to adopt a new management paradigm-such as quality assurance. Additionally, evidence in the literature points that as the complexity of a university increases, a mechanism is needed to

assure the quality of teaching and learning in addition to the quality of administrative services (Blackmur, 2004; Altbach et al., 2009; Baumgardt & Lekhetho, 2013).

e. *The tuition fee level*

In private universities, fees are the only source of funding (Tempus-Lebanon, 2012). When they are set at a high level, students require value for their money (Machin & Wilson, 2005). One of the aspects of value for money is considered to be the quality of education (Mora, 2005). Therefore, plausible expectations regarding quality of education by students are higher in private higher education institutions than in public universities (Garcia et al., 2005).

Also, the tuition fee level directly affects students' choice of a university when they compare the expected benefits with the expected costs associated with an investment in higher education (Paulsen, 2001). Therefore, the tuition fee level affects admission rates. Henard & Roseveare (2012) argue that institutions engage in, and publicise their implementation of, quality teaching essentially to compete more effectively for students turned away by high tuition fees. Cooper et al. (2014) agree that when higher fees are charged and students have a wide range of university choice it is important to provide education that meets their needs of quality education; thus, they would be more likely to implement systems of quality assurance.

4.5 The proposed research model and hypotheses

Based on the theoretical and empirical review, a proposed research model suggests that four sets of independent variables will affect responsiveness to quality assurance implementation- defined in this research as the implementation of any type of quality assurance activity at a business school; Figure 4-1 depicts the proposed model that will be empirically tested.

Figure 4-1 Proposed model of responsiveness to quality assurance implementation
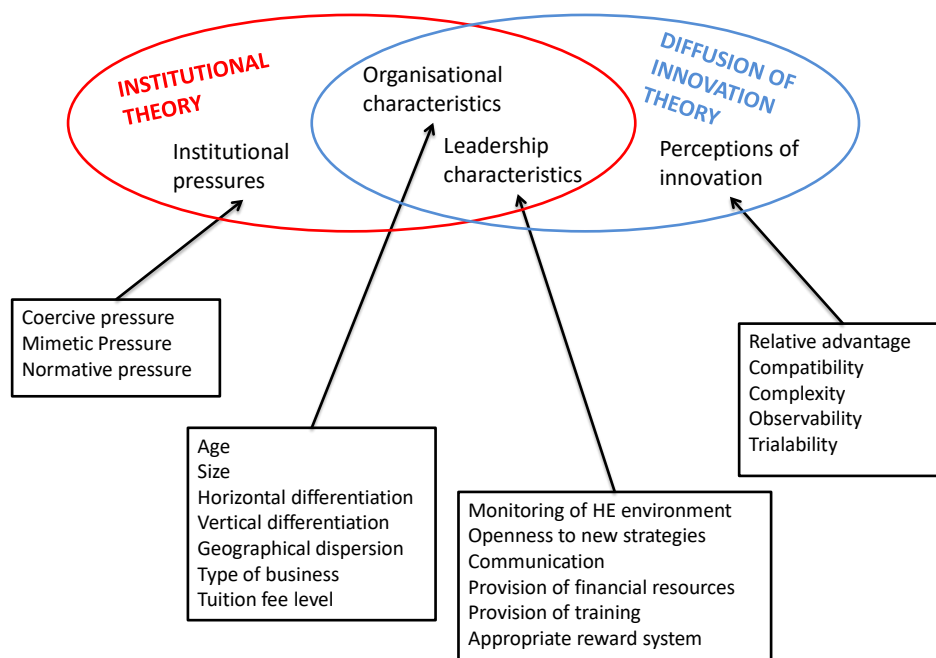
The model suggests that factors in the institutional environment and dimensions of perceptions of innovation directly affect responsiveness to quality assurance implementation. In addition, factors of organisational characteristics and leaders' characteristics (both discussed in institutional theory and diffusion of innovation theory) influence responsiveness.

Therefore, the following hypotheses (Groups A, B, C and D) were developed from the existing literature to answer the four research sub-questions:

Question one: what organisational characteristics are associated with implementation of quality assurance at Lebanese business schools?

Group A: Hypotheses related to the organisational characteristics of a business school tested in chapter 6.

Hypothesis A1: Private not-for-profit business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A2a: Old business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A2b: New business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A3a: Small business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A3b: Large business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A4: Business schools with a large number of programmes are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A5: Business schools offering a Doctoral degree are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A6: Geographically dispersed business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A7: Business schools with high tuition fees are responsive to quality assurance.

Research question two: do leadership characteristics affect responsiveness to quality assurance implementation at the Lebanese business schools?

Group B: Hypotheses related to the characteristics of the business schools' leadership, tested in chapter 7.

Hypothesis B1: Monitoring the environment of higher education and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation are correlated.

Hypothesis B2: Openness of leadership to new ideas and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation are correlated.

Hypothesis B3: Communication of the importance of implementing measures aimed at improving the university status and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation are correlated.

Hypothesis B4: The provision of financial resources and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation are correlated.

Hypothesis B5: The provision of training and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation are correlated.

Hypothesis B6: The provision of adequate reward for the implementation of measures aimed at the improvement of the university status and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation are correlated.

Research question three: do the perceptions of quality assurance dimensions affect responsiveness to quality assurance implementation at the Lebanese business schools?

Group C: hypotheses related to the perceptions of quality assurance attributes, tested in chapter 7.

Relative advantage

Hypothesis C1a: the perception that quality assurance enhances a business school reputation is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Hypothesis C1b: the perception that quality assurance improves the quality of teaching is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Compatibility

Hypothesis C2a: The perception that quality assurance imposes restrictions on the way teaching is performed is correlated with responsiveness.

Hypothesis C2b: The perception that quality assurance affects decision making at the business school is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Complexity

Hypothesis C3a: The perception that quality assurance implementation is a lengthy process is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Hypothesis C3b: The perception that quality assurance requires an overall change of the way a business school is managed is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Observability

Hypothesis C4a: The perception that quality assurance delivers quick results is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Hypothesis C4b: The perception that quality assurance has improved the status of other business schools is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Trialability

Hypothesis C5: The perception that quality assurance can be implemented gradually is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Research question four: How are the institutional pressures affecting responsiveness to quality assurance at the Lebanese business schools?

Group D: Propositions related to the effect of institutional pressures, tested in chapter 8.

Hypothesis D1: The perception of the degree of coercive pressure affects responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

Hypothesis D2: The perception of the degree of mimetic pressure affects responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

Hypothesis D3: The perception of the degree of normative pressure affects responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

4.6   Conclusion

The theoretical and empirical review suggests that the decision to implement quality assurance is subject to the influence of several factors, namely: the institutional pressures in the external environment, the stakeholders' perceptions of the attributes of quality assurance and the organisational and leaders' characteristics. The way these factors interact together to produce responsiveness will be explored empirically in the research.

The suggested responsiveness to the quality assurance model attempts to combine the main aspects of institutional theory and diffusion of innovation theory and to summarise the factors that were identified in the literature as influential of these aspects in terms of implementing quality assurance. The hypotheses developed from the model and the literature will be tested

using unique survey data from nine business schools. Methodology and the survey design will be described in the following Chapter 5.

Chapter 5   Research Methodology and Design

5.1   The road map of the research

In order to assess the inferred hypotheses and research propositions, the research started with a secondary data statistical analysis phase (Phase One) covering all business schools in Lebanon and then proceeded with a multiple case study approach (Phase Two) for a selected sample of institutions. Lijphart (1971), amongst others, maintained that the combination of the statistical and case study method is appropriate in many research situations. This is a "practice that we think should be followed much more frequently than is the case in contemporary social science" (King et al., 1994, p. 69). Similarly, Slaughter (2001) stated:

> *To study the new problems facing higher education and to frame them with new theories calls for mixed methods, multiple site case studies, data gathering from micro to macro levels, and a variety of analytical techniques linked to discrete levels and units of analysis. To be comparative, studies must focus on more than a single institution (p. 407).*

Statistical analysis is best served with large numbers and random sampling. The case study depends upon the careful a priori selection of the cases. With these two approaches combined, it is hoped that a valid assessment of the organisational and institutional factors' influence on responsiveness to quality assurance will be accomplished.

The following sections explore further the choice of the research design by following the sequence of the research design process suggested by Saunders et al. (2003), outlined in Figure 5-1.

Figure 5-1 Research process

Positivism · Realism · Deductive · Interpretivism · Experiment · Survey · Objectivism · Mono method · Cross-sectional · Case study · Subjectivism · Data collection and data analysis · Mixed methods · Action research · Grounded theory · Pragmatism · Longitudinal · Multi-method · Ethnography · Functionalist · Archival research · Interpretive · Inductive · Radical humanist · Radical structuralist

Philosophies · Approaches · **Strategies** · **Choices** · **Time horizons** · Techniques and procedures

Saunders et al. (2003, p.83)

5.2 The research philosophy

Two competing philosophies have dominated research: Positivism and Interpretivism (Dieronitou, 2014). The positivist paradigm advocates the existence of a singular reality that can be discovered by objective and value-free inquiry using quantitative research methods. Thus, true knowledge is based on experience of senses and can be obtained by observation and experiment (Thomas, 2010). The interpretivist paradigm, on the other hand, takes the view that reality consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world and claims that reality is subjective and thus requires qualitative research methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The most recent research paradigm put forward by many theorists and practitioners in order to overcome this paradigmatic division is 'pragmatism' (Dieronitou, 2014). Pragmatism-as opposed to positivism and constructivism- bypasses the controversial debates of truth and reality, and "accepts, philosophically, that there are singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry and orients itself toward solving practical problems in the ''real world'' (Feilzer, 2010,

p.8). For Pragmatists, the end justifies the mean; they would use any method as long as the potential for answering the question(s) is accomplished. Therefore, pragmatism favours a mixed methods strategy focusing on the problem to be researched and the consequences of the research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2002). By using a mixed methods strategy, the researcher is "free of mental and practical constraints imposed by the forced choice dichotomy between positivism and constructivism'' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 27), and not a ''prisoner of a particular [research] method or technique'' (Robson, 1993, p. 291). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) assert that pragmatism embraces and acknowledges the uncertainty inherent in any research and that even if there are causal relationships they are ''transitory and hard to identify'' (p.93). Mounce (1997) agrees and confirms that research is constantly open to changes and events that are unpredictable and influenced by the human element forcing pragmatic researchers to be flexible and receptive of unexpected data. The concern of the pragmatist is more to open up the world to social enquiry and hence to be less purist in terms of methods and preconceptions (about theory and method) (Brannen, 2005). Such researchers are oriented to the production of research results that they seek to link to practical and policy ends (Hammersley, 2000). Thus a pragmatic rationality will more readily embrace a mix of methods if the research questions and practicalities of the research context suggest it (Feilzer, 2010).

5.3   The research approach

The main purpose of this research is to present a coherent explanation of the differential responsiveness to quality assurance implementation by analyzing data relevant to different layers of the phenomenon using different research methods. Instead of relying on deductive reasoning and general premises to reach specific conclusions, or inductive approaches that seek general conclusions based on specific premises, the current research therefore adopts a more flexible approach (Harwell, 2011); an inference to the best explanation, called the abductive research approach. It is reasoning from given data to a hypothesis that explains the data (Evers & Wu, 2006). In this type of reasoning, the justification of a generalization relies on the fact that it explains the observed empirical data and no other alternative hypothesis offers a better explanation of what has been observed (Evers & Wu, 2006). In the abductive approach, the researcher moves back and forth between induction and deduction (Morgan, 2007) and gains

insights by using the data generated from the used qualitative and quantitative methods (Morgan, 2007). Thus, analyzing the data sets abductively enables the interpretation of the data from a multidimensional perspective, each data set informing and enhancing each other.

The current research starts with statistical analysis of the population of the business schools, then turns to a study of selected cases and concludes by integrating the results in the final analysis through an alternation of data used from both phases.

5.4   The research strategy

A research strategy represents the appropriate approach(es) to collect and analyze data (Robson, 2002) that should be relevant to achieve the purpose of the research and to address the research questions (Denscombe, 1998). Saunders et al. (2003) have cited several strategies to conduct research (figure 5-1). In this subsection, the strategies employed in the research will be introduced, namely secondary data analysis and case study.

5.4.1   Secondary data analysis

This strategy refers to the review and use of existing information, gathered and recorded by a party other than the researcher and prior (and for purposes other than) to the current research in order to develop new insights through interpretation or presentation (Zikmund, 2010). Hewson (2006) defines secondary data analysis as "the further analysis of an existing dataset with the aim of addressing a research question distinct from that for which the dataset was originally collected and generating novel interpretations and conclusions" (p. 274).

The primary advantage of using available data records is that they are almost always faster and less expensive to obtain than primary data. Nevertheless, a researcher must always ensure that they are valid to serve the research question, up to date, and verifiable (Zikmund, 2010).

5.4.2   Case study

The decision to implement quality assurance in higher education falls well within Schramm's (1971) definition of a case study rationale. Schramm argues that

The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented (or not implemented) and with what result (Schramm, 1971, emphasis added).

Moreover, the choice of the case study approach is determined by the following factors. First, the case study allows investigating a phenomenon of interest within its context (Yin, 2009). The implementation of quality assurance is a complex organisational process that is difficult to isolate from its organisational context (Csizmadia, 2006); stakeholders' perceptions of quality assurance and the institutional pressures as well as organisational characteristics may have impacts on the decision to implement it. Thus, the case study provides the opportunity to appreciate these impacts and to explore to what extent the proposed concepts and theorised relationships are possible. Second, Yin (2009) argues that the case study is the approach of choice when the research aims to answer "how" or "why" questions, where the investigator has little control over events, and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. These three conditions are prevalent in the current research. Third, the case study approach allows for the use of mixed methods: Yin (2009) affirms that the richness of the phenomenon and the extensiveness of the real-life contexts require coping with a technically distinctive situation with many variables. Thus, an essential tactic is to use multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a complementary fashion.

By including both quantitative and qualitative data, the case study helps to explain both the process and the outcome of a phenomenon through complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the cases under investigation (Tellis, 1997).

5.5 Time horizon

Research studies are classified chronologically. A research is cross-sectional when the relevant data is collected at a single point in time; in longitudinal research the data is collected at multiple points in time (Zikmund, 2010). Thus, cross-sectional information deals with status, while longitudinal information concerns with progress and change in status (Rajulton, 2001) and require more time and funds. Therefore, due to the limitation of such resources, the current

research is cross-sectional. It is designed to study the status of responsiveness to quality assurance implementation at a time when the push for quality assurance by the government seems persistent but the responsiveness of the majority of the system is not paralleled.

5.6   Methods of data collection

The research design most commonly associated with a pragmatist paradigm is the mixed methods design using quantitative methods to measure some aspects of a phenomenon and qualitative methods for others (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). It is considered to be useful in capturing the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches during the collection of data and analysis of results in a single study. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, "provides a better understanding of a research problem than either approaches alone" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5); thus, achieving "breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123). Instead of methods being important, the problem is most important, and researchers use all approaches to understand it (Rossman & Wilson, 1985). Brannen (2005) and Creswell & Clarck (2010) contend that the decision of using a mixed methods design in research is primarily linked to the nature of the research question and the kind of knowledge it seeks to generate. Moreover, Currall & Towler (2003) point out that when a research is concerned with the analysis of dynamic and process-centred phenomena such as innovation and change, a mixed method strategy would yield better outcomes.

Quantitative methods in the current research are used to study the association between the organisational characteristics, the perceptions of leadership characteristics and the dimensions of quality assurance as an innovation with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation; whereas qualitative methods are used to explore the stakeholders' perceptions of the institutional pressures influence. Secondary data collection and a questionnaire (quantitative methods) and semi-structured interviews (qualitative method) were used in this research project to achieve its aims and objectives and to answer the research questions.

The secondary data was collected from the websites of the selected business schools in addition to the annual report on the state of higher education published by the Centre of Educational Research and Development (CERD) for the year 2015/2016. The questionnaire and the

interviews were personally administered by the researcher after contacting the respondents to seek approval for their participation. The administration of the questionnaire and the interviews were conducted in April and May 2017.

5.6.1   Advantages of using the mixed method design

Bryman (2006) provided a detailed list of 16 reasons, based on researchers' practices, for mixing methods. Three of these reasons are discussed below as they are deemed by the researcher to be more relevant to the current research: 1) to answer different research questions 2) completeness, and 3) utility.

When the research study entails a complex social phenomenon, several questions are posed to cover its different aspects. Brannen (2005) confirms that it is rare for a research study to pose only one research question rather it often comprises a complex of research questions. While the key research question or questions may be underpinned by positivist assumptions, some research questions may be underpinned by an interpretevist assumption, for example concerning how people perceive a phenomenon. Quantitative methods may be successful in answering the "what" question through the provision of descriptions but qualitative research is needed to elicit the "why" behind them. So, employing one method may result in overlooking critical information that would best be accessed through another. Consequently, mixed method research can answer the different research questions posed by the current research.

Completeness refers to the notion that the researcher can pull together a more comprehensive explanation of the research question if both quantitative and qualitative researches are employed (Bryman, 2006). The qualitative data provides a deep understanding of survey responses, and statistical analysis can provide detailed assessment of patterns of responses. Specifically, in the analysis phase the two types of the generated data are juxtaposed to produce complementary insights that together create a "bigger" picture.

Utility refers to the degree of the usefulness of findings generated through the use of mixed methods and how much they inform practitioners (Creswell & Clark, 2010). This is closely related to the completeness attribute: by generating a more elaborate understanding of the research question, interested parties can use the findings to recommend practical approaches to modify a status quo.

5.6.2 The secondary data collection method

The collected data on the business schools organisational characteristics was obtained through content analysis of their websites, and then was verified by reviewing the published annual report by the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) on institutions of higher education for the academic year 2015-2016 as well as the website of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) in Lebanon. When data was missing, the business schools were contacted directly by the researcher. Therefore, it is believed that the collected data is reliable and valid for the research purposes.

5.6.3 The questionnaire

A closed-ended questionnaire was developed to explore the perceptions of both, quality assurance as a managerial innovation and leadership characteristics, then to establish through statistical analysis their association with responsiveness.

The use of a questionnaire is often favoured by researchers because it provides data that are precise, and, arguably, unambiguous- if the questions are formulated very clearly (Csizmadia, 2006). Therefore, the questions were developed in a descriptive style with pre-coded answers. The questionnaire was also short to ensure the respondents' motivation to cooperate. To validate the questions, a pilot study was conducted with 10 respondents. This is not reported separately, but included in the responses as it was successful enough and did not lead to major adaptations. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions (see Appendix) with a 4-point Likert scale ('strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (4). Each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and it was personally administered by the researcher.

5.6.3.1 The questions and the choice of the scale

The first section of the questionnaire was intended to explore the respondents' perceptions of business schools leadership characteristics. The questions were developed using the literature review (chapter two). Thus, six questions covered the six characteristics of openness, environment monitoring, communication, the provision of financial resources, the provision of training, and appropriateness of the reward system. The second section enquired

about the perception of quality assurance based on Rogers' (1995) classification of the attributes of an innovation: relative advantage, observability, compatibility, complexity, and trialability.

The Likert scale did not include a neutral midpoint. For this, the research followed Ducharme (2016) by addressing the following two questions:

1. Is it reasonable that the respondent is familiar with the topic of the survey item?

2. Is it reasonable to think that the respondent should have an opinion one way or another about the topic of the survey item?

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) organised and sponsored during the years 2006-2008 several academic activities relevant to quality assurance, to which it invited universities' staff in Lebanon to participate. Additionally, since the enactment of the quality assurance law in 2014, these activities were intensified both on the part of the Ministry and the higher education institutions. Specifically, five of the sampled business schools organised and hosted a conference on quality assurance in higher education and four of them are represented in a government committee tasked with the preparation of the national quality assurance framework guidelines. Therefore, for both sections of the questionnaire, it is believed that the respondents are familiar with the topic of quality assurance and have an opinion in this regard.

Lastly, the choice of including a neutral midpoint depends on whether a researcher can afford to waste some potential useful data, which was not an option due to the current research's small number of respondents.

5.6.4 The interviews

The second method within the case studies consisted of semi-structured interviews aimed at exploring and explaining how the institutional pressures of higher education affect the decision to implement/not implement quality assurance and to what degree. Thus, questions relating to the coercive, mimetic and normative pressures were asked (See appendix 2) based on the literature review on quality assurance and institutional theory.

The interview provides an opportunity to gather data in the respondent's own words, to focus inquiry more pointedly toward the study's central questions, to draw data efficiently from a setting (Bryman, 2008), and to seek information directly from knowledgeable persons at the business schools. Interviewing face-to-face also had the advantage of providing room for

interaction between the researcher and the respondents. If necessary, questions and answers were clarified and specified. The data generated through the statistical analysis and the questionnaire would have provided little more than a snapshot, a photograph of the quality assurance state. The interviews offered more useful insights into the ways in which the schools responded to quality assurance.

5.7   Sampling strategy

For the secondary data analysis, sampling was not an issue. The entire population of business schools in the Lebanese higher education system were included as a sample.

Case study research includes both single- and multiple-case studies. Although choosing a single-case study may have justifiable causes and can effectively serve some types of research, the multiple-case study is often considered more compelling, and the overall study where it is used is therefore regarded as being more robust (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). Therefore, as the research is interested in explaining the differential responsiveness to quality assurance implementation, the design required the selection of multiple business schools with contrasting responsiveness attitude; this would allow the extraction of the distinctive causes for a decision to implement or not to implement, would strengthen the results and would yield greater confidence in the robustness of the theory (Yin, 2009).

Based on the results of the statistical analysis performed in the first phase, business schools displaying the organisational characteristic(s) associated with responsiveness to quality assurance were determined. Of these business schools, nine were purposively selected as a sample. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique; the main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable the answer to the research questions (Zikmund, 2010).

Although purposive sampling technique limits the ability to generalise the findings of the research to the entire higher education system, the research findings could provide a basis for further research or allow links to be forged with existing findings in the research area

After the selection of the business schools, it was important to determine the data collection units. The data collection unit is the individual from whom the data is derived, whereas the unit of analysis is the organisation to which he/she belongs.

Although the final decision to implement quality assurance at a business school rests primarily at the university level (the President, Vice-president and other authoritative personnel) the stakeholders at the business school play a highly influential consultative role in this regard; they are directly involved during the decision execution, thus their support should be noted and their views taken into consideration. Otherwise, resistance to any proposed project to implement quality assurance would be high. Accordingly, the units of data collection were the Deans of the business schools and chairpersons of the various departments. Targeting these respondents also rests on the belief that they are well informed about the organisational characteristics of the business school and its leadership; as well as knowledge on quality assurance. Moreover, there is reason to expect that they play a very central role in the processes of decision-making and in the potential creation of quality assurance initiatives that lead up to organisational activities related to its implementation. Consequently, the selection of respondents was based less on representation than on the fact that they possess insight and breadth of outlook related to questions central to the research. In total, 42 respondents participated in the research.

Feilzer (2010) contends that although it is clear that using a small number of cases suffers from limitations as regards its generalisability, it does hold some advantages. Erlandson et al. (1993, pp. 16) concurs that it presents "insights into the structures and processes involved in creating certain findings, aids appropriate interpretation, and enhances the validity of the research and its meaningfulness".

5.8   Reliability and validity

Bazeley (2004) argues that mixed research is inherently neither more nor less valid than specific approaches to research: as with any research, validity stems more from the appropriateness, thoroughness and effectiveness with which those methods are applied and the care given to thoughtful weighing of the evidence than from the application of a particular set of rules or adherence to an established tradition. Tashakorri & Teddlie (2003) suggest that by using a mixed method approach, a new nomenclature could be created; they also suggest using the term 'inference quality' as a substitute for validity/ trustworthiness in order to convey the quality of the conclusions that can be drawn from a study. In short, there are established rules for

controlling validity in standard quantitative and qualitative research. These same rules must be followed when the methods are combined.

Reliability and validity are foundational requirements for scientific research, especially in the social sciences (Trope, 2014). Reliability represents the extent to which the measures of a specified construct provide consistent and reproducible results. Validity represents the extent to which measures accurately represent the constructs they are intended to measure (Creswell, 2009).

According to Collis & Hussey (2003, p. 186), "validity is concerned with the extent to which the research findings accurately represents what is happening". More specific, whether the data is a true picture of what is being studied. According to Cooper & Schindler (2006, p.318-320), three major forms of validity can be identified, namely "content validity", "criterion-related validity" and "construct validity".

Content validity is determined when a tool appears to others to be measuring what it says it does (Zikmund, 2010). A rigorous way to assess content validity is to ask recognised experts in the field of research to review the research instruments. Based on the reviewers' comments, the unclear and obscure questions can be revised and the complex items reworded.

Concurrent or predictive validity are both measures of criterion validity. Concurrent validity uses an already existing and well-accepted measure against which the new measure can be compared. Predictive validity measures the extent to which a tool can predict a future event of interest. Construct validity shows how well the test of measures links with theoretical assumptions (Cooper & Emory, 1995).Evidence of construct validity can be provided by comparing the results obtained with the results obtained using other tests, other (related) characteristics of the individual or factors in the individual's environment which would be expected to affect test performance.

Reliability is concerned with the findings of the research (Collis & Hussey, 2003). It refers to the consistency, dependability and replicability of "the results obtained from a piece of research" (Nunan, 1999, p. 14). In other words, the findings of a research can be said to be reliable if a repetition of the research delivers the same results.

There are six generally recognised techniques that are used to assess reliability: inter-rater reliability, test-retest reliability, split-half reliability or internal consistency reliability, and uni-

dimensional reliability (Straub et al., 2004). The most widely used measure of reliability is Cronbach"s coefficient alpha which measures internal reliability of the multiple-item measures (Bryman, 2008) and is considered to provide the most accurate estimate of reliability (Breakwell et al., 1995). It essentially calculates the average of all possible split-half reliability coefficients and varies between 0 (no internal reliability) and 1 (perfect internal reliability). Thus, the higher the correlation between the items, the greater the internal reliability (Breakwell et al., 1995; Bryman, 2008). Alpha equal to 0.6 and 0.7 is generally considered as a good and a satisfactory level of reliability, respectively (Bryman, 2008).

5.8.1   Reliability and validity of the questionnaire

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, literature on implementation of quality assurance was studied and used as a methodological device. A series of meetings with the research supervisors were conducted to develop the items of the questionnaire; This content validity process included eliminating linguistic ambiguities and reducing the ambiguity of questions and to analyse the adequacy of the questionnaire to ensure that it would be suitable for capturing the data required for the study. Then, the refined questionnaire was piloted on 10 staff members of different business schools, and no further changes were suggested.

To assess the reliability of measures, the reliability coefficient Cronbach alpha was used. The reliability test results showed that the average alpha was 0.776 which is considered to be a satisfactory level of reliability (Bryman, 2008).

5.8.2   Reliability and validity of the interview

In order to achieve a high level of validity and reliability in interviews, some steps were prepared and followed to guarantee the absence of bias. According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 328), "the 5Ps is a useful mantra: Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance". He adds that this planning is critical when "you are going to demonstrate your credibility and obtain the confidence of the interviewees" (p. 328).

Attempts to increase the reliability of the interview have been undertaken by using a semi-structured interview guide during interviews. This in itself enhances reliability (Merton et al., 1990). Silverman (1993, p. 146) claims that it is possible for other researchers to replicate a

study if the researcher describes and documents his actions during the research process. As Stensaker (2004, p. 92) concluded:

> *High reliability during different interviews will depend on whether the followed procedures are identical from one interview to another, that the informants understand the questions the same way, and that the answers may be grouped without misunderstandings occurring.*

All these cited aspects have been taken into account in the current research.

A total of 9 interviews were carried out. The researcher conducted all interviews in person and permission was sought from the interviewees to audio record. Recording the interviews offered an accurate data capture. The limited amount of interviews at each school may be compensated by the richness in details sought. This trade off between number of interviews and depth per interview was necessary as a consequence of the frames of time and resources of the study. All interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. The pre-composed interview guide formed the frame for the interviews (see Appendix 2). The questions consisted of a combination of open and one closed question. Nevertheless, the interview guide was not adhered to at all times. For instance, in situations that demanded more probing in order to clarify various statements and the meaning attached to certain concepts stated by respondents. Thus the interview guide may be said to consist of formal and informal (open) interview designs combined, with the purpose of making the interviews comparable in terms of the various themes

The interviews were transcribed directly afterwards to ensure accuracy. It is worth mentioning that valuable information was communicated unofficially and when the recording was stopped. For confidentiality purposes, actual institutional and interviewee names were not included in the study.

5.9   Methods of data analysis

To analyse the secondary data and the questionnaire data, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. The interview data was analysed using Nvivo11. The analysis of the data is explained in the following sections.

5.9.1   Secondary data

The secondary data was used to test the association between the independent variables (the organisational characteristics) and the dependent variable (responsiveness to quality assurance implementation). Frequency tables and descriptive statistics were performed to summarise and describe the general state of business schools' responsiveness.

Then, the data was coded to create binary variables required for the inferential Fisher's exact test of association. Where the test statistic was significant, Gamma test was used to determine the size and direction of the association.

5.9.2   The questionnaire

The questions in the questionnaire were closed-ended with pre-coded response categories. The response categories and the codes were designed to be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, meaningful, consistent and easy to use in the data analysis.

Factor analysis was run for the purpose of factor reduction and then, as the dependent variable was dichotomous, Spearman's rho correlation test was performed to explore the relationship between the variables (Mann, 1995).

5.9.3   The interview

The first step of the interviews' analyses included the transcription of interviews and then the coding of the data according to the main themes generated from the literature review: coercive, mimetic and normative pressures. Creswell (2003) identifies these themes as *a priori* codes. Rubin and Rubin (2005, p.209) further suggest that:

> *Using published literature to suggest concepts and themes by which to code is perfectly legitimate. In fact, doing so will help you later on if you are trying to relate your findings to what others have already written.*

Therefore, using NVivo11, nodes were created for the 3 a priori themes and themes that emerged during the interviews. NVivo11 "drag and drop" coding tool was used to code the data into their respective nodes and sub-nodes.

The analysis of the qualitative data looked for the ''stable'', ''order and recurrence'' in the interview data as well as the ''precarious, "the ambiguities and singularities" (Feilzer, 2010, p.

10). The data was further analysed quantitatively as well as qualitatively, a process described as conversion mixed design by Teddlie & Tashakkori (2009, p. 151). The non-parametric Spearman rank correlation test was run to test the relationships between the variables.

5.10 Limitations of the methodology

Any chosen methodology for research has its relative weaknesses and strengths. Schulze (2003) contends that the selection of any research methodology involves gains as well as losses. While Cohen et al. (2000) argue that research methodologies could not be categorised as "best'" or "worst" but according to their appropriateness in answering the research question.

As with any research, the methodology adopted in this research has its limitations. The main limitation of this research lies in the sampling strategies that were used to select the business schools. The used non-probability purposive sampling method has limitations mainly in terms of the generalisability of the findings.

Additionally, since the study is cross-sectional and not longitudinal, which reduces the validity of findings (Babbie, 2001); in particular, the perceptions of a concept such as quality assurance may change over time, thus data requires to be collected more than once over a period of time (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

5.11 Research ethics

Ethics in research refers to the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of his/her work, or are affected by it (Zikmund, 2010). Researchers conducting a study may, unintentionally, cross-the-line in terms of ethical behaviour. This is why before embarking on any research study, a review of the ethical implications is warranted. Adhering to ethical standards promotes the values necessary to encourage respondents to participate: trust, honesty, fairness, accountability, and mutual respect (BERA, 2004).

To safeguard this study from ethical issues, before administering the questionnaires the respondents were informed of the research purpose and that they can choose not to participate verbally. The cover page of the questionnaire was designed to inform respondents about the research objectives, that it is voluntary, and that their data will be kept in confidentiality, and will

only be used for the purpose of the research. It also stated that the respondents are free to withdraw from answering the questionnaires at any point without offering any reason. The researcher's obligation not to deceive or mislead the respondents in any way was respected.

Before the start of any interview, the participants were informed about its purpose, the potential benefits of the study and that their privacy and anonymity shall be maintained during data analysis and data kept for a reasonable period of time (Cooper & Schindler, 1998). Additionally, care was taken not to influence the participants' views.

During transcription, the researcher was sure that writing is free of bias towards any group (e.g., age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, race, gender, etc.) and that the details of the study must be careful explained within the actual report so as to allow readers the opportunity to judge the ethical quality of the study for themselves (Robson, 2002).

5.12 Conclusion

The main purpose of the research is to explore and explain the differential responsiveness to quality assurance in business schools in Lebanon. It is based on the pragmatic multi-level convergent mixed-methods design. A mixed methods research is defined as a "research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in a single study or programme of inquiry" (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). Mixed methods approach is useful to develop a better understanding of complex phenomena by triangulating or corroborating or complementing one set of results with another and thereby enhancing the validity of inferences (Green et al., 2001;Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2002; Mertens, 2005).

Chapter 6   Findings and analysis- The secondary data analysis: The business schools organisational characteristics

6.1   Introduction

The aim of this research is to understand how institutional pressures, organisational characteristics, perception of quality assurance and leadership characteristics influence responsiveness to quality assurance in Lebanese private business schools.

In Chapter 4, hypotheses which will be tested in this chapter were developed to answer the research objective-to identify the organisational characteristics of the business schools that are associated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

The methods of analysis include the descriptive statistics of the variables and Fisher's exact test of association (a special type of chi-squared test).

6.2   Descriptive analysis

This subsection summarises the data collected for 33 business schools constituting the entire business school population in Lebanon. The data was retrieved from the websites of these institutions in addition to the data published by the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CRED) for the school year 2015-2016. In some cases when data was missing the business school was directly contacted by the researcher.

Quality assurance at a business school can be either internal and/or external. Responsiveness to quality assurance in this research is defined as the implementation of any type of quality assurance within a business school; whereas non-responsiveness is defined as the absence of any quality assurance activity. In searching the websites of all the business schools, the researcher searched for key terms that could indicate a quality assurance activity. These terms were: quality, quality assurance and accreditation. Accordingly, the following Table 6-1 summarizes the categorical frequency distribution of the business schools according to their responsiveness type:

Table 6-1: Frequency table: The level of responsiveness and the number of business schools

Type of responsiveness	Number of Schools
No quality assurance	22
External accreditation/ Institutional accreditation	3
Internal quality assurance	8
Total	**33**

The results reveal that two-thirds of the business Schools (n=22) have not engaged in any activity related to quality assurance and one-third (n=11) is responsive with different types of quality assurance. The overall result indicates that quality assurance implementation is slow and has not proceeded according to the state's expectations.

The descriptive statistics used data-specific measures of central tendency to describe the independent variables (the organisational characteristics). Therefore, nominal data were described using the mode, whereas interval and ordinal data were described using the median which is not affected by extreme values. The following table summarises the variable types and the measures of central tendency.

Responsive schools have implemented at least one type of quality assurance; non-responsive schools have not implemented any type of quality assurance.

Table 6-2 Results of descriptive statistics

		Responsive schools		Non-Responsive schools	
		Median	Mode	Median	Mode
1	Type of business (0=not-for-profit, 1= for profit)		0		0
2	Age (years)	56		18	
3	Size (number of students)	2063		280	
4	Tuition Fee ($ per credit)	196		163	
5	Number of Programmes	6		8	
6	Number of Branches	4		1	
7	Level of conferred degrees (1=BA, 2= MBA, 3=PHD)		3		2

The descriptive analysis of the two groups of business schools (responsive/not responsive) suggests that responsive schools tend to be older and larger (in terms of students' numbers and branches), receive a higher tuition fee and have fewer programmes. Both groups of schools are mostly not-for-profit. The following table shows the business types of the schools and their frequency.

Table 6-3 Type of business

	Responsive schools	**Non-responsive schools**
Not-for-profit	9	12
For profit	2	10
Total	**11**	**22**

Four of the 11 responsive schools (36%) offer a doctoral level degree, whereas the Master degree is offered at the majority of the non-responsive schools (n=14, 64%) and only one school offers a doctoral level degree. The following table shows the number of schools and their offered degrees level.

Table 6-4 Level of offered degrees

	Responsive schools	**Non-responsive schools**
Bachelor degree only	0	7
Bachelor and Master degree	7	14
Doctoral studies	4	1
Total	**11**	**22**

6.3   Operationalisation and coding of the data

To run the inferential statistics tests, the aggregate data was edited and coded as follows: The dependent variable, Responsiveness to quality assurance, is defined as the implementation of any type of quality assurance at a business school because they all indicate a state of general

responsiveness to the concept; whereas non-responsiveness is defined as the absence of any quality assurance activity at the business school. Thus, the following codes were formulated.

    0- The business school is not responsive and thus has not implemented any type of quality assurance.

    1- The business school is responsive and has implemented at least one type of quality assurance

The independent variables expected to be influential in determining responsiveness were determined from the literature review in chapter one. They are operationalised and coded as follows:

6.3.1 The type of business:

Business schools in Lebanon are divided into two types: not-for profit institutions established mainly by missionaries and religious associations; for-profit institutions established by individuals as sole proprietorships or as partnerships. The type of business is relevant to responsiveness of quality assurance because its implementation process is costly, and questions arise as to whether the owners are able and willing to dedicate funds for the endeavour.

The type of business was coded as follows:

    0- Not-for-profit

    1- For profit

6.3.2 Age of the business school

The Lebanese private universities system was initiated in 1875 when the American University of Beirut was established. Afterwards other universities came into existence. Some business schools share with their respective university the date of foundation.

In 1961, the first state law was ratified in order to organise the education system. Later in 1996, a new law clarified many aspects of its precedent and determined the specifications for the foundation of a private university in terms of human resources and logistics. Thus, the year 1996 is considered to be the cut off time to determine the age variable. Therefore, age is coded as follows:

0- Old business schools founded on or before 1996

1- New business schools founded after 1996.

6.3.3 Size of the business school

The size of the business school variable is determined by the number of enrolled students in the academic year 2015/2016. According to the statistical report of the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CRED), the minimum number of enrolled students in a business school in 2015 was 19 and the maximum was 6,232 with a median of 609 students. Therefore, business schools' size was operationalised and coded as follows:

0- Small business schools with a number of students equal or below the median of 609.

1- Large business schools with a number of students above 609.

6.3.4 Complexity

Complexity is identified as the combined effect of three elements: horizontal differentiation, vertical or hierarchical differentiation and geographical dispersion (Hall & Tolbert, 2005). They were defined and operationalised in the research respectively as the number of programmes, the hierarchy of the conferred degrees and the number of branches (Csizmadia, 2006).

The statistical median for the number of programmes in the business schools is 7, with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 14. Therefore, the number of programmes was coded as follows:

0- Number of programmes is equal or below 7

1- Number of programmes is greater than 7.

The hierarchy of the conferred degrees was identified within two groups: 1) Business schools offering a Bachelor degree only or both a Bachelor and a Master degree 2) Business schools that additionally offer a doctoral degree. Doctoral degrees are different than the other two types because their candidates share the experience of creating knowledge through the practice of independent research and scholarship. This creation of new knowledge or of applying existing knowledge in a new way is not expected at undergraduate or taught postgraduate level. Also,

Doctoral candidates operate at a level of independence and self-direction that would not be expected of an undergraduate or taught postgraduate student (QAA, 2011). Doctoral candidates conduct independent research, under the guidance of one or more supervisors, and would be expected to be able to contribute substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches (QAA, 2011) . Therefore, the hierarchy of conferred degrees was operationalised and coded as follows:

      0- Bachelor and/or Master degree

      1- Bachelor, master and doctoral degree.

The geographical dispersion of a business school is operationalised as the number of branches as the term campus is mainly used for a university (a university may have a campus with or without a branch for the business school). The median for the number of business school branches is two. Therefore, the number of branches was coded as follows:

      0- Business schools with two or fewer branches

      1- Business schools with more than two branches

6.3.5 The level of tuition fee for a credit-hour

The median tuition fee for a credit hour at the business schools in 2015 was $170. Therefore, the tuition fee level was coded as follows:

      0- Tuition fee below or equal the median of $170

      1- Tuition fee above $ 170.

Table 6-5 Summary of the variables and coding

Type of variable	Variable	Categories	Code
Dependent	Responsiveness to quality assurance	-Business school has not implemented any type of quality assurance (Non-Responsive)	0
		-Business school has implemented at least one type of quality assurance (Responsive)	1

Independent	Type of business	-Not for profit	0
		-For profit	1
	Age of the business school	-Old (founded on or before 1996)	0
		-New (founded after 1996)	1
	Size of the business school	-Small (number of students equal or below the median of 609)	0
		-Large (number of students above 609)	1
	Number of programmes	-Small (equal or below the median of 7)	0
		-Large (greater than 7)	1
	Hierarchy of conferred degrees	-Bachelor and/or Master degree	0
		-Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degree	1
	Geographical dispersion	-equal or fewer than the median of 2 branches	0
		-More than two branches	1
	Level of tuition fee	-Below or equal the median of $170 per credit	0
		-Above $170 per credit	1

6.4 The statistical test: Fisher's exact test

Fisher's exact test of association was run between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable. Fisher's exact test is a non-parametric test used to determine if there is a relationship (or association) between two categorical variables (DeCoster, 2004). As a special type of chi-squared test, it is the preferred association test to use when the sample size is small (Upton, 1992; Chen, 2011). Small sample size is variously defined by textbooks, along the lines of 'in all cases where total n<20, or when n<40 and any expected cell count is less than 5 (Bland, 2000; Kirkwood & Sterne, 2003). In the case of two variables being compared, the test can also be interpreted as determining if there is a difference between the two variables. The sample data is used to calculate a test statistic, the size of which reflects the probability (p-value) that the observed association between the two variables has occurred by chance, i.e. due to sampling

error (DeCoster, 2004). In this case, Fisher's exact test is used to determine whether there is an association between each of the independent variables and responsiveness to quality assurance. The null hypothesis (H0) is tested and either maintained or rejected, in the latter case the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. If the probability of the test statistic is greater than alpha = 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected at the 5% level of significance and it is concluded that there is no association between the variables, i.e. they are independent.

H0: There is no association between the independent variables and responsiveness to quality assurance

H1: There is an association between the independent variables and responsiveness to quality assurance.

When the test is significant ($p<0.05$), the non-parametric Goodman and Kruskal's gamma (G or γ) test is used to measure the strength and direction of the association between the variables.

6.4.1 Type of business

The literature suggests that the money earned by or donated to a not-for-profit organisation is invested in pursuing the organisation's objectives and to keeping it running. Therefore, not-for-profit organisations are expected to be more responsive and more willing to invest in new ideas, such as quality assurance, that will improve their status. The research tested this hypothesis on the population of the private business schools in Lebanon and found the following results.

The cross-tabulation (Table 6-5) shows that 42.9% of the not-for- profit business schools are responsive, whereas 57.1% are non-responsive.

Table 6-6: Cross-tabulation of the type of business and responsiveness to quality assurance

| | | | Responsiveness to Quality Assurance | | |
			Non-responsive	Responsive	Total
Type of Business	Not for profit	Count	12	9	21
		% within Type of Business	57.1%	42.9%	100.0%
	For profit	Count	10	2	12
		% within Type of Business	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	22	11	33
		% within Type of Business	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%

Table 6-7: Fisher's exact test result- Type of business and responsiveness to quality assurance

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	2.357[a]	1	.125	.249	.124	
Continuity Correction[b]	1.326	1	.250			
Likelihood Ratio	2.514	1	.113	.152	.124	
Fisher's Exact Test				.249	.124	
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.286[c]	1	.131	.249	.124	.100
N of Valid Cases	33					

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.00.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

c. The standardized statistic is -1.512.

The p-value associated with the Fisher's exact test (p=0.249) in (Table 6-6) indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. It is therefore concluded that there is no association between the type of business and responsiveness to quality assurance. In other words, there is no difference between for profit and not-for profit business schools in terms of their responsiveness to quality assurance.

6.4.2 Age of the business school

The literature on the association between age and responsiveness to the implementation of a new management paradigm was inconclusive; it suggests that age is associated with the experience and the capacity of organisations (Kahsay, 2012). Thus, the older the business school the more experience and knowledge it possesses to assimilate and implement a new management paradigm such as quality assurance; whereas Rosa et al. (2006) argue that new institutions are more open and receptive of new ideas. The cross-tabulation (Table 6-7) shows that 50% of old business schools are responsive and 17.6% of new business schools are responsive.

Table 6-8: Cross-tabulation of the age of the business school and responsiveness to quality assurance

			Responsiveness to Quality Assurance		
			Non-responsive	Responsive	Total
Age of the faculty	New	Count	14	3	17
		% within Age of the faculty	82.4%	17.6%	100.0%
	Old	Count	8	8	16
		% within Age of the faculty	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	22	11	33
		% within Age of the faculty	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%

Table 6-9: Fisher's exact test result- Age of the business school and responsiveness to quality assurance

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	3.882[a]	1	.049	.071	.054	
Continuity Correction[b]	2.563	1	.109			
Likelihood Ratio	3.985	1	.046	.071	.054	
Fisher's Exact Test				.071	.054	
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.765[c]	1	.052	.071	.054	.045
N of Valid Cases	33					

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.33.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

c. The standardized statistic is 1.940.

Since the p-value associated with the test statistic is greater than 0.05 (p=.071)(Table 6-8), the null hypothesis cannot be rejected with 95% confidence, i.e. it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant association between age and responsiveness to quality assurance. In other words there is no difference between old and new business schools in terms of responsiveness to quality assurance.

6.4.3 Business school size

The literature suggests that large organisations tend to adopt innovations because they have more slack resources and they are financially able to engage in new projects and can withstand operational failures (Hitt et al., 1990; Rogers, 2003). On the other hand, small organisations are said to be more innovative because they are more flexible, have greater ability to adapt and improve, and demonstrate less difficulty accepting and implementing change (Aldrich & Auster 1986; Damanpour, 1996). The cross-tabulation (Table 6-9) shows that 62.5% of the large schools are responsive whereas 5.9% of small schools only have implemented quality assurance.

Table 6-10 Cross-tabulation of business school size and responsiveness to quality assurance

			Responsiveness to Quality Assurance		
			Non-responsive	Responsive	Total
Faculty size	Small	Count	16	1	17
		% within Faculty size	94.1%	5.9%	100.0%
	Large	Count	6	10	16
		% within Faculty size	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	22	11	33
		% within Faculty size	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%

Table 6-11: Fisher's exact test result- School size and responsiveness to quality assurance

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	11.890[a]	1	.001	.001	.001	
Continuity Correction[b]	9.478	1	.002			
Likelihood Ratio	13.233	1	.000	.001	.001	
Fisher's Exact Test				.001	.001	
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.529[c]	1	.001	.001	.001	.001
N of Valid Cases	33					

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.33.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

c. The standardized statistic is 3.395.

Since the p-value associated with the test statistic is lower than 0.01 (p=.001)(Table 6-10), the null hypothesis can be rejected with 99% confidence, i.e. it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between size and responsiveness to quality assurance. Goodman and Kruskal's gamma test confirms that there is a strong, positive correlation between the size of a business school and responsiveness to quality assurance which is statistically significant (G = .928, p =.0005). Therefore, in this research large business schools have been found to be more likely to implement quality assurance.

Table 6-12 Goodman and Kruskal test

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error[a]	Approximate T[b]	Approximate Significance	Exact Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	.928	.080	4.227	.0005	.001
N of Valid Cases		33				

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

6.4.4 Number of programmes

The literature suggests that institutions offering a large number of programmes tend to implement quality assurance (Csizmadia, 2006). The cross-tabulation (Table 6-12) shows that 25% of business schools with more than 7 programmes are responsive.

Table 6-13: Cross-tabulation of number of programmes and responsiveness to quality assurance

			Responsiveness to Quality Assurance		Total
			Non-responsive	Responsive	
Number of Programmes	7 or Less	Count	10	7	17
		% within Number of Programmes	58.8%	41.2%	100.0%
	More than 7	Count	12	4	16
		% within Number of Programmes	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	22	11	33
		% within Number of Programmes	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%

Table 6-14: Fisher's exact test result- Number of programmes and responsiveness to quality assurance

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	.971[a]	1	.325	.465	.270	
Continuity Correction[b]	.379	1	.538			
Likelihood Ratio	.980	1	.322	.465	.270	
Fisher's Exact Test				.465	.270	
Linear-by-Linear Association	.941[c]	1	.332	.465	.270	.183
N of Valid Cases	33					

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.33.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

c. The standardized statistic is -.970.

Having tested the relationship between the two variables, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the 5% level of significance (P=.465)(Table 6-13) , i.e. it can be concluded that in the context of Lebanese business schools there is no statistically significant relationship between the number of programmes and responsiveness to quality assurance.

6.4.5 The highest conferred degree

The review of literature suggests that a business school offering doctoral level degrees is more likely to implement quality assurance (QAA, 2011; Tsevi, 2015).Table 6-14 shows that 80% of the schools that offer a doctoral degree are responsive whereas only 25% of schools offering a bachelor or a master degree are responsive which seems to be in line with the literature.

Table 6-15: Cross tabulation of the highest degree conferred and responsiveness to quality assurance

			Responsiveness to Quality Assurance		
			Non-responsive	Responsive	Total
Degrees conferred	Bachelor and Master only	Count	21	7	28
		% within Degrees conferred	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	With doctoral degree	Count	1	4	5
		% within Degrees conferred	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	22	11	33
		% within Degrees conferred	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%

Table 6-16: Fisher's exact test result- Highest degree conferred and responsiveness to quality assurance

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	5.775[a]	1	.016	.033	.033	
Continuity Correction[b]	3.565	1	.059			
Likelihood Ratio	5.515	1	.019	.033	.033	
Fisher's Exact Test				.033	.033	
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.600[c]	1	.018	.033	.033	.031
N of Valid Cases	33					

a. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.67.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

c. The standardized statistic is 2.366.

Since the p-value associated with the test statistic is lower than 0.05 (p=.033)(Table 6-15), the null hypothesis can be rejected with 95% confidence, i.e. it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of conferred degrees and responsiveness to quality assurance.

Goodman and Kruskal's gamma test indicates that there is a strong, positive correlation between the level of conferred degrees at a business school and responsiveness to quality assurance which is statistically significant (G = .846, p= .042). Therefore, it can be concluded that business schools offering doctoral level degrees are more likely to implement quality assurance.

Table 6-17 Goodman and Kruskal test

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error[a]	Approximate T[b]	Approximate Significance	Exact Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	.846	.170	2.031	.042	.143
N of Valid Cases		33				

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

6.4.6 Number of branches

Csizmadia (2006) argues that the number of branches is positively associated with responsiveness to quality assurance. Table 6-17 shows that schools with more than two branches are 50% responsive; 78.9% of schools with two or less branches are non-responsive.

Table 6-18: Cross-tabulation of number of branches and responsiveness to quality assurance

			Responsiveness to Quality Assurance		Total
			Non-responsive	Responsive	
Number of branches	Two or less branches	Count	15	4	19
		% within Number of Campuses	78.9%	21.1%	100.0%
	More than two branches	Count	7	7	14
		% within Number of Campuses	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	22	11	33
		% within Number of Campuses	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%

Table 6-19: Fisher's exact test result- Number of branches and responsiveness to quality assurance

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	3.039[a]	1	.081	.136	.086	
Continuity Correction[b]	1.876	1	.171			
Likelihood Ratio	3.045	1	.081	.136	.086	
Fisher's Exact Test				.136	.086	
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.947[c]	1	.086	.136	.086	.069
N of Valid Cases	33					

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.67.

c. The standardized statistic is 1.717.

The p-value (p=.136) associated with the test statistic is higher than 0.05 (Table 6-18).This is why the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the 5% level of significance, i.e. it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant relationship between the number of branches and responsiveness to quality assurance.

6.4.7   The tuition fee level for one credit

Cooper et al. (2014) and Henard et al. (2012) suggest that high tuition fees are positively associated with quality assurance. Table 6-19 shows that 43.8% of schools with high tuition fee are responsive.

Table 6-20: Cross-tabulation of the tuition fee level and responsiveness to quality assurance

			Non-responsive	Responsive	Total
			Responsiveness to Quality Assurance		
Tuition fee level	Low	Count	13	4	17
		% within Tuition fee level	76.5%	23.5%	100.0%
	High	Count	9	7	16
		% within Tuition fee level	56.3%	43.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	22	11	33
		% within Tuition fee level	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%

Table 6-21: Fisher's exact test result-Tuition fee level and responsiveness to quality assurance

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	1.517[a]	1	.218	.282	.195	
Continuity Correction[b]	.743	1	.389			
Likelihood Ratio	1.530	1	.216	.282	.195	
Fisher's Exact Test				.282	.195	
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.471[c]	1	.225	.282	.195	.141
N of Valid Cases	33					

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.33.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

c. The standardized statistic is 1.213.

The p-value (p=.282) associated with the test statistic is higher than 0.05(Table 6-20). This is why the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the 5% level of significance, i.e. it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant relationship between the tuition fee level and responsiveness to quality assurance.

6.4.8   Summary of the findings

The cross tabulation and the inferential Fisher's exact test show that the size of the business school and the level of the highest conferred degree are positively associated with responsiveness to quality assurance

On the other hand, the type of business, the age of the school, the number of programmes, the number of branches and the level of tuition fee do not appear to be statistically significantly associated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

6.5   Conclusion

This chapter explored the association between the business schools' organisational characteristics and responsiveness to quality assurance. The organisational characteristics were extracted from the literature review and relevant secondary data drawn from the business schools websites and government sources were analysed. Results of the descriptive statistics indicated that the responsive schools tend to be older and larger (in terms of students' numbers and branches), receive a higher tuition fee and have fewer programmes. Both groups of schools are mostly not-for-profit. Responsive schools offer a doctoral level degree more than non-responsive schools.

Fisher's exact test of association was used as the variables were coded as categorical and the sample was small. The results of the tests are in line with Rogers (2003) observation that the size of an organisation has consistently been shown to predict innovation and the adoption of innovation; it also concurs with Hitt et al. (1990) who argue that large organisations have more

slack resources for experimentation and innovation, thus they are able financially to engage in new projects, such as the implementation of quality assurance, and can withstand operational failures.

Hall and Tolbert (2005) suggest that all the dimensions of complexity combine in determining the pace of quality assurance implementation; consequently, organisations that are more complex (horizontally, vertically or geographically) are slow to implement new ideas and processes. In the current research however, horizontal complexity (number of programmes) and geographical complexity (number of campuses) have not been found to be significant in determining responsiveness, while vertical complexity (the highest conferred degree level-doctoral) has been found to be positively associated with responsiveness. This finding is in line with other research (Tsevi, 2015; Mavil, 2013) suggesting that the provision of doctoral studies, in particular, requires a system for quality assurance.

Chapter 7   Findings and Analysis- The case studies: Perceptions of leadership characteristics and attributes of quality assurance

7.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, Fisher's exact tests of association indicated that the size of the business school and the highest level of conferred degrees are both positively associated with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation. This chapter explores why some large business schools and one small with a doctoral programme have not yet implemented any type of quality assurance; and how the dimensions of leadership characteristics and quality assurance affect responsiveness to quality assurance. The research hypotheses H6-H20 developed in chapter 4 will be tested in this chapter.

The data for this part of the research was collected using a 4-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) questionnaire of two sections. The first of the two sections explores the respondents' perceptions of leadership characteristics in relation to responsiveness to quality assurance. The second explores the respondents' perceptions of quality assurance as innovation in relation to responsiveness to quality assurance implementation. Responsiveness is defined in the research as the implementation of any type of quality assurance. Therefore when referred to responsive schools it means that they have implemented at least one type of quality assurance.

In this research, 8 of the 16 (50%) large business schools are purposively selected. Their students' population represented 54% of the total number of business schools students in Lebanon- 7 of them are amongst the 10 most populated and one is the 12th on the list. Of these 8 schools, 5 are responsive (one with a doctoral degree) and 3 are non-responsive (no doctoral degree); then, one small business school was added to the sample because it emerged as an extreme case: the only small business school that offers a doctoral degree without any quality assurance activity. In sum, the sample comprised five responsive schools and four non-responsive schools.

The 42 Deans, assistant Deans and chairs of these business schools are the units of data analysis: 17 respondents are from responsive business schools and 25 respondents are from non-

responsive business schools. The sample represents 86% of the total population of 49 academic staff member in these 9 business schools.

7.2 Reliability statistics

The questionnaire was tested for internal reliability and was found to be reliable with Cronbach's alpha equal to 0.776 (Table 7-1). The most widely used measure of reliability is Cronbach coefficient alpha which measures internal reliability of the multiple-item measures (Bryman, 2008) and is considered to provide the most accurate estimate of reliability (Breakwell et al., 1995). It essentially calculates the average of all possible split-half reliability coefficients and varies between 0 (no internal reliability) and 1 (perfect internal reliability). Thus, the higher the correlation between the items, the higher the internal reliability (Breakwell et al., 1995; Bryman, 2008). Alpha equals to 0.6 and 0.7 is generally considered respectively as a good and a satisfactory level of reliability (Bryman, 2008).

Table 7-1 Cronbach's alpha reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.776	16

7.3 Descriptive analysis

The data is first summarised using descriptive statistics. Figure 7-1 presents the respondents' answers to the first section of the questionnaire about leadership characteristics.

Figure 7-1 Leadership characteristics
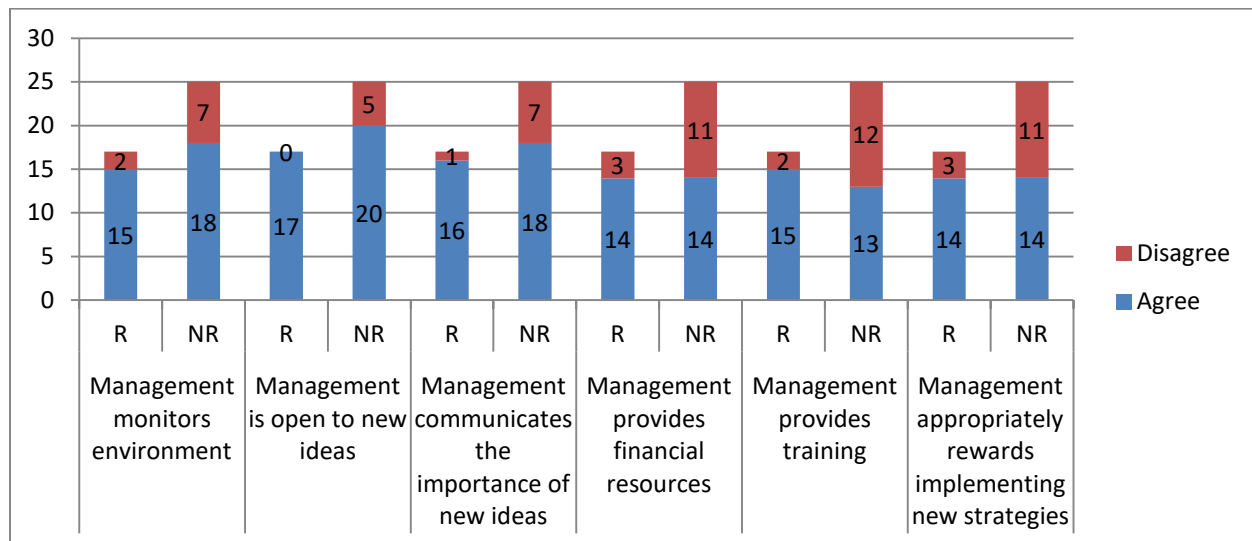
Figure 7-1 shows that the majority of respondents at the responsive schools (R) agree that management displays the characteristics associated with responsiveness. All the respondents agree that management is open to new ideas whereas all but one agree that management communicates the importance of implementing new ideas; also of the 17 respondents, 15 equally agree that management monitors the higher education environment to bring in new ideas and provides training; 14 also agree at the same time to both that management provides the necessary financial resources and appropriately rewards the implementation of new strategies that could improve the schools status.

The majority of respondents at non-responsive schools (NR) agree that management monitors the higher education environment (18/25), is open to new ideas (20/25) and communicates the importance of implementing measures that will improve the university status (18/25). But for the last three variables, the frequency of disagreement rises and fewer respondents agree about management characteristics as regards the provision of financial resources (14/25), the provision of training (15/25), and the appropriate rewards (14/25). Therefore, it can be concluded that respondents from non-responsive schools are more divided in terms of the characteristics that require management to spend money. In other words, they seem to agree that management exhibits more the characteristics that are free of financial commitments and less the characteristics that require financial obligations.

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Figure 7-2 shows the respondents' answers to the second section of the questionnaire about their perceptions of quality assurance.

Figure 7-2 The perceptions of quality assurance
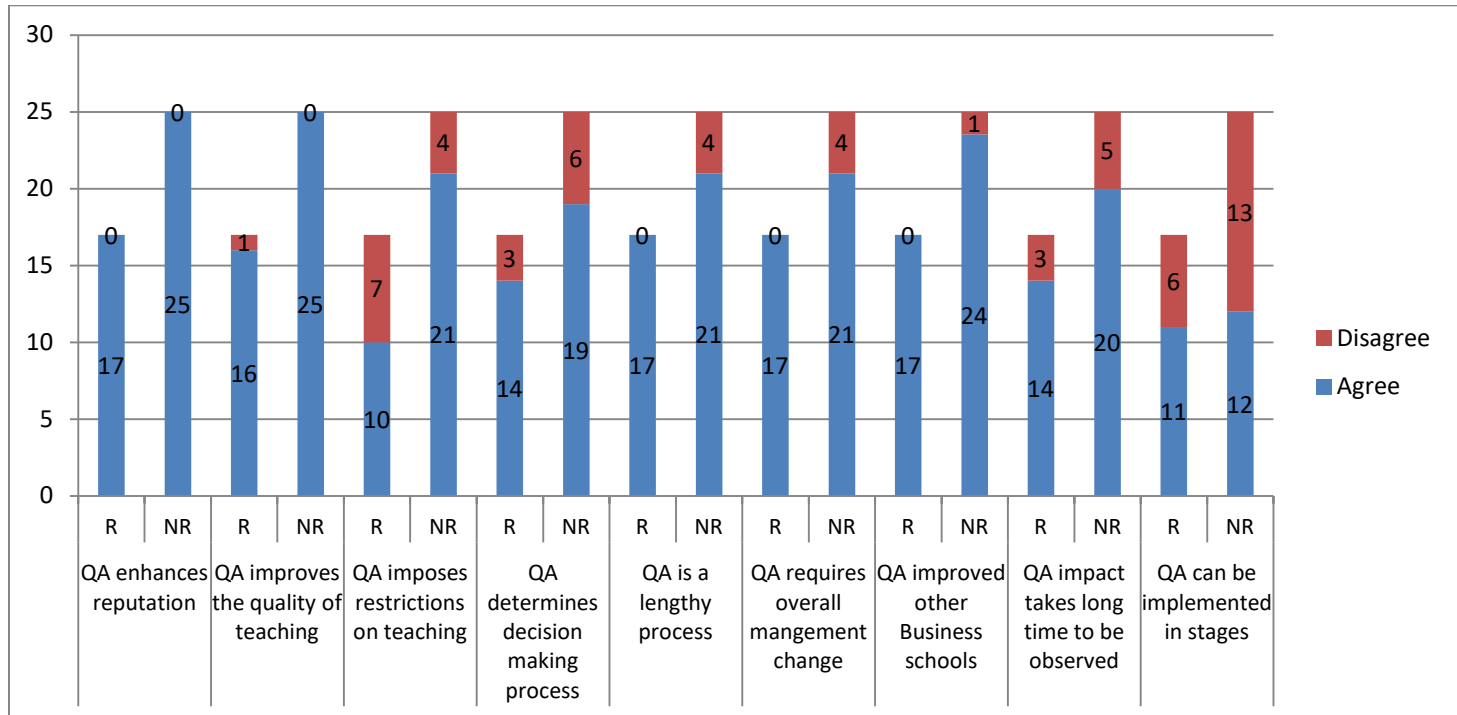
The results of this part of the questionnaire suggest that the respondents had approximately similar perceptions of quality assurance.

Figure 7-2 shows that all the respondents (100%) perceive that quality assurance offers a relative advantage as it enhances the *reputation* of the business school and all but one respondent from a responsive institution disagrees that quality assurance *improves the quality of teaching*.

The majority of respondents perceive that quality assurance is not compatible with the value of academic autonomy; 10 from responsive schools and 21 from non-responsive schools agree that quality assurance *imposes restrictions on the way teaching is performed*, whereas 14 and 19 respondents from responsive and non-responsive schools respectively agree that quality assurance *determines how decisions at the school should be made*.

A big proportion of respondents from both types of schools also perceive quality assurance as a *complex* process (17 and 21 from responsive and non-responsive schools respectively) because it is *lengthy* and *requires an overall change of the way the university is managed*.

All but one respondent from a non-responsive school agree that quality assurance has *resulted in the improvement of other business schools' status*. The vast majority of respondents agree that *the impact of its implementation takes a long time to be observed*. Finally, 11 and 12 respondents from responsive and non-responsive schools respectively agree that quality assurance *can be implemented in one department before being applied to the entire business school*.

The last statement in the questionnaire inquired whether the general performance of the business school is satisfactory without quality assurance. Figure 7-3 shows that 13 and 22 of respondents respectively from responsive and non-responsive business schools disagree with the statement.

Figure 7-3 The general performance of the business school is satisfactory without quality assurance
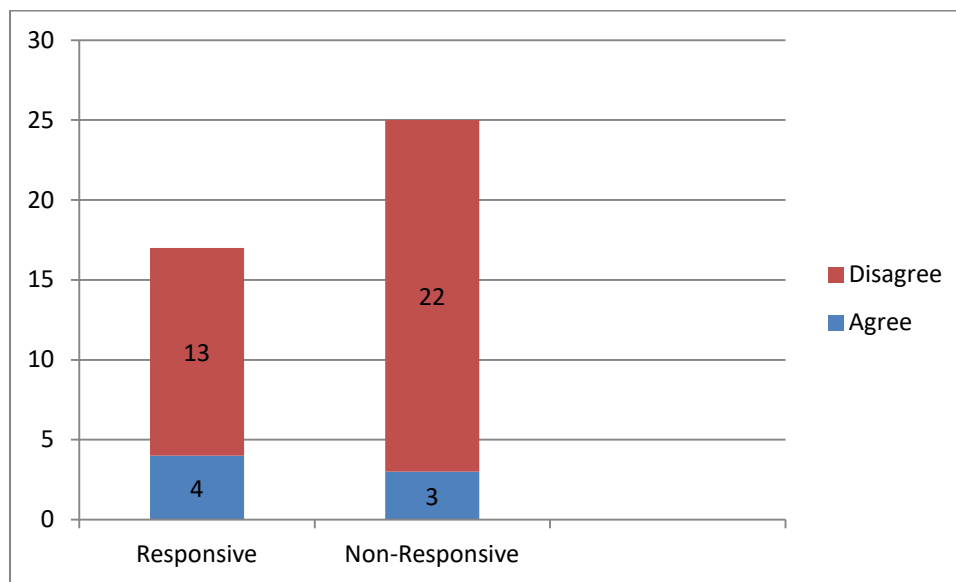
7.3.1 Conclusion of the descriptive analysis

The overall results of the descriptive analysis indicate that the majority of respondents from both types of business schools seem to agree on the attributes of quality assurance. They

also agree that management monitors the environment, is open to new ideas and communicates how important it is to implement new strategies to improve the business school.

The main difference between the two groups of respondents relates to those statements that enquire about management's characteristics associated with the provision of financial support for implementing new ideas; the majority of the respondents from responsive schools agree that management provides the necessary financial resources, whereas a lesser number of respondents from non-responsive business school agree.

7.4 Examination of the correlation between the predictor variables and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation

First in this section, an exploratory factor analysis is performed to validate the inclusion of the independent variables into their respective concepts (leadership and quality assurance as innovation) and then to explore how the extracted latent factors affect quality assurance implementation. Then, the correlation between each of these independent variables and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation is tested.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) examines all the pair wise relationships between individual variables (e.g., items on a scale) and seeks to extract latent factors from the measured variables (Osborne, 2015). It is a widely utilized and broadly applied statistical technique in the social sciences (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Hence, an exploratory factor analysis is performed to reduce the number of predictors that are latent in the data; the exploratory factor analysis allowed the extraction of fewer independent variables with the potential to discern their effect on responsiveness to quality assurance.

The Varimax Rotation in the factor analysis is selected to clarify and simplify the results (Osborne, 2015). The rotation achieves a 'simple structure' by minimising the number of items that load highly on a factor, using the orthogonal assumption that the factors are uncorrelated. The aim here is to make the factor solution more interpretable (Penny, 2004).

Spearman correlation test is performed afterwards to determine how each of the independent variables correlates with the dependent variable, responsiveness to quality assurance implementation. Spearman rho correlation test or the Spearman's rank-order correlation is the nonparametric version of the Pearson product-moment correlation. Spearman's correlation

coefficient, (ρ, also signified by r_s) measures the strength and direction of association between two ranked variables

7.4.1 Factor analysis results

The factor analysis performed in SPSS returned the following results:

Table 7-2: KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.704
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	391.931
	df	120
	Sig.	.000

The KMO test measures the sampling adequacy for a satisfactory factor analysis to proceed. Kaiser (1974) recommend that 0.5 (value for KMO) as minimum (barely accepted), values between 0.7-0.8 as acceptable, and values above 0.9 as superb. Table 7-2 shows an acceptable KMO value of .704; thus, the sample is appropriate for exploratory factor analysis.

The next SPSS output is a table of communalities which shows how much of the variance in the variables has been accounted for by the extracted factors. For instance 87.9% of the variance in "Monitoring higher education environment" is accounted for, while 77.9% of the variance in "communication" is accounted for (Table 7-3). MacCallum et al. (1999) consider that all items in a factor model should have communalities of over 0.60 or an average communality of 0.7 to justify performing a factor analysis with small sample sizes. Tabachnick & Fidell (2007) suggest using stringent cut-offs going from 0.32 (*poor*), 0.45 (*fair*), 0.55 (*good*), 0.63 (*very good*) or 0.71 (*excellent*). Generally, a communality (loading) of .70 or greater is ideal because it suggests that approximately 50% of the variance of that item is accounted for by the factor (Beavers et al., 2013).

None of the items has a communality value of less than .60, which is an indication that all items fit well, in a moderate to high degree, with the other items in their factors.

Table 7-3: Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Monitoring of the Higher Education environment	1.000	.879
Openness to implementation of new strategies	1.000	.864
Communication	1.000	.779
Provision of financial resources	1.000	.875
Provision of training	1.000	.822
Appropriate Rewards	1.000	.806
Reputation	1.000	.884
Quality of education	1.000	.889
Restrictions	1.000	.698
Decision Making	1.000	.691
Lengthy process	1.000	.672
Overall management change	1.000	.719
Improvement of other universities	1.000	.732
Delayed impact	1.000	.783
Staged implementation	1.000	.688
The general performance of the university	1.000	.618

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 7-4: Total Variance Explained

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.588	34.924	34.924	5.588	34.924	34.924	5.169	32.307	32.307
2	2.586	16.162	51.086	2.586	16.162	51.086	2.029	12.678	44.986
3	1.750	10.937	62.023	1.750	10.937	62.023	1.843	11.519	56.504
4	1.257	7.859	69.882	1.257	7.859	69.882	1.699	10.619	67.123
5	1.220	7.626	77.508	1.220	7.626	77.508	1.662	10.384	77.508
6	.824	5.152	82.660						

7	.650	4.065	86.725							
8	.493	3.082	89.807							
9	.435	2.719	92.526							
10	.358	2.240	94.766							
11	.296	1.849	96.615							
12	.186	1.160	97.775							
13	.117	.729	98.504							
14	.111	.696	99.200							
15	.076	.477	99.677							
16	.052	.323	100.000							

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 7-4 shows that the first five components in the initial solution have eigenvalues greater than 1(column 2). The eigenvalue is a value associated with each factor describing the amount of variance in the items that can be explained by that factor (Pett et al., 2003). "The factor with the largest eigenvalue has the most variance and so on, down to factors with small or negative eigenvalues that are usually omitted from solutions" (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996, p. 646). The third column of the table shows the variance explained by the extracted factors before rotation. The initial cumulative variability explained by these five factors in the extracted solution is 77.5%. The produced five components explain 34.9%, 16.1%, 10.9%, 7.8%, and 7.6% of the variance respectively.

Table 7-5 Rotated Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Monitoring of the Higher Education environment	.893				
Openness to implementation of new strategies	.881				
Communication	.876				
Provision of financial resources	.891				
Provision of training	.883				
Appropriate Rewards	.869				
Reputation		.928			
Quality of education		.854			
Restrictions on teaching			.711		
Restrictions on Decision Making			.810		
Lengthy process					.582
Overall management change					.511
Improvement of other universities					.837
Delayed impact			.527		
Staged implementation				.812	
The general performance of the university				.630	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 7-5 shows how the components "loaded". Factor loadings are measures of the effect size of a common factor on a manifest variable. Simply put, they are correlation coefficients between items and factors. When an item is significantly correlated to any of the factors, its loading must be generally considered above .30 (Beavers et al., 2013). Therefore when loadings less than 0.3 were excluded, the analysis yielded a five-factor solution with a simple structure.

As expected, the first six variables, all related to the perceptions of *leadership characteristics* loaded together; as did reputation and quality of education describing *relative advantage*. The perception that quality assurance imposes restrictions on teaching and decision making at the business school (both describe *the compatibility dimension*) loaded together along with the perception that the impact of quality assurance takes time to be observed (delayed impact). An explanation for the relationship between these three factors is that the first two may illicit resistance to change and therefore delay the process of quality assurance implementation and consequently the timely "*observability*" of its impact.

Both the perception that the implementation of quality assurance is a *lengthy process* and that it requires an overall *change of the way the university is managed* loaded together with the perception that quality assurance has resulted in *the improvement of other universities' status*. The first two (describing the complexity dimension of quality assurance implementation) may create obstacles and thus disturb the regular operation of some processes at the business school; hence, the respondents may perceive that this disturbance outweighs the perceived improvement and the advantage of implementing quality assurance

The perception that quality assurance may be implemented in one department before being applied to the whole business school loaded with the perception of the general performance of the business school; an explanation suggests that as the implementation of quality assurance progresses, the perception of the general performance changes.

7.4.2   Spearman rho correlation test results

Results of the Spearman rho correlation test between the six variables representing leadership characteristics and a business school responsiveness to quality assurance implementation are displayed in table 7-6.

Table 7-6 Spearman rho Correlation- Leadership characteristics and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation

		Monitoring of the Higher Education environment	Openness to implementation of new strategies	Communication with staff	Provision of financial resources	Provision of training	Appropriate Rewards
Responsiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.286*	.290*	.427***	.332**	.369*	.300*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.066	.062	.005	.032	.016	.054
	N	42	42	42	42	42	42

* Correlation is significant at 10% level, **Correlation is significant at 5% level, ***Correlation is significant at 10% level

The test results show that communication, the provision of financial resources and the provision of training are moderately but highly statistically significantly correlated to responsiveness to quality assurance implementation at $p < 0.05$ while monitoring the higher education environment, the implementation of new strategies and the provision of appropriate rewards are weakly correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation and the relationship is significant at $p < 0.1$.

Testing the correlation between the perceptions of quality assurance dimensions and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation does not yield any statistically significant results (Table 7-7).

Table 7-7 Spearman rho Correlation- Dimensions of quality assurance and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation

<div align="center">Correlations</div>

		Reputation	Quality of education	Restrictions	Decision Making	Lengthy process	Overall management change	Improvement of other universities	Delayed impact	Staged implementation	The general performance of the university
Responsiveness	Correlation Coefficient	-.171	-.106	-.262	.000	.109	.139	.014	.113	.194	.151
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.280	.506	.093	1.000	.493	.381	.930	.476	.218	.339
	N	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42

In fact, when the factors extracted from the exploratory analysis are tested for correlation with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation the results confirm that leadership is indeed significant in predicting whether an institution will implement quality assurance while the dimensions of quality assurance factors remain insignificant in predicting responsiveness to quality assurance implementation (Table 7-8).

Table 7-8 Correlation test using the extracted factors

<div align="center">**Correlations**</div>

			REGR factor score 1 for analysis 1	REGR factor score 2 for analysis 1	REGR factor score 3 for analysis 1	REGR factor score 4 for analysis 1	REGR factor score 5 for analysis 1
Spearman's rho	Responsiveness	Correlation coefficient	.382	.042	.150	-.118	.030
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.012	.792	.343	.457	.850
		N	42	42	42	42	42

7.5   Conclusion

This chapter explored the relationship between the characteristics of leadership and quality assurance dimensions and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

The exploratory factor analysis confirmed that the characteristics of leadership combine into one factor while the dimensions of quality assurance as innovation were reduced into four factors.

The Spearman correlation tests results show that leadership characteristics predict responsiveness to quality assurance implementation (at various levels of statistical significance) while perceptions of quality assurance attributes have not been found to be statistically significantly correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation. The same result was obtained when the extracted factors were used to test for correlation with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

The results are in line with other research confirming the crucial role that leadership plays in adopting and implementing quality assurance in higher education (Csizmadia, 2006; Papadimitriou, 2011; Kahsay, 2012). On the other hand, the results do not support the observation that the perception of an innovation (Rogers, 1995), such as quality assurance, is significant in influencing responsiveness to implementation.

Chapter 8   Findings and Analysis- The case studies: the interviews

8.1   Introduction

This chapter analyses the findings from the interviews. The primary purpose of this part is to draw upon institutional theories to present empirical evidence about the extent of influence that coercive, normative, and mimetic institutional pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) exhibit on individual responsiveness to quality assurance implementation. Coercive isomorphism is externally imposed (Santana, et al 2010) often by the state, while mimetic and normative isomorphisms are acted upon willingly by the organisation as a result of an external stimulus or otherwise. Mimetic pressure derives primarily from competition and normative pressure is instigated by the affiliation to an international academic body or by the market place.

A total of 9 interviews were carried out with the Deans of the 9 business schools of the sample. The universities are designated with letter codes for confidentiality purposes.

In analysing the interviews with Nvivo11, five major themes were generated from the interviews' analysis regarding quality assurance in private higher education in Lebanon: three are considered *a priori* and two emerged during the interviews. They are the following:

1- Coercive pressure
   a. The government efforts and the lack of support
   b. Political hindrance
   c. The lack of sanctions
2- Mimetic pressure
   a. Upper management and the strategic vision
   b. Countering Competition
   c. The market niche
   d. Benchmarking
3- Normative pressure
   a. International relations and academic cooperation

  b. Students

  c. The business environment

 4- Reasons of not implementing

  a. Culture

  b. Financial

  c. Lack of sanctions

  d. Lack of skills

 5- Decoupling

8.2 The results

Using Nvivo11, the interviews data was analysed according to the themes. The following subsections present the results.

8.2.1 Coercive Pressure

   The questions related to the coercive pressure are designed to explore its degree of influence on the efforts of private universities to meet quality assurance standards. Coercive isomorphism is propagated through regulations, laws and accreditation processes and mostly emanates from the state. During the interviews the following three dimensions that are related to the coercive pressure, surfaced:

a. The government's effort and lack of support

Three interviewees from responsive and non-responsive faculties confirm that the government is doing good effort to motivate universities to implement quality assurance. But they also stated that the effort is mainly in terms of training and workshops; it is not coupled with enough support in terms of funding, for example. Some of the comments are:

> *The ministry of Higher education is working heavily on the concept of quality assurance and they are continually conducting workshops ...they also gave an ultimatum to universities to implement quality assurance basic principles and then more advanced level such as Key Performance Indicators(KPIs) (NRU4).*

It's fair enough that the government is trying to encourage. However it is relying on the individual efforts of universities and not providing incentives ... for a programme supported by the government to succeed, it needs some incentives such as funds for research and so on... the Lebanese universities still rely on international bodies for funds and on personal funds, so the government initiative is still missing a major element ...it can encourage.....it is providing a starting platform but is it enough? ...because research costs money and time, private universities are relying on their resources...if the government wants to take a real active approach it needs to provide resources. (NRU2)

They are playing a good role and encouraging universities ...they didn't help us... they introduced the idea through workshops and seminars but tactically effectively? I don't think (RU3).

Nevertheless, one interviewee from a responsive faculty was more blunt and said

As our university is concerned the government effort is slim to none (RU1).

b. The lack of sanctions

Most of the respondents blame the government for not being more forceful in pushing for the process and not following up on its laws

To create a national framework for quality assurance, rules and regulations have to be clear-cut. Giving an ultimatum of three years is not enough because it is not coupled with definite sanctions or penalties. Now time has run out...what will the government do? (RU4).

They need to use punishment and penalties .... They [the universities] think the country is all chaotic and they don't think that eventually all would be sorted and organized...(NRU4).

The system empowers these institutions [the non-responsive] instead of trying to put roadblocks, for example meeting certain qualifications ...if you have to blame somebody it is the Lebanese government (RU1)

There should be enforcement of implementation and a plan like what happened with hospitals ... Quality assurance should be implemented but it has to be forceful and there should be serious follow up (NRU3).

The framework for quality assurance is very new... shouldn't there be a follow up by the ministry to see whether its requirements have been met or not? The ministry is trying to go forward in this regard but it is not doing the efforts that are really required to that extent... (NRU2).

Three of the interviewees say they are not aware of any sanctions that could be imposed in case of non-responsiveness. Additionally, the interviewees doubt that the government would really follow up and implement sanctions;

I think that the government may withdraw licenses or close departments or campuses... but how serious are they? They are supposed to audit ... they can stop some processes...but how far are they going into auditing or to what extent? No one has been de-licensed...(NRU4).

I don't have an idea about the law....How far would the ministry go in terms of sanctions? I hope it happens...(NRU3).

I don't know if there are any sanctions... quality assurance is an option up till now (RU3).

c. Political hindrance

Three interviewees think that the political climate in Lebanon is behind the ministry's reluctance to follow up and impose the implementation of quality assurance. Many universities

in Lebanon are owned by political parties or individuals who have the power to disregard the law.

Politics in Lebanon interferes ... There's no disengagement between ownership and academe...every university has its political orientation (NRU3).

The government should implementing the law and be persistent in following up with those institutions that do not implement and overcome political influences or any other influences and just implement the law. (NRU2).

Higher education is treated just like any other political matter... when they come to a deadlock they start looking for a solution. The NAHEQA is almost done...the structure is there ...but as the Director General of the Ministry said the agency has been delayed to form because of the general situation in the country....the decisions is in the drawer ...as everything else is in the country...The law is still in the parliament's drawer and there is disagreement about who is going to be the referent in this matter (the party that would control decisions)(NRU4).

In conclusion, the Deans of the business faculties consider that, although the government is pushing for the implementation of quality assurance, its efforts are not endorsed with sanctions and penalties and thus it is considered trivial and does not seem to play a role in the decision to implement quality assurance. Therefore, the responsive universities engage in the process voluntarily. Thus, proposition number one is refuted; Coercive pressure exists but is not a significant as a motivator for the implementation of quality assurance.

8.2.2 Mimetic pressure

Bell and Taylor (2005) indicate that "the mimetic process of imitation provides a means whereby organisations are able to deal with uncertainty by imitating the ways of others, whom they regard as superior or successful". Through mimetic isomorphism, organisations are informed of institutional 'scripts' that have to be obtained to be legitimate (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Four factors contribute to the role of mimetic pressure.

a. The role of leadership and the strategic vision

Most respondents agree that the decision to start the implementation of quality assurance, or to support those who have already implemented, comes as part of the strategic vision of management and the role of leadership. They say:

> *…QA is included in our vision which is to always work and think in a quality way … it is integrated in our management functions (NRU4).*

> *It's a matter of a comprehensive strategy to competitively differentiate the university. So it is actually part of the strategic vision. Our university, its board of directors and the president have a clear vision of becoming one of the 100 top universities in the world (RU4).*

> *Leadership is important…implementing a new concept requires financial resources, time and training…this needs a new strategy…there are certain financial and human conditions that have to be available…if upper management does not have the conviction about the concept it won't be implemented…it has to come from upper levels… it needs long term commitment ….it costs…upper management is the basis (NRU3).*

> *you know it's a matter of strategic decision-making…it is not enough to have good intentions…you have to work on this…It is not enough to declare that I want to become a great university…strategic planning and implementation should follow…(NRU1).*

> *It is within the strategy of the university that by the year 2018 all faculties should be accredited (RU2).*

> *We're lucky that we have a president who believes in the importance of quality (RU5).*

b. Countering competition

The interviewees expressed their opinion that competition resulting from the expansion of the number of universities has affected their universities. Two non-responsive schools say they needed to respond

> *Competition has definitely affected us...the number of students started dropping five years ago...we have been losing students and I think it is time to introduce some kind of change (NRU1).*

> *The competition is huge in higher education...So what we are doing is that we are thinking in terms of competitive advantage...we want to distinguish ourselves in order to attract more students. We have to work on this topic because we can't be left behind (NRU4).*

Responsive schools also admit to the fact that competition pushed them to respond by implementing quality assurance

> *Today, our competitive advantage is that we have three accreditations which no other private institution has (RU4).*
> *It's an issue of competition...if (X) has it [accreditation] so should we...let's have it in order to compete with them ....it wasn't to improve the quality of education (RU1).*

> *One of the reasons for conducting quality assurance was to have a competitive advantage and good positioning in the market. It is not acceptable to be in a university that does not really have a quality certificate- this is negative. So one of the reasons is to maintain a competitive positioning in the market (RU3).*

> *The primary idea is that accreditation is a fashion...you have to follow the fashion in the market...you need to follow the trend to show that you got the ability to get recognition for the quality of your programmes...so first of all it's a trend and fashion and in some*

places you have to follow universities in the US and Europe that are leading and to be on the same wave (RU2).

c. **The Market niche**

Three of the interviewees confirm that even though competition is fierce, they do not feel threatened as a school because they have their own "market" and 'customers"; they assert that the existence of quality assurance would not make a difference when a student decides on a university to attend.

Competition is fierce... however it depends on your market niche, your marketing strategy, what you provide and the quality of your education...there's always competition... if you rely purely on quality without taking into consideration the backgrounds of students and the financial abilities of students you'll end up with a small university in terms of students number ...on the other hand if you only seek students number and you don't look at quality you might have a big student number but the quality of education will drop; so you have to maintain a balance and that's the strategy we adopt: maintaining a balance between quality and number of students. The majority of students are from the middle to low income class. Quality costs ... if you don't take that element into consideration we will lose our identity which is basically targeting these types of students (NRU2).

I don't believe that competition is linked to accreditation... Competition does not exist because every university has its own context and own customers whether there is quality or not ...I cannot imagine for example that a student from the south goes to a university in the north unless in few exception cases ... students in the south go to universities in the south ... every university has its own market... AUB is indispensable for rich people ...and people who have money would not come to our university (NRU3).

Our students pay 200 dollars for a credit if we do accreditation this would raise the tuition to 400 dollars... we don't want that... accreditation in itself is not the goal... the

goal is to provide our students with quality education...The goal is not to provide quality for students that don't exist... AUB students won't come to us because we are not a university that is designed for the elite ... we target the middle class and the average intellectual... we are middle... the talented students that don't have money go to a university where they can have scholarships ...if they have the money and are talented, they go to AUB...it depends upon their abilities...usually your income decides where you go in Lebanon...you will not find someone that can pay AUB tuition and then goes to the public Lebanese university by choice... Those who can afford AUB don't come to our university... so every university should understand where it is positioned in the market... you have to be realistic....(RU2).

d. Benchmarking

The last factor that implies mimetic pressure is benchmarking; the process of engaging in a comparative study of the higher education industry to check what other universities are doing and how they achieve a competitive advantage.

We benchmark and we try to find out if any gap exists in our performance and look for strategies to fill it. After all, if you don't monitor what others are doing and you don't follow on new trends and market demand you may fall behind (RU4).

Definitely we benchmark ...the first thing we do is to assess the market and check what other universities are doing... we track the gaps and then change accordingly (NRU4).

I have the internet...I collect most of my information from the internet and from the websites of universities and I try to collect data when I meet them and know what they are doing ..it was useful I get to have information about them (RU3).

In conclusion, the Deans of faculties generally agree that competition is fierce and that, for both groups, responsive and non-responsive, quality assurance offers a competitive advantage. Some of the schools feel less threatened because they have a market niche and "customers" that would

always ask for their services. Most of them benchmark to check the trends of the industry.

8.2.3 Normative pressure

Normative isomorphism is linked to professional values and culture stemming from local and global professional associations (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Meyer & Scott 1983). Normative pressure is operationalised as the university's relations and formal academic agreements with external stakeholders in order to improve its capacity for planning educational programmes, continuing education, and research. In addition, relationships with organisations in the business environment are part of normative pressure.

a. International relations and academic cooperation

The interviewees have two different perspectives on how their international relations affect their decision to implement quality assurance.

The interviewees from responsive business faculties say

> *Yes we have an agreement with [.....] for the moderation of our certificate ...it affected us positively because we started the moderation in parallel with quality assurance. Our international partner has an established quality assurance system that we have to follow ... and it was very helpful ...we started the moderation so we had to reorganise our work based on its requirements and then we applied for accreditation... it was easy because we had a model to follow (RU3) .*

Another interviewee says

> *we have agreement with a university in France ...a joint programme for MBA graduates that are accepted to continue doctoral studies and we supervise in Lebanon for science and business faculty...we always try to do such deals... they interfere in terms of programmes...they asked the details about courses description, mission, vision (RU5).*

For one interviewee, from a responsive business faculty, accreditation has had a positive effect in attracting international cooperation

What attracts international universities to partner with us is our accreditation … they want to have a joint programme with us…They say we respect you for this and it gives us confidence (RU1).

Two of the interviewees from non-responsive business schools say that they have agreements and international academic relations but they are not effectively operationalised and therefore, do not affect the decision to implement quality assurance

The university has numerous agreements with other institutions in the world but they are not effective and functional (NRU3).

We have signed many academic agreements but unfortunately these are not truly operationalised. Today we have not engaged in any of the activities written in these agreements (NRU1).

b. The business environment

Both responsive and non-responsive business schools consult with the business environment, in terms of providing employable graduate with required skills and knowledge, or to help students find a job. They consult with them also to inquire about needed skills and knowledge.

We have dedicated a staff for public relations in order to contact other universities, to attend conferences, bank, civic society... the deans of faculties work to diagnose needs and required skills... it not a strategic activity but at the school level... every dean is responsible to contact the workplace to diagnose needs (NRU3).

The objective of our school is to prepare graduates with employment skills needed in the market...So every time I am at a conference I connect with business people in order to inquire about needed employment skills and in order to provide internships and training opportunities for our students (NRU1).

The school board has members from the business industry ... they help financially, in the placement of students for training, and by recommending what they need for their businesses...we try to accommodate ... (RU1).

We're always in contact with the business market to help students find employmen...graduates are supported in finding jobs (RU5).

We have contacts in the market and business...we consider them as our partners and they are represented in the university...next year, they will be represented in the university board of director..we ask them what do you need as a market in terms of employability skills and how do you assess our graduate, what are the required skills needed in order to change our curriculum and courses...our final customer is not the student it is the market...with this strategy 82-85% of our students find jobs after graduation (NRU4).

As a conclusion, in general, most business schools have agreement with international partners. For the responsive faculties, these were influential in terms of requiring the implementation of procedures and measures affecting quality assurance. Influence was also exerted by the business environment with which the schools consult, formally or informally, about needed employability skills and knowledge.

8.2.4   Reasons for not implementing

For the last part of the interview, the interviewees were asked to state the factors that they think may be preventing schools from implementing quality assurance or are influencing their decision to do so. These factors are the following:

a. Culture:

Three interviewees from non-responsive schools and two from responsive schools expressed the opinion that non-responsiveness is the result of misunderstanding the values and the culture of quality assurance or even their total absence.

There should be conviction from upper management to establish a quality culture in universities...most employees in universities would not be able to answer your questionnaire because the culture of quality does not exist (NRU3).

Quality assurance should start with the building of a culture where people understand what it means and it becomes part of their way of thinking and their behaviours so that external supervision becomes useless...because it becomes part of who they are-their identity. When your workforce does not have the required culture and values, they fear change and thus they keep delaying a decision to proceed (NRU1).

...it's really a matter of culture...(NRU4).

There is a difference between" I want to provide quality education by giving good exams and projects" and when you think about quality from a culture perspective... you take a different approach... we did not follow AACSB accreditation because it is a change of culture but because it was required by the system... (RU1).

Quality assurance is not a title...it is a whole culture ... a way of thinking and behaving. Some people think of it in terms of standardization and that training someone to answer all the right questions will make you pass the test and win accreditation. But it is not the case (RU4).

b. Financial

Five of the interviewees agree that quality assurance costs financially and that this fact contradicts with the aim of generating profit-even for not-for-profit universities (like RU1).

Quality comes with a cost...they cannot risk the cost so they sacrifice quality...most universities in Lebanon are owned by private institutions or private communities and individuals and their biggest focus is how we can make more money than how we can

introduce quality education...the concept of education for them is how we can get more admissions...Students are money (RU1).

It is hard and it is a long process and it is costly (RU3).

Some things are costly...training and other....universities consider the benefit they would get for this investment...it is after all an investment...it costs money and time (RU5).

Unfortunately for some universities it is a business venture... Family business...capital venture...money making...they don't need quality assurance, they don't need accreditation ...all they need is to recruit students who pay their fees ...pay minimum cost for teachers...and make money ...that's how it is ...as simple as that...so it is a matter of finance (NRU4).

The financial situation may be a factor...the cost may substantially increase when universities tackle the student-instructor ratio.... They would then be forced to increase the number professors which will increase cost. (NRU4).

We are a family business... The owners might not be too interested in performance... you know the reasons [financial] (NRU3).

e. **Lack of sanctions**

The lack of sanctions was cited as a factor behind non-responsiveness, in addition to the lack of clarity and vagueness of the law. This was also discussed in the previous section on coercive pressure.

There are several factors pushing people not to implement one of them lack of clarity, follow up and lack of penalties plus not having incentives to do changes (NRU2).

...May be because they are not forced...if the ministry takes away their license they may think twice...because there are no sanctions...(RU5).

Giving an ultimatum of three years is not enough because it is not coupled with definite sanctions or penalties (RU4).

f. Lack of skills

Lacking the necessary skilled and experienced human resources for implementation is cited as a reason for non-responsiveness.

The lack of skills and it could be because they think we are doing fine (NRU3).

It's negligence and lack of knowledge on how to do it. Many universities don't have the skilled and knowledgeable personnel who know how to start the process, how to prepare for it, what to do...so they are struggling and the government is not helping in this regard (NRU1).

Some universities are not implementing because they may not have enough human resources or skills (RU5).

In sum, when asked to rank order the factors that pushed them to implement (for responsive schools) or would influence their decision to implement (for the non-responsive), the answers were mixed, but only one of the Deans put government in the first place. Some had competition as the first factor.

It's competition first ...then the students...then our international partners and last comes the government (RU1).

It's Leadership...competition....government....students (RU2).

It was leadership and competition. Reputation and students come together as second and last is the government (RU3).

Not the students... it's a combination of government, competition and international ...international relations comes first...the government is second ...competition is third because I don't think we are suffering from competition (NRU2).

...The government and internal performance (NRU3).

8.2.5   Decoupling

Two interviewees from responsive schools expressed the opinion that sometimes the fact of being accredited or having an internal quality assurance system is not a guarantee that they are doing a good job, thus they are engaging in a decoupling attitude. They said:

The president talks about improving quality but the problem with improving quality is that you have to dedicate money...are they doing it? (RU1)

Universities attempting accreditation are looking for a "decoration" ... for something to improve their reputation and attract students ... but truly what is going on the inside is totally different from what it appears to be. Take research as an example... Does accreditation confirm that they do research – which is one of the pillars of quality in higher education. Is there a structure that determines how many conferences to organize or how many conferences to attend in order to pursue academic development? What about publications in scientific journals? When these kind of topics are clarified then we can talk about quality (RU4).

8.3   Summary of the interviews results:

Overall, the interviewees rank the coercive pressure last in influencing responsiveness to quality assurance. The business schools do not feel pressured by the government to implement quality assurance due to the lack of a solid regulatory framework; the rectified quality assurance

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law does not spell out specific sanctions in case of non-responsiveness. The results generated by Nvivo11 show the following:

Figure 8-1 shows that the highest ranked reason for non-responsiveness is the lack of sanctions, followed by the lack of support and last is the political hindrance.
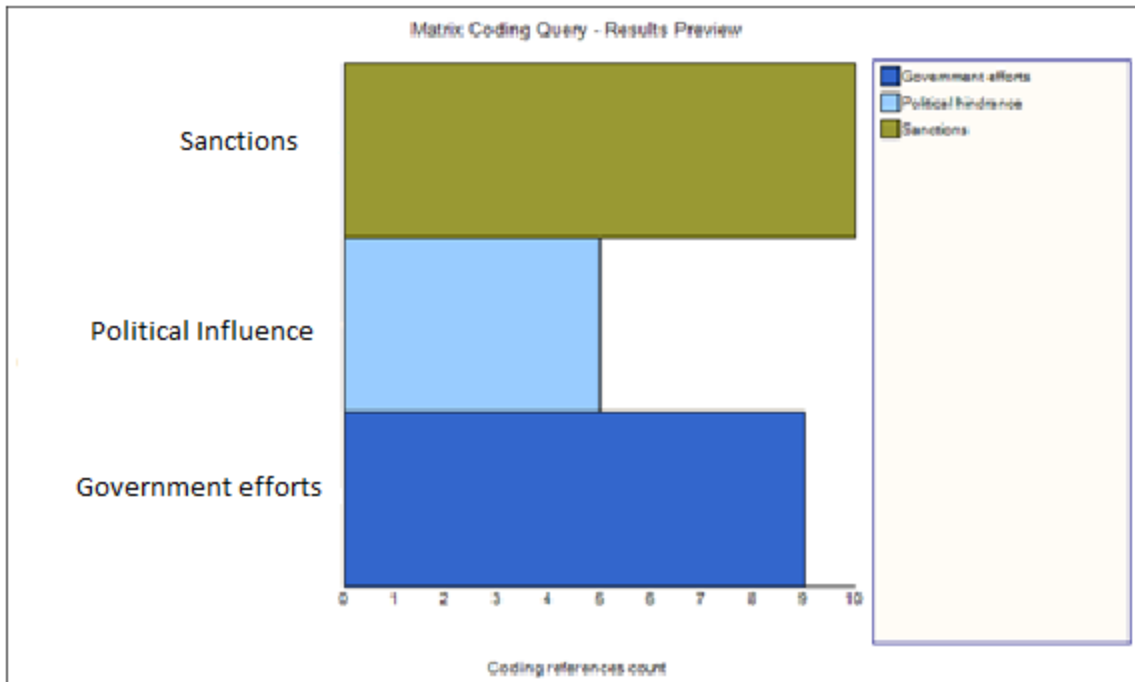
Figure 8-1: Coercive pressure components

Figure 8-2 shows that the implementation of quality assurance at the responsive business schools results from the strategic view of upper management and the need to counter competition. These same reasons would be influential in case quality assurance was considered for implementation at the non-responsive schools.

Figure 8-2: Differential response to the mimetic pressure components

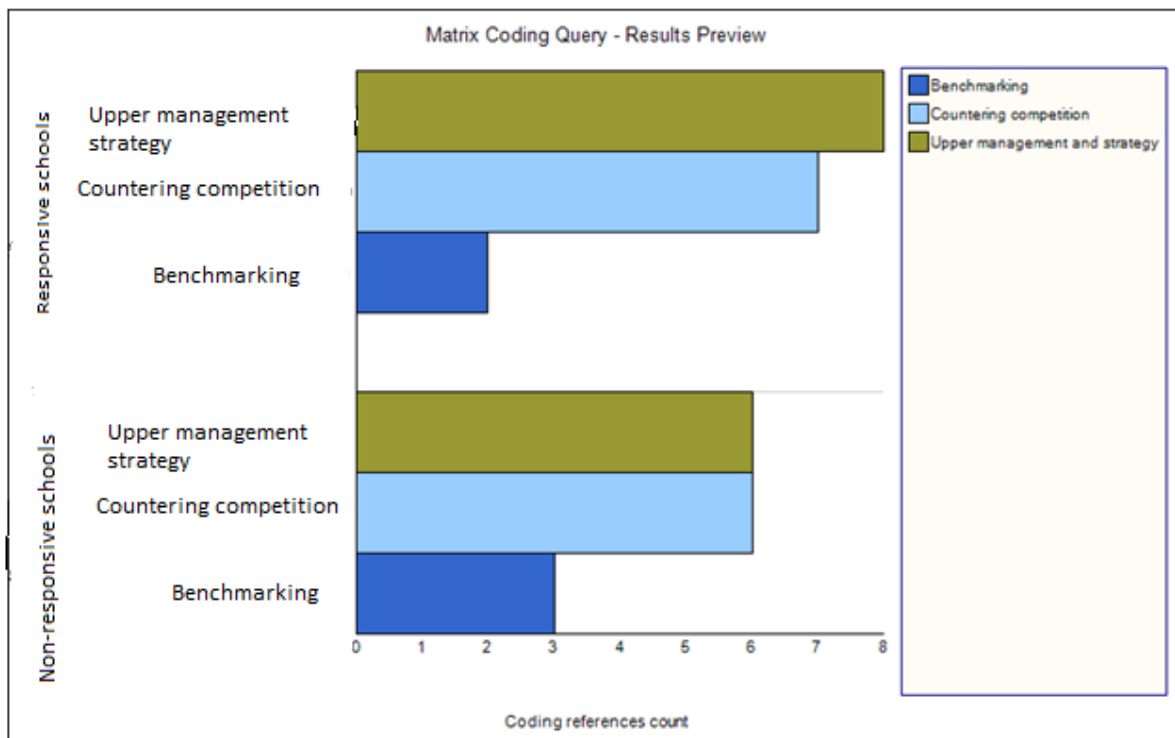Figure 8-3 shows that academic cooperation and the outlook for internationalisation influence responsiveness to quality assurance implementation at the responsive business schools; both are part of the normative pressure. Non-responsive schools may consider responsiveness due to pressure from the business environment and if they seek (or put in effect) academic agreements with other academic institutions.

Figure 8-3: Differential response to the normative pressure components
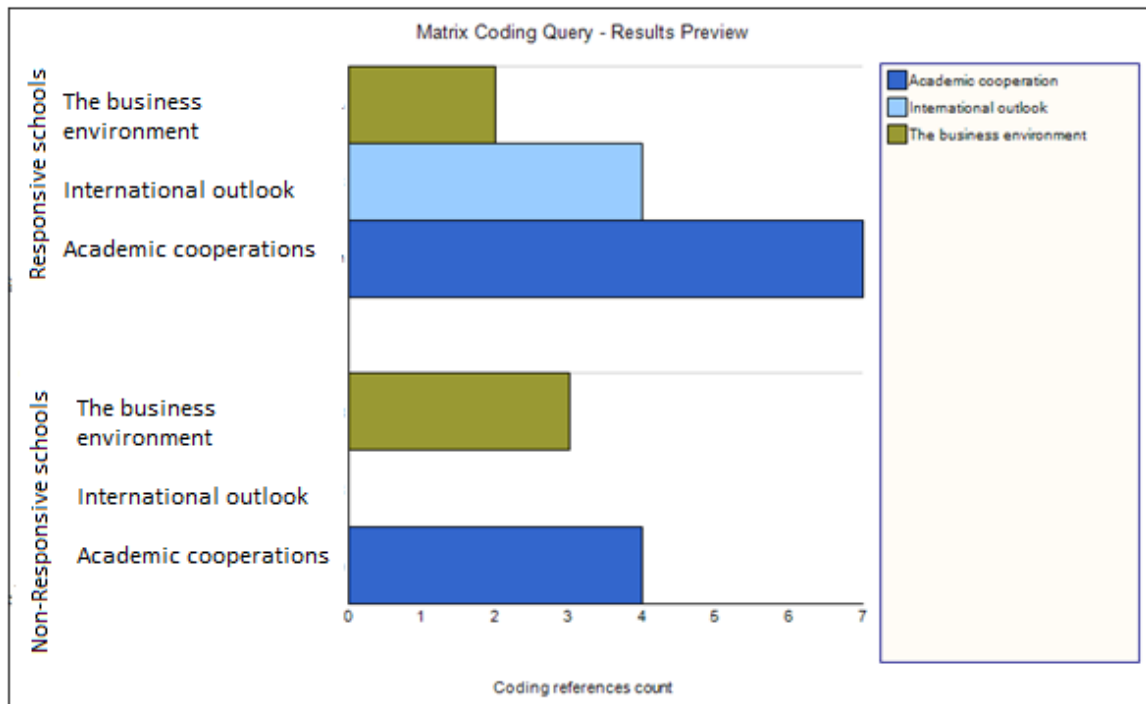
Overall, the three pressures (coercive, mimetic and normative) have differential effect on responsiveness to implementation. Figure 8-4, show that responsive business schools are mostly influenced by the normative pressure, whereas for the non-responsive schools, the mimetic pressure would be influential if a decision to implement is made. For both groups of schools, the coercive pressure is the least significant.

Figure 8-4: Overall differential responses to the institutional pressures
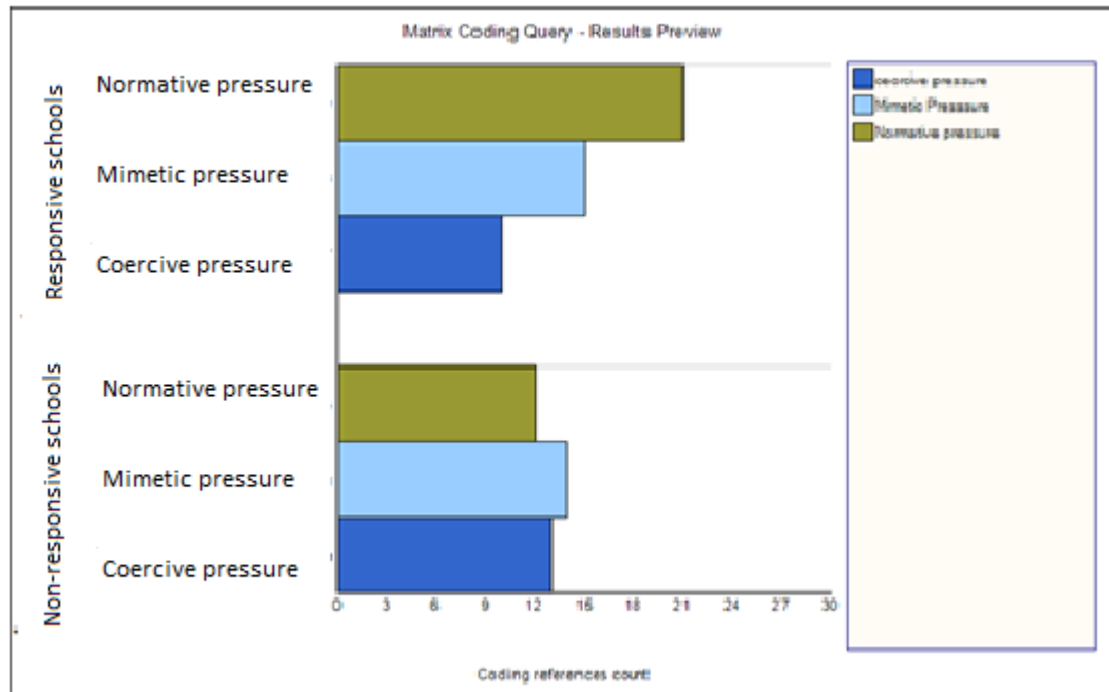
The reasons for not implementing as rank ordered by the interviewees through Nvivo11 (Figure 8-5), are (in order): the lack of sanctions and the financial position of the institution, followed by the lack of a supportive culture and lastly the lack of skills.

Figure 8-5: Reasons for non-responsiveness
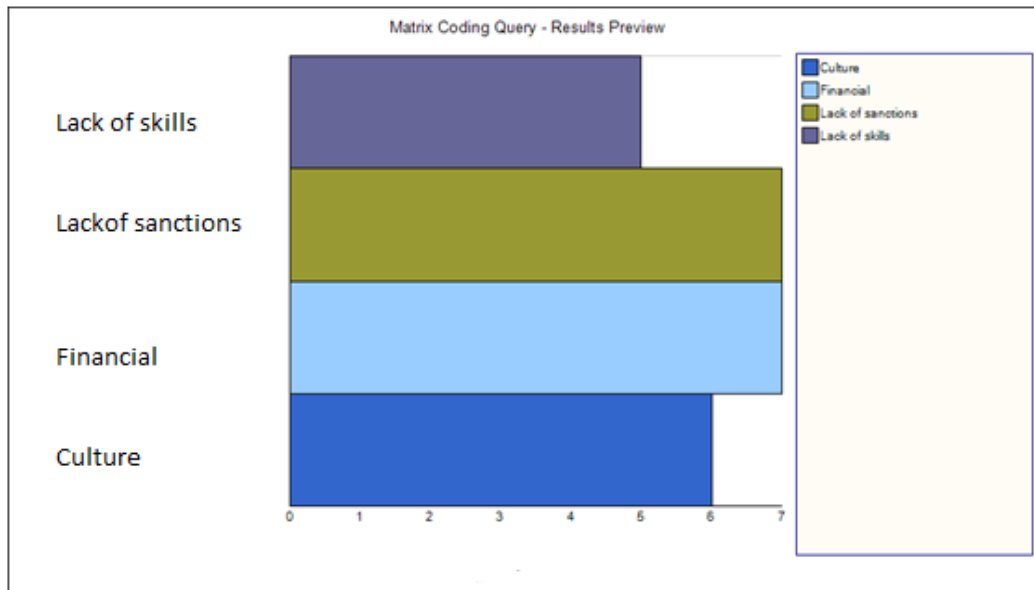
8.4 Analysis and conclusion

Meyer & Rowan (1977) proposed that organisations submit to the rule of institutions outside the organisation for the purpose of seeking legitimacy in the eye of external constituencies such as the government and society. Legitimacy is generally defined as the perception that an organisation's actions are desirable, proper, and appropriate given "the norms, values, and beliefs" of the field in which they operate (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). A government affects legitimacy by using its formal authority to create and enforce laws and policies that set standards for legitimacy (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Accordingly, organisations are compelled to follow certain practices if they wish to operate legally or to receive government-controlled designations associated with legitimacy. Having received such recognition, organisations may acquire associated perceptions of legitimacy and, in turn, potentially gain access to other resources necessary for survival (McQuarrie et al., 2013).

On the other hand, DiMaggio & Powell (1983) explained that the mechanism of response, which ultimately leads to the homogeneity of an organisational field, takes place as a result of three mechanisms: coercive, mimetic and normative.

Coercive isomorphism results from the formal and informal pressures enforced by organisations that control resources and legitimacy. Government legislation and policies are identified as coercive forces because organisations that wish to acquire the perception of legitimacy generated by compliance with the law must follow the standards of practice articulated in the relevant legislation—regardless of whether those standards are appropriate or effective (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Indeed, government is often characterized as one of the primary sources of coercive force, and organisations that resist this force are deemed to be illegal and must face the consequences associated with that status (Kondra & Hinings, 1998).

In Lebanon, for a private university to be instituted and to operate it must follow a licensing process and must fulfil the main standards including specifications for the buildings, scientific equipments, laboratories facilities and libraries, and specifications concerning the academic qualifications of its teaching staff. Once a license is granted, a university is a legitimately operating institution of higher education. Besides this initial and important interaction with the government, a university is free to set its own operating procedures, policies and regulations.

This decreased level of interaction between the institutions and the government is further explained by the fact that private universities do not receive any type of financial support from the government and their income is primarily generated from tuition, endowments, and gifts and grants from private donors. Stensaker (2000) remarked that improving quality in higher education institutions will largely be a symbolic activity, initiated to ensure the continued funding by gaining societal support.

In view of such situation, universities do not feel pressured to conform to any mandate by the government unless it threatens their existence. Given that the newly rectified law to implement quality assurance is free of clearly defined and pronounced sanctions –in case a university is non-responsive- universities who implemented quality assurance did it voluntarily and away from the impetus to gain legitimacy or resources.

Aggravating this situation is the political situation in Lebanon and the influence that politics and the political personnel play in all issues relating to the public affairs including education.

According to Danziger (1994), politics is "the exercise of power"; "the public allocation of things that are valued"; "the resolution of conflict"; and "the competition among individuals and groups pursuing their interests" (p. 5). Thus, a process could be described as political if it displays some or all these characteristics of politics. The process of quality assurance implementation in Lebanon suggests the presence of these characteristics. The majority of the universities in Lebanon are owned by a political party or a religious association that pursue their interests and any imposed change to the way they are managed or organised may instigate conflict. This fact also explains the reason why the government has not been forceful in necessitating compliance nor it has not so far taken any sanctioning measures.

Mimetic isomorphism is the process of modelling leading organisation to gain status and legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Thus, organisations follow the lead of more successful ones due to the belief that their replicated actions will be more likely to generate positive outcomes; in higher education, these could be increased admission rates, improved ranking, or enhanced reputation. This also saves them the time and cost to search for their own solutions in the face of problems, technology that they do not understand, or emergent conditions of the market.

The increased competition in the Lebanese higher education system has been a major driver behind the implementation of quality assurance for many business schools. Through achieving accreditation or implementing an internal quality system, the responsive business schools hoped to distinguish themselves and therefore establish a competitive advantage. Others practice benchmarking to keep abreast of newly introduced changes to the system and to monitor what leading universities are doing. Nevertheless, some schools feel immune against competition: they chose to serve a specific market niche; student with a specific social and financial status who will attend them with or without quality assurance because they cannot afford the switching cost. Thus they would keep a reasonable number of students that would be generating income and sustain their survival. Therefore, mimetic pressure exists but with a moderate effect.

Normative isomorphism is tied to professional standards in the organisational field that pressure organisations to conform (Gates, 1997) through following the best practice guidelines (Hodson et al., 2008). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) defined professionalization as "the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control 'the

production of procedures', and to establish a cognitive base of legitimation for their occupational autonomy" (p. 152). Therefore, membership in professional networks is an important source of normative pressure. Hwang & Powell (2009) also stated that "participation in professional development and training brings non-profits into closer contact with their external environment and prevalent organisational practices" (p.275). Additionally, Csizmadia (2006) found that that normative isomorphism was probably introduced through external consultancy and that it played an important role in the institutionalization process as well as in protecting universities' legitimacy.

Responsive business schools have academic agreements with an international school and some of them have joint partnerships where their programmes are moderated by the international partner. Therefore, they feel compelled to implement measures that sustain these relationships including the implementation of a quality assurance system such as external accreditation.

The finding is in line with Scott's (1995) observation that accreditation standards are key aspects of the normative environment- a seal of approval for a professional organisation. Casile & Davis-Blake (2002) also characterized accreditation as a type of rationalized myth that is likely to confer legitimacy to business schools.

8.5   Conclusion of phase two of the research-the case studies

The analysis of the data in phase two suggests that although leadership is a significant factor behind responsiveness and although mimetic and normative pressures exist, the lack of sanctions in the rectified law by the government allows the universities differential responsiveness. The financial condition of schools adds to this situation, as the non-responsive schools are interested in generating income and preserving their economic welfare. Business schools that have been accredited or have implemented an internal quality assurance system did it voluntarily to counter competition or to comply with the terms of international academic agreements. This has also been driven by the strategic view of management.

Whereas, the non-responsive universities, who also perceive the lack of sanctions and the vagueness of the law as the main source for non-compliance, they express the opinion that their decision to implement in the future will also be driven by competition.

Chapter 9   Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1   Background

The proliferation of private provision of educational services and a globalised knowledge-dependent economy intensified the demand for accountability and concern with educational productivity in higher education (Blanco-Ramirez & Berger, 2014). Hence, since the 1990s, almost every country in the world has developed a national system for quality assurance in higher education ((Blanco-Ramirez & Berger, 2014). Moreover, in the case of Lebanon where private higher education expanded exponentially from 1996 (Moussawi, 2010), higher education institutions are challenged to adjust their programme structures, curricula, teaching and learning modes and methods to preserve their leading role in the Arab region (Kaissi et al., 2008). Consequently, the Lebanese government, represented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, has organised and sponsored, since 2004, several activities such as training workshops, seminars and conferences aimed at the dissemination of a quality assurance culture. In addition, it published a series of guide books introducing and then detailing the process of quality assurance implementation in association with international partners such as the World Bank.

The Ministry's efforts culminated in 2014 in ratifying Law No. 285/2014, requiring all institutions of higher education to implement a system for quality assurance and then to seek, at a later stage, external accreditation. In the business schools in particular, which attract 33% of the total population of students in private universities (CERD, 2015), quality assurance seems much needed in order to provide a systematic and reliable educational provision.

Nevertheless, three years into the law and 16 years after the start of the debate on national quality assurance for higher education in 2001 (Jammal, 2016), the number of responsive private business schools stands at 11 out of 35.

Thus, the overall aim of this research was to advance an understanding of the differential responsiveness to quality assurance implementation particularly in relation to organisational and institutional factors. The specific research objectives were, within the context of higher education and business schools, to:

1- Identify the organisational characteristics that differentiate responsive business schools from non-responsive business schools.

2- Explore how the characteristics of business schools leadership affect responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

3- Evaluate the association between the business schools stakeholders' perceptions of quality assurance dimensions and responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

4- Determine how institutional pressures affect the implementation of quality assurance

5- Formulate recommendations on adequate approaches to implement quality assurance in a business school.

This chapter will revisit the research objectives above, summarize the findings of this research work and offer conclusions based on the findings. Recommendations for future research will also be discussed. Lastly, the contributions of this research to the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education will be advanced.

9.2 Testing the hypotheses and evaluating the research propositions

In this section the research hypotheses are revisited considering the empirical results of the research.

9.2.1 The business schools organisational characteristics

Several studies have pointed to the important role that specific organisational characteristics play as determinants of quality assurance implementation (Erdem, 2009; Kahsay, 2012; Utuka, 2012; Abaalkhail, 2013). The type of business (profit or not-for-profit) relates to the decision whether the generated income is reinvested in the business school or retained by the owners as profit. The age of the business school is relevant because it affects the decision to balance its historic traditions and heritage with powerful societal forces for change (Papadimitriou, 2011); it has been found to be associated with the experience and the capacity of an organisation to implement change (Kahsay, 2012) but it was also found to be associated with long-lived values restricting the motivation to be open to new ideas (Cameron and Quinn, 1999).

Rogers (2003) observed that the size of an organisation has also consistently been shown to predict innovation and the adoption of innovation. Hitt et al. (1990) indicated that large organisations have more slack resources for experimentation and innovation; whereas Dougherty (1996) argues that large organisations are more bureaucratic and less flexible, and thus unable to change and adapt quickly.

The complexity of an organisation is also reported as crucial in understanding how and why processes, such as the implementation of quality assurance, occur (Hall & Tolbert, 2005). Pollitt et al. (1998) also confirmed that "complexity affects the speed and nature of the diffusion of reforms such as quality assurance" (p. 174). Complexity is defined as the number of departments, the hierarchy of the conferred degrees and geographical dispersion (Csizmadia, 2006).

Cooper et al. (2014) agree that tuition fees are important in determining responsiveness because they affect not only the source of its financing but also students' requirements for a quality education and consequently the business schools' decision to conform.

The following first group (A) of hypotheses relating to the effect of organisational characteristics on business schools responsiveness to quality assurance implementation were then developed and tested in chapter 6:

Hypothesis A1: Private not-for-profit business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A2a: Old business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A2b: New business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A3a: Small business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A3b: Large business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A4: Business schools with a large number of programmes are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A5: Business schools offering a Doctoral degree are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A6: Geographically dispersed business schools are responsive to quality assurance.

Hypothesis A7: Business schools with high tuition fees are responsive to quality assurance.

This study has shown that large size is statistically significantly associated with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation; thus agreeing with Hitt et al. (1990), Csizmadia (2006) and Papadimitriou (2011). The size of a business school influences its financial condition and hence

provides more slack resources for experimentation and innovation; financially large business schools are able to engage in new projects and can withstand potential operational failures.

Moreover, a doctoral level of conferred degree is found to be statistically significantly associated with responsiveness to quality assurance. The finding is in line with the observation that the provision of doctoral level studies requires the prevalence of a reliable organisational structure to assure its quality (Brown, 2004; EIASM, 2015).

9.2.2 Leadership characteristics

Both the institutional theory and the diffusion of innovation theory agree that the leaders of an institution play an important part in adopting new ideas. Birkinshaw et al. (2008) and DiMaggio, (1988) identify them as internal change agents that proactively create interest in, experiment with, and validate the management innovation in question. Thus, institutional entrepreneurship (DiMaggio, 1988), initiated by the internal change agent, refers to the activities of institutional entrepreneurs, who not only initiate diverse changes in the institutional environment but also actively participate in the implementation of such changes (Battilana et al., 2009).

Rogers (2003), in the diffusion of innovation theory, proposes that a change agent's promotion efforts determine the rate of adoption of a management innovation. He defined a change agent as "an individual who influences a client's innovation decision in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency" (Rogers, 2003).

The literature review of both theories suggested that leadership characteristics mostly associated with isomorphism and the adoption of innovation were: 1) continual monitoring of the environment, 2) openness to new ideas, 3) communication of the importance of implementing new ideas, 4) the provision of financial resources and 5) training, and 6) appropriately rewarding the implementation of new strategies.

Most studies have suggested that in a changing environment, strong institutional management and leadership is the enabling catalyst for successful intervention at the strategic management level because of the greater complexity of the external environment and the need for faster decision-making to affect the changes essential to ensure future institutional success and survival (Lewis & Smith, 1994; Brennan & Shah, 2000; Csizmadia, 2006; papdimitriou, 2011,)

The following hypotheses group (B) were then developed and tested in chapter 7:

Hypothesis B1: Monitoring the environment of higher education and responsiveness are correlated.

Hypothesis B2: The openness of leadership to new ideas and responsiveness are correlated.

Hypothesis B3: The communication of the importance of implementing measures aimed at improving the university status and responsiveness are correlated.

Hypothesis B4: The provision of financial resources and responsiveness are correlated.

Hypothesis B5: The provision of training and responsiveness are correlated.

Hypothesis B6: The provision of adequate reward for the implementation of measures aimed at the improvement of the university status and responsiveness are correlated.

Indeed this study has shown that there is a positive relationship between the characteristics of the leadership of the business schools and responsiveness to quality assurance. The Spearman's rho test of correlation (using the reduced factor representing the characteristics of leadership) indicated that leadership characteristics significantly influence responsiveness and that business schools with leaders possessing the variable characteristics are more likely to be responsive, a finding in line with previous research.

9.2.3   Stakeholders' perceptions of quality assurance

The theory of diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 1995) explains that the rate of adoption is determined by the stakeholders' perceptions of its five attributes: (1) Relative advantage, (2) Compatibility with the norms and values of the adopting individuals, (3) Complexity, the degree of difficulty in implementing or use the innovation, (4) Trialability, the degree of experimentation before adoption, and (5) Observability, the potential to observe positive effects ensuing as a result of adoption.

To successfully implement quality assurance the internal stakeholders' perceptions of these attributes and their involvement in the implementation decision and activities are important; top management initiates and motivates the quality process but "the department is still the primary activity system in higher education" (Kleijnen et al., 2011, p.143). Thus it is of utmost importance that all hierarchical levels in higher education institutions share the same vision of excellence and participate in achieving effectiveness (Sakthivel, 2007). Staff involvement leads

to higher levels of commitment and reduces resistance to change. But involvement -a behavioural resultant- starts with perceptions that trigger a corresponding behaviour (Bargh et al. 1996). Thus, Robbins & Judge (2009) say that the study of people's perception is important because their behaviour is based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself. This was the main driver behind including the Deans and chairs of departments of the business schools in the current research: their support for quality is crucial to its successful implementation and a factor influencing the accuracy and meaningfulness of the results achieved (Laughton, 2003).

The following hypotheses group (C) were then developed and tested in chapter 7:

Relative advantage

Hypothesis C1a: the perception that quality assurance enhances a business school reputation is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Hypothesis C1b: the perception that quality assurance improves the quality of teaching is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Compatibility

Hypothesis C2a: The perception that quality assurance imposes restrictions on the way teaching is performed is correlated with responsiveness.

Hypothesis C2b: The perception that quality assurance affects decision making at the business school is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Complexity

Hypothesis C3a: The perception that quality assurance implementation is a lengthy process is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Hypothesis C3b: The perception that quality assurance requires an overall change of the way a business school is managed is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Observability

Hypothesis C4a: The perception that quality assurance delivers quick results is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Hypothesis C4b: The perception that quality assurance has improved the status of other business schools is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

Trialability

Hypothesis C5: The perception that quality assurance can be implemented gradually is correlated with responsiveness to quality assurance.

The overall findings of the research suggest that business schools' stakeholders perceive that quality assurance provides relative advantage in terms of enhanced reputation and improvement of the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, they also agree with Doherty (2008) who contends that teaching staff may consider that the managerial control espoused by quality assurance conflicts with their academic freedom and their professional autonomy; In general, the respondents perceive that quality assurance imposes restrictions on the way teaching is performed and that it determines how decisions at the school shall be made; practices not compatible with higher education values. Furthermore, the respondents perceive that the implementation of quality assurance is a complex process because it requires a length of time and requires an overall change of the way the university is managed.

Concerning the attribute of observability, the greater part of the respondents agree that quality assurance has resulted in the improvement of other business schools' status, although they also agree that the impact of its implementation takes a long time to be observed. Lastly, the majority of the respondents believe that quality assurance can be tested in one department before being applied to the entire business school.

Altogether the findings suggest a mixed view of quality assurance by the individuals who can influence the decision to implement it. Nevertheless, the predictor variables were found to be not statistically significantly associated with responsiveness; a finding that disagrees with Rogers (1995) observation that the perceptions of an innovation predict the rate of its adoption and implementation. However, these variables are worthy of consideration when a decision to implement is considered. This is discussed further in the implications for practice section. What is considered a good starting point to build upon is that the majority of the respondents disagree that the general performance of the business school is satisfactory without quality assurance; in

other words, the respondents perceive that the implementation of quality assurance may improve the general status of the business school and bring further development.

9.2.4 The institutional pressures

The institutional theory suggests that organisations submit to the rule of institutions outside the organisation for the purpose of seeking legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Later, DiMaggio & Powell (1983) referred to the process as isomorphism and specified that it takes place as a result of three mechanisms: coercive, mimetic and normative. Coercive isomorphism results from the formal and informal pressures enforced by organisations that control resources and legitimacy. Mandates imposed by a state or a government are an explicit example of such a source of pressure. Outside of the governmental arena, organisations find themselves obliged to implement standardised rules and procedures imposed by a parent company or donor organisation such as the World Bank or the European Union.

Mimetic isomorphism results from the environmental uncertainties in which an organisation operates. It is the process of modelling at leading organisation in order to save the time and cost to search for new solutions for emerging challenges.

Normative isomorphism stems from professionalization which is conceived as the influence of formal education such as in universities and the standard operating procedures and policies imposed by associations and professional networks such as the unions and the professional syndicates and associations.

The following hypotheses group (D) were then developed and tested in chapter 8:

Hypothesis D1: The perception of the degree of coercive pressure affects responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

Hypothesis D2: The perception of the degree of mimetic pressure affects responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

Hypothesis D3: The perception of the degree of normative pressure affects responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

The analysis of the interviews conducted with the Deans of the business schools have shown that responsiveness to quality assurance tends to stem primarily from the normative pressure exerted

by international partners, and by the motivation to be internationally recognised, in addition to the willingness to conform to the business environment's requirements for employability skills. All the responsive business schools are engaged with academic agreements with a foreign partner with some of their programmes entirely managed by the former; whereas non-responsive business schools are not active in this regard. This finding is in line with previous research on the adoption of quality assurance (Csizmadia, 2006; Papadimitriou 2011) and agrees with DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Meyer & Scott's (1982) original arguments that normative isomorphic pressures are linked to professionalization and the support obtained from local and global professional associations.

Mimetic pressure came in second in influencing responsiveness and was mainly portrayed as a strategic decision resulting from upper management vision; implementing quality assurance as a response to growing competition was less reported. In particular, non-responsive business schools consider that although competition is high, they do not feel threatened because they operate within a market niche with high barriers to entry; either because they serve a specific socio-economic class (mainly less privileged) or because they are geographically conveniently located. This is in line with Beckert (2010) arguing that institutional divergence due to competitive pressure results from organisations being willing to specialize and to create niches for themselves.

The interviewees agree that coercive pressure, though it exists through the ratified 2014 law, was the least influential in responsiveness. They reported that the law lacked the required enforcement procedures and that the political climate, supported by a sectarian system, also contributed to building an environment of reluctance towards implementation.

Erden's (2006) pointed out that

> *"in the absence of strong coercive mechanisms, and when the legal framework itself has multiplicity within, the historical roots of organizations become more effective in influencing their activities, structures and procedures, creating divergence. On the contrary, in the presence of a strong institutional regime and a unified legal framework, then the field becomes homogenized around the organizational features that are emphasized by the coercive pressures. Organizational histories play a role only in the*

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features that are left 'untouched' by the coercive pressures. As the institutional regime becomes weaker, even when the legal framework keeps its unified character, there is more room for diversity" (p. 116).

Decoupling, the concept that organisations abide only superficially by institutional pressure and adopt new structures without necessarily implementing the related practices (Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2008) was raised by few interviewees; an explanation for this would be the argument of Oliver (1991) that "the appearance rather than the fact of conformity is often presumed to be sufficient for the attainment of legitimacy" (p. 155).

9.2.5   Conclusion

This study has examined the factors influencing responsiveness to quality assurance implementation in Lebanese business schools using both the institutional theory and diffusion of innovation theory. In general, the research results suggest that large business schools that offer a doctoral degree and that are engaged in international academic agreements and partnerships tend to be more responsive to quality assurance implementation. The results are in line with previous other research in higher education investigating the influence of organisational characteristics (Csizmadia, 2006; Papadimitriou, 2011) and institutional pressures (Casile & Davis-Blake, 2002; Cooper et al., 2014) on quality assurance implementation. The research has also found that leadership characteristics are significant thus agreeing with previous research (Zachariah, 2007; Krücken, 2007; Garrison & Vaughan, 2013). The study concludes that responsiveness is also due to a number of other factors such as the availability of knowledge and skills required to practice quality assurance and the presence of a supportive culture.

Based on the results of the research, the model of responsiveness to quality assurance, introduced in chapter 3 is modified, is modified to show the significant factors that positively influence implementation- the other factors are strike through.

Figure 9-1 Modified model of responsiveness to quality assurance implementation at the Lebanese business schools
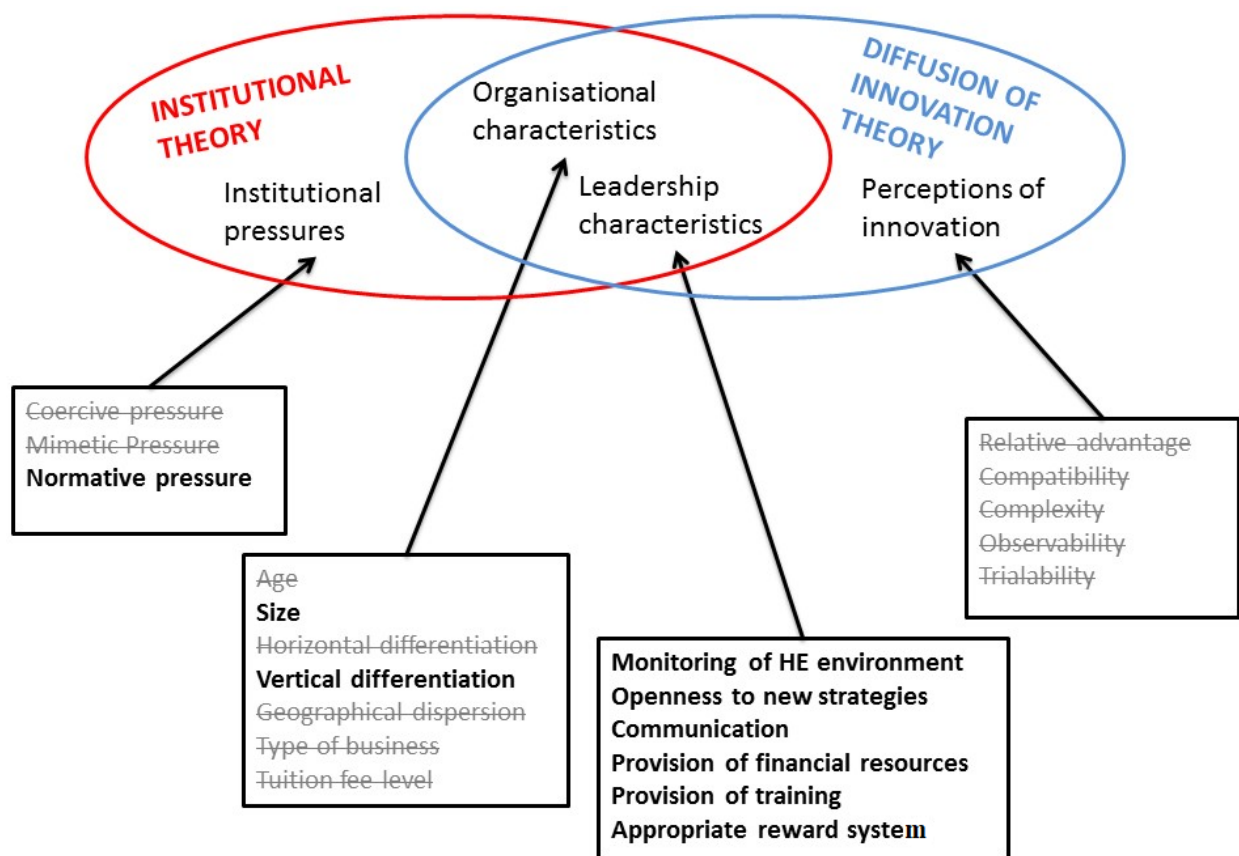
9.3 The overall contribution of the research

The private higher education system in Lebanon is complex in terms of expanding access and study programmes and its reliance on private independent financial resources. These trends raise a concern about quality of education and thus lead to demands for accountability on the part of universities. Such changes necessitate the undertaking of a study such as this one, which helps to fill the research gap on quality and quality assurance practices in the Lebanese universities and specifically the business schools.

This study has produced insights into the state of quality of higher education in Lebanon in general. The contributions of higher institutions towards Lebanon's social and economic development in today's world are more significant now than ever. This is because higher

institutions, as noted by the World Bank (2002), "are expected to play a key role in the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge, all of which are key determining factors for a country or region to survive in this knowledge-based society" (p. xvii). Higher institutions in Lebanon, as in other parts of the globe, are in competition to ensure their national and international viability. To survive this competition, it is important that institutions in Lebanon strive to improve the quality of the education they provide. The current research investigates the factors which influence the implementation of quality assurance measures.

The study investigated responsiveness to quality assurance in private business schools in Lebanon. The reason for undertaking research in this area in the Lebanese context is twofold. First, the development and implementation of a national quality assurance programme has been a debated issue since the first regional Arab conference on the topic held in Cairo in 2000; continual state and internationally-supported initiatives to speed up the process have not been successful and the rate of adoption of quality assurance remains meagre. Therefore, there is a need to understand the underlying factors for such a phenomenon using empirical research.

Second, in addition to the fact that the practice of quality assurance in higher education in Lebanon is scarce, it is also not well researched and documented. A review of research written on Lebanese higher education (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2002; Kaissi et al., 2008; Nasser et al., 2008; El-Hassan, 2009; Choueiri et al., 2012) indicates that none of them had a focus on quality assurance and much less on the factors that influence its implementation.

Consequently, this research will help to fill the research gap on quality and quality assurance implementation in the Lebanese context and will provide theoretical and empirical contribution to the existing literature on responsiveness to quality assurance implementation in a higher education institutional context.

To the knowledge of the researcher, this is the first attempt to investigate quality assurance responsiveness to implementation in the context of Lebanese business school with a focus on organisational and institutional factors.

9.4   Contribution to knowledge

This study makes a contribution to our understanding of the drivers and obstacles that might champion or impede responsiveness to quality assurance in higher education in general; in

addition to addressing a specific research gap as far as quality assurance in Lebanese higher education is concerned.

The theoretical implications of this study indicate a meaningful contribution has been made by applying institutional theory and diffusion of innovation theory on the study of quality assurance implementation and thus providing empirical evidence of their relative explanatory power.

By providing empirical evidence, the study extends Rogers (1995) theory of diffusion of innovation by considering the role leadership plays when innovation is introduced in organisations. Rogers (1995) affirms that the perceptions of the innovation's attributes are by far the most influential in deciding whether an innovation will (or will not) be adopted disregarding the effect of other influential factors such as leadership characteristics. Rogers' (1995, 2003) gives ample account of the importance and characteristics of leaders who can affect change but ignores the case when leaders restrain from responsiveness to implementation of innovation regardless of other stakeholders' opinion. Rogers (1995) affirms that "it is the receivers' perceptions of the attributes of innovations that affect their rate of adoption" (p. 212).

The current research demonstrates that the perceptions of the attributes of an innovation (here quality assurance) do not solely affect responsiveness to implementation; leaders may decide to implement (or not) regardless of other stakeholders' perceptions.

The research also added insight into the effects of institutional pressures on responsiveness to quality assurance implementation in the current state of government policy. Hence, although coercive pressure exists in the Lebanese higher education context through the enactment of laws, the findings of the research suggest its power is "neutralised" when the political climate experiences conflict among its parties. Thus, political and sectarian interests can override the power of law and can hinder any attempted reforms. Furthermore, the findings suggest that in the absence of a solid regulatory framework, institutions diverge from the requirements of the law. The absence of sanctions in the enacted law for quality assurance in higher education in Lebanon was constantly cited as a precursor for non-responsiveness. This outcome is further multiplied when the institutions are concerned mainly with their profit generation goals. In other words, profit-generation will take precedence when the law allows for divergence from its requirements. Furthermore, the review of literature suggested a divide on the role of organisational size on responsiveness to implementation. This research provides empirical evidence supporting the

observation that large organisational size (in contrast to small) is found to be significant in determining responsiveness, a finding consistent with other research (Csizmadia, 2006; Papadimitriou, 2011); large business schools tend to have the necessary resources for implementation. Therefore, large business schools in Lebanon have established internal quality assurance systems or have gained external accreditation, known to be particularly costly. The findings also verify the observation that the provision of doctoral level studies requires the prevalence of a reliable organisational structure to assure its quality (Brown, 2004, EIASM, 2015). Indeed, the current research found that the level of conferred degrees was found to be associated with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation.

9.5   Contribution to practice

The study has practical implications. It provides pertinent and timely information concerning the existing systems and practices of assuring quality to the Lebanese public, to higher education institutions and to business and governmental organisations. Additionally, the study helps to raise the awareness to key stakeholders of the factors that converge to influence the implementation of quality assurance. As the study examined the factors associated with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation, it offers practical recommendations on increasing responsiveness- in other words reducing non-responsiveness on the part of business schools.

To the Lebanese public (particularly students and their parents), this research may serve as an empirically-founded base of information about the current state and the future prospects of quality assurance in business schools in Lebanon; it may assist student in making an informed decision when choosing a university or business school.

For business organisations, the research mapping of the higher education landscape in terms of quality assurance may help during the recruitment and selection process of employees; employees who graduated from a quality assured business school are more likely to possess professionally required skills (ENQA, 2009).

To higher education policy makers, this study has the potential to inform the reform of the quality assurance policy. The institutional theory literature suggests that institutions conform to the pressure of the law (coercive pressure) in order to gain legitimacy and secure resources. In

other words, institutions tend to be more receptive of state directions if they are threatened by sanctions and motivated by financial incentives. The findings of the research confirmed that the absence of a solid regulatory framework (specifically sanctions and follow up) slows down the implementation of quality assurance in higher education institutions. Therefore, the government is encouraged to strengthen the legal and quality regulatory frameworks in order to stimulate and facilitate the adoption and implementation of quality assurance in higher education. Sanctions must spell out, clearly and explicitly, the consequences of non-responsiveness and follow-up measures (such as auditing and inspection visits) should be established and followed consistently. If the process is impeded by the political and sectarian conditions of the country, officials are encouraged to increase public attention to quality assurance by disseminating information on the state of quality assurance in higher education, naming the institutions that implemented quality assurance measures and highlighting the benefits of doing so and the consequences of not complying. Consequently, the normative pressure (derived from public attention) would intensify and may compel business schools to conform. Furthermore, publicly exposing the parties involved in political interference may reduce their obstructive effects.

A persistent non-responsiveness on the part of business schools after the act on quality assurance came into force in 2014 and disregard of an ultimatum for implementation (3 years) also suggests a disconnection between the government and the institutions. Hence, greater stakeholders' consultation may improve communication between the two parties and reduce resistance to change (Baumgardt & Lekhetho, 2013). This could be achieved by setting up joint committees and advisory boards between the government and institutions to discuss quality assurance issues in addition to other frameworks that can help the process.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2001) reports that the implementation of quality assurance may indicate poor value-for-money for higher education institutions. Indeed, the findings of this research showed that both for-profit and not-for-profit business schools are concerned about generating income and sustaining their profits after quality assurance implementation. In particular, small business schools may struggle financially to cover the expenses tied to the process. Hence, the government is encouraged to financially support the implementation of quality assurance by providing funds and setting up a financial incentive scheme through which institution are supported and rewarded for implementing quality

assurance. This would mitigate their profit generation concern and motivate implementation. Training, seminars and workshops that may induce a financial burden should also be provided free of charge. Not only will they lift the financial burden but would also help build the knowledge and skills of higher education stakeholders. Indeed, in this research, lack of skills and knowledge has been identified as one of the reasons for non-responsiveness in some business schools. To resolve this issue, leaders (in both governmental and in higher education institutions) are encouraged to create a learning-oriented culture where an increased level of knowledge leads to lesser individual and organisational resistance to implementation (Zulu et al., 2004). Moreover, the creation of an organisational quality culture will lead to practices and procedures that are focused on enhancement rather than mere compliance (Hodson & Thomas, 2003).

The results of the study revealed that the implementation of quality assurance was sometimes ceremonial to sustain an image of conformance, a process identified by institutional theory as "decoupling". For example, quality assurance principles require management to set up processes for continual human resources development such as training and attending conferences-processes that demand financial funding. Nevertheless, such processes are not provided and therefore management exhibits divergence between discourse and practice. Accordingly, in order to restrict "decoupling", the government is encouraged to set up processes of institutional auditing to validate the effective application of quality assurance. The results of the auditing process must also be considered during the administration of financial support and reward.

For the business schools the study contributes to a more informed understanding of their internal environment namely the role of leadership and the importance of addressing the perceptions of stakeholders regarding quality assurance. Perceptions are known to cause corresponding behaviour (Bargh et al. 1996); thus, close attention and monitoring of the business school stakeholders' perceptions of both leadership characteristics and attributes of quality assurance by management are encouraged as they can directly affect the behaviours of their subordinates and consequently either inhibit or motivate the implementation of quality assurance. This study found that leadership characteristics are associated with responsiveness to quality assurance implementation, a finding consistent with previous research which demonstrates that interventions aimed at securing organisational change depend heavily on effective leadership

(Burns, 1978; Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Davies et al., 2001; Carnall, 2003; McRoy and Gibbs, 2003).

The leaders of a business school act as a social model whose innovative behaviour is imitated by the members of the system (Rogers, 1995). Their influence and respect can be lost when their behaviour deviates from the norms and expectations of their roles. In other words, if the leaders of a business school advocate the importance and benefits of implementing new ideas that may improve the business school status (as the study revealed), they must be willing to make available the necessary resources and rewards in this regard. Accordingly, leaders are encouraged to adhere to their expected roles and align their discourse with action.

Business schools' leaders are advised to continually monitor the internal stakeholders' perceptions and to introduce learning mechanisms to introduce and explain the benefits of quality assurance; the study found that the respondents at the business schools perceive quality assurance to be complex and incompatible with the values of higher education. Thus, it is recommended that training and other informative activities be held to ease their concerns and relieve their anxiety about the expected change. These can help in building a supportive professional culture that values the implementation of new paradigms and rewards such initiatives. Bendermacher et al., 2017) confirm that the development of such culture is "contingent on a leader's commitment, ability to create a climate of trust and shared understanding and setting and communicating policies" (p.45).

Table 9-1 Summary of contributions to practice

Who	What	How	Why
The government	Solid regulatory framework	Enforcing sanctions	Increase number of quality assured higher education institutions
	Publicly expose political interference	Naming the parties that hinder implementation of the law	Reduce political interference
	Increase public attention to quality assurance	Dissemination of information through the media, publications...	Increase public awareness

	Increase consultation with higher education institutions	Set up committees, advisory boards....	Reduce organisational resistance to change
	Increase funding	Directly (financial) and indirectly (paying for external consultants, providing labs, equipment...)	Motivate implementation
	Create a learning-oriented quality culture	Training, seminars, workshops…	Reduce individual and organisational resistance to implementation
	Ensure higher education institutions do what they say they do	Auditing and inspection visits	Improve accountability
Business schools leaders	Monitor staff perceptions of leadership and quality assurance	Survey opinions on regular basis; introduce employee employment survey; discuss quality assurance during staff meetings	To get staff to buy-in and thus reduce resistance to implementation
	Align discourse with action	Do what you say you do	Avoid sanctions and to maintain respect of stakeholders and lead by example
	Improve staff understanding of quality assurance	Training and education activities	Relieve anxiety about expected change

9.6 Limitations of the study

It is generally accepted that any research has its own scope and limitations (Saunders et al., 2009). Three main limitations to the study are thus noted.

The first limitation of this research relates to the degree to which the results could be generalised. First, the study was conducted on the Lebanese private business schools with the consequence

that the findings may not be fully generalisable to other schools, to the entire university or to other institutions of higher education including the one public university.

Second, the use of non-probability sampling (purposive sampling) does not allow the generalisation of the results; only large business schools were targeted, and only the deans and chairpersons of these schools, thus limiting the number of usable responses. A greater number of responses may influence the relative effects of the institutional pressures and the perceptions of innovation attributes of quality assurance.

Third, since the study is cross-sectional and not longitudinal, it does not account for the change of the stakeholders' perceptions expected to occur over time.

9.7   Proposals for further research

The research was conducted in the Lebanese context tied with political and sectarian issues. Thus, it would be interesting to investigate whether a replication of the research would lead to other findings in other countries where the political system is less controversial, specifically as regards the institutional pressures.

Also, the collected data was cross-sectional. Future research may wish to consider longitudinal case-study designs to better understand how institutional pressures and the perceptions of quality assurance come to influence responsiveness to implementation over time.

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

A Doctoral Research

I am a doctoral researcher at Staffordshire University. I am conducting an exploratory research to investigate the differential responsiveness to quality assurance implementation within private business schools in Lebanon. The results of the research will be used to facilitate the implementation of quality assurance in higher education in general and to improve managerial skills in this area.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and anonymous. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure your identity remains anonymous and no names will appear in the final document. Furthermore, you can choose to refrain from answering any question or to withdraw from the research at any time without the need to provide an explanation. The results will remain confidential and will only be used for the purpose of the research and may be seen by the University. If you want to see the results of the research or have any other inquiries please contact me or feel free to contact my research supervisors at the addresses below:

K033047c@student.staffs.ac.uk

h.eggins@staffs.ac.uk

jana.fiserova@staffs.ac.uk

I would greatly appreciate you taking your time to complete this survey. Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as your written consent to participate in the research

I have read the information about the research and I accept to participate. I understand I have the right to withdraw from the research project, at any time without prejudice; up to the point that the data has been aggregated and or analysed.

Signature…………………………   Date   …………………………

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

What is (are) the title(s) of your job(s)? _____

Section A: The business school leadership characteristics

Please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement below

	SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree.	SA	A	D	SD
1	Management continuously monitors the higher education environment to bring in new ideas that can improve the business school status				
2	Management is open to implementing new strategies aimed at improving the business school status				
3	Management communicates how important it is to implement measures that will improve the business school status				
4	Management provides the necessary financial resources to implement new management strategies				
5	Management provides the necessary training to implement new management strategies				
6	Management appropriately rewards the implementation of new strategies that improve the business school status				

Section B: the attributes of quality assurance: *Please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement below*

	SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree.	SA	A	D	SD
7	Quality assurance enhances the business school reputation				
8	Quality assurance improves the quality of teaching				
9	Quality assurance imposes restrictions on the way teaching is performed				
10	Quality assurance determines how decisions at the business school shall be made				
11	The implementation of quality assurance is a lengthy process				
12	Quality assurance requires an overall change of the way the business school is managed				
13	Quality assurance has resulted in the improvement of other business schools status				
14	The impact of quality assurance implementation takes a long time to be observed				

15	Quality assurance can be implemented in one department before being applied to the whole institution				
16	The general performance of the business school is satisfactory without quality assurance				

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix 2 interview protocol

Interview questions to detect the existence of institutional pressures and their influence on responsiveness to quality assurance implementation:

I- Coercive pressure:

1- How would you describe the governments' efforts in terms of motivating universities and business schools to implementing quality assurance? (knowing that a law has been rectified for this purpose)
2- Do you know of any sanctions in case the law is not followed? (if yes, how is the are you going to respond)
3- Does the institution receive funds from the government or any other funding body? (If yes, is the receipt of funds conditioned on the implementation of QA?)
4- In your view, what policies will further enhance the quality assurance process and assist private higher education institutions?

II- Mimetic pressure:

1- How would you describe the impact of the existence of a large number of business schools in Lebanon on your status?
2- Does the university, in general, and the business school in particular, compile evidence on its performance and compare it to other universities?
3- What are you doing to counter competition?
4- Could you indicate how you are able to identify new programmes and to what extent your competitors influence this aspect?

III- Normative pressure:

1- Is your business school a member of any academic association? Or is in an international academic joint venture?
2- How important is it for your business school to join the league tables?
3- Do you consult with other organisations (business or other) on matters of market demand for specialized graduates?
4- Do you collect data on students' satisfaction with teaching and other processes at the school?

General questions:

- If your university (and then business school) decides to implement quality assurance, which of the following factors would be the most influential on the decision?
    - o The government
    - o Competition

- Students
- Business organisations
- Academic associations

As this interview draws to a close, is there anything that you would like to share that relates to quality assurance but has not yet been mentioned?

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