

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

MOHAMMED ALOTAIBI

**Developing a Framework to Facilitate a Culture for Continuous
Improvement within Higher Education Institutions:
The Case of Saudi Arabia**

PhD THESIS

Academic Years: 2014 - 2019

**Supervisor: Dr Patrick McLaughlin
Associate Supervisor: Dr Ahmed Al-Ashaab**

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**This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of PhD**

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ABSTRACT

Continuous Improvement in HEIs is becoming increasingly an important part of the HEIs strategic management. Major changes in the higher education sector over the last two decades have exerted pressure on the ability of HEI systems to sustain quality, meet increasing demands for accountability, and demonstrate their economic and social role. The drive for quality management and quality assurance has manifested in the increase in accreditation and quality audits required of HEIs by government bodies and external entities. Saudi Arabia higher education system is not exceptional in this regard. Therefore, this explanatory and interpretive study adopted a qualitative grounded theory approach, which, aims to establish how organisational culture can be leveraged to support continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia's HEIs. It has used a number different data gathering instruments: including, face-to-face interviews, focus groups and survey. It also, identifies a number of themes that influence CI implementation in Saudi HEIs, and develop a framework of interventions that will help to leverage the organisation cultures of Saudi Arabia HEIs to facilitate continuous improvement. Recommendations for further study included more focused studies on the OC of Saudi based private universities and their current CI practices.

Key words: organisational cultures, continuous improvement, higher education institutions and Grounded Theory

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere love and gratitude to my father, Saeed, who has inspired me throughout the whole of my educational journey. May God rest his soul in paradise.

My sincerest gratitude also goes to my Mother, Munirah, who has always pushed me towards success with her words and prayers.

I also wish to acknowledge the unending support given to me by My wife, Norah, and my children Ammar, Muaath and Amira during the entirety of my PhD journey. I will forever be a grateful and loving husband and father.

My appreciation is also extended to my Supervisors, Dr. Patrick McLaughlin, and Dr. Ahmed Al-Ashaab for their continuous guidance and advice during the ups and downs of my PhD journey.

Finally, I would like to thank the study participants for agreeing to take part in this PhD thesis, in spite of their busy schedules.

LIST OF PUBLICATION

Journal papers:

- Mohammed Saeed Alotaibi, Patrick McLaughlin and Ahmed Al-Ashaab (2019)," Organisational Cultural Factors Influencing Continuous Improvement in Saudi Universities", The Journal of Organisational Management Studies, Vol. 2019 (2019), Article ID 408194, DOI: 10.5171/2019.408194

Conferences attendance and Participation

- Factors influencing the continuous improvement in Saudi HEIs' poster presented at the 9th Saudi Students Conference was held on the 13th-14th February, 2016 at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Birmingham.
- Identifying the organisation culture aspects that enablers and inhibitors the continuous improvement in Saudi HEIs' "poster presented at the event of Manufacturing Doctoral Community" - Cranfield university 25 April 2017
- Oral presentation in the 8th Academic International Conference on Multi-Disciplinary Studies and Education AICMSE on 21st-23rd January 2019 Oxford Conference.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
UK	United Kingdom
HEI	Higher Education Institution
OC	Organisational Culture
NC	National Culture
CI	Continuous Improvement
OCA	Organisation Culture Aspects
TQM	Total Quality Management
MBNQA	Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
CH	Cultural Hegemony
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
USR	University's Social Responsibility
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
GT	Grounded Theory

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis presents the findings of a Grounded Theory based study on the aspects of organisational culture that are either enablers or inhibitors of continuous improvement within Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions (HEIs). The introductory chapter presents the following: a background to the study, the research problem, the study aims and objectives, the conceptual framework, the significance of the study, the methodology and methods, and definitions of the key terms. It concludes by presenting the structure of the rest of the thesis.

1.2 Background

Continuous Improvement (CI) is described by Deming as a philosophy that consists of "Improvement initiatives that increase successes and reduce failures" (Juergensen, 2000; Baghel and Bhuiyan, 2005). The notion of CI is traced back to the Japanese Kaizen idea, which aims to regularly change practices and other things for the better (Imai, 1986). Bessant et al. (2001) argue that, in this unpredictable and complex business environment, it is essential that organisations continually engage in CI efforts. The competitiveness of organisations is not so much assessed by their capital base location, buildings, equipment or the number of their members, but rather by their output products (Bessant et al., 2001). Therefore, There has been an increase in calls for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to justify their existence and contribution to society. Linked to these developments has risen the need for HEIs to adopt management practices hitherto associated with private sector entities, among

which is the need for continuous improvement. The influence of points of view grounded in neoliberalism on HEIs has brought an increased emphasis on policy reforms, market forces, global competitiveness, accountability, efficiency, and policy reforms driven by the need for quality and adherence to specific standards (Zajda and Rust, 2016 ; Nash, 2019). Further, alongside the internationalisation of higher education, HEIs are operating in an environment that transcends local contexts. This makes it necessary for HEIs to adhere to internationally recognised quality benchmarks and adopt continuous quality improvements in order to meet international standards (Almazroa and Al-Shamrani, 2015). As far back as 2005, Temponi noted that HEIs could, through continuous improvement, move towards operating like customer-focused private sector entities that value return on investment. Al Shobakir and Abu Naser (2017) found a strong correlation between the extent to which an education institution engaged in excellence strategies (continuous improvement being among these) and it gaining sustainable competitive advantages.

It has, however, been noted that continuous improvement is both culture and context sensitive to the extent that practices that may be successful in one cultural context may not be applicable in another. The Middle East in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, present different cultural contexts from those found in Western countries. In the west the idea of continuous improvement has been popularised and culturally established, whereas in Middle-East and Saudi Arabia in particular, the benefits CI has only been recently recognised and being developed from a cultural perspective. (Yang, 2011; Hamdan, 2014; Mitki, Y. & Shani, A.B., 1995). Considering this, Hamdan (2014) highlighted the need for a “... *culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in Saudi Arabian higher education, especially when students have a cultural background that differs from that of their instructor*” (p.201). Likewise, Yang (2011) signalled the difficulties confronted by China when trying to integrate Eastern and Western higher education cultures. Specifically, this author mentioned:

The central purpose of China's modern higher education has been to combine Chinese and Western elements at all levels including institutional arrangements, research methodologies, educational ideals and cultural spirit, a combination that brings together aspects of Chinese and Western philosophical heritages. This, however, has not been achieved (p.1).

It seems clear that cultural contexts can create tensions that impact how higher education institutions are viewed as cultural organisations. In this vein, Yang (2011) declared that, *“Individual researchers need to be aware of their own cultural conditioning, keen not to overlook the different cognitive frameworks of the researched, and address questions about their beliefs and attitudes through appropriate lenses”* (p.4).

Thus, according to these statements, the national cultural context—including beliefs, values, and religious customs—have a significant influence on higher educational institutions. Indeed, since universities can be viewed as organisations, the characteristics of national culture should have an invaluable impact or influence that needs to be explored.

On the one hand, organisational culture exists within the context of national culture, which may impose constraints on organisations as they seek to adjust to their local contexts. On the other hand, concomitant with developments in the area of continuous improvement, there has been an upsurge in studies of organisational culture that associate this factor with positive organisational outcomes, including continuous improvement (Bendermacher et al., 2017; McLean, Antony and Dahlgaard, 2017; Brajer-Marczak, 2014). According to Gerhart (2009), such associations may result in discrepancies among organisational units, based in different countries. In this regard, multi-national

organisations need to ensure that their cultures are not at odds with the context of their host country.

The national culture – organisational culture relationship has been noted by, among others, Hofstede (1983), who argued that management is ‘culturally dependent’ and successful organisations have sought to align ideas from foreign management with the local culture. In the same vein, House et al. (2004) highlighted that national culture influences organisational culture. Gelfand et al. (2007) posits that ,where an organisation’s culture correlates with the national culture, a significant positive effect can be achieved.

Organisational change and development have been found to be shaped by the values and beliefs that are integral to the society in which they are taking place (Willis et al., 2016; Amis et al., 2004). The Saudi Arabian national culture is disproportionately influenced by Islam, and this fact extends to organisational culture, particularly those of the kingdom’s HEIs (Rafiki and Wahab, 2014; Ezzi et al, 2014). Indeed, in the case of Saudi Arabia, attitudes toward change are affected by religion, which militates against long-term planning because it is considered the preserve of Insh Allah (God’s willingness), i.e., high uncertainty avoidance, high power distance, and group and male orientation (Rees and Althakhri, 2008).

Ali (1996) noted that, in the Arab context, the intention of an action, rather than its practice, is more important. The importance accorded to the actions implies that, whatever changes are introduced in the interest of continuous improvement, must align action and intention. It can be inferred that both intention and action coming from constant improvement within the university setting, would be affected by the characteristics of cultural and religious behaviours. Likewise, Rees and Althakhri, (2008) calls for further studies on the effect of Arab culture on implementation of change in organisations in that region. Also Ben Saad and Abbas (2018) recommend the conduction of

studies on both public and private Saudi institutions to examine the impact of organisational culture on employee performance. Thus, this study takes place within the context of these cultural and religious influences on cultural organisations and constant improvement.

1.2.1 Definition of key terms

Organisational culture: “...pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members of the organisation as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1992, p.12).

Continuous Improvement: an across the organisation process that is focused on on-going incremental innovation (Bessant et al., 1994) and which result in increased success alongside reduced failure (Juergensen, 2000).

1.3 Research problem

The significance of CI in HEIs relies heavily on those institutions’ importance in the success of individuals, organisations and countries as a whole. Higher education is being challenged to become more responsive, effective and efficient, in the same way that private businesses have been challenged over the past two decades (Alexander, 2000; Cullen et al., 2003; Downey, 2000). The expanding of education worldwide, with students studying in different countries, is causing some concerns for educational institutions, especially the HE sector. In Saudi Arabia, as the majority of universities are public universities, the government, according to Alzhrani et al. (2016), has forced universities to implement modern management styles,

including TQM, in order to achieve CI. However, according to Albach and Mazi, (2014), the CI efforts in the Saudi HEIs face a number of challenges, including the sustainability of the educational reforms. In fact, the whole education system in Saudi Arabia is in need for transformative policies in order to improve its outputs. Al-Essa, explains “Our educational system output is still too weak to face the challenges of the present and the future, and we cannot face them without building a versed and capable education system to accommodate the future generations’ ambitions” (Al-Essa, 2016). According to Alharbi (2016), the Saudi HEIs face a number challenges, including: research productivity and improving quality.

In recent years, Saudi Arabian universities have been involved in a movement called Total Quality Management (TQM) in an effort to benchmark themselves against global best practices (Alzhrani et al., 2016). Indeed, on the one hand, this movement has provoked an increased interest in quality management in HEIs in Arabic countries (Papanthymou and Darra 2017); on the other hand, the need for continuous improvement is directly implied in TQM, which is better implemented in a cultural context that is receptive to change (Halvorson, 2013).

However, scholars found that, although that TQM, which includes continuous improvement, has been adopted in most Saudi HEIs, there are still challenges in its implementation (Alzhrani et al., 2016). As an initiative to improve these challenges, authors such as Alzhrani et al., (2016) have proposed a model for establishing the enhancement of TQM practices, and concluded by calling on Saudi universities to maintain quality and development departments dedicated to monitoring quality in the educational process. Pointedly, for this study, they remained silent on the interface between quality management processes and organisational culture.

Likewise, studies have also shown that efforts have been made in Libya to investigate the implementation of sustainable total quality management within the Libyan HEI sector and culture; however, the relationship between continuous improvement and cultural organisation was, again, not among the identified factors (Khoja, 2016).

Furthermore, Alholiby (2018) developed a framework consisting of seven main areas for improving quality assurance operation within Saudi Arabia's HEIs; however, organisational culture did not feature in its outcomes.

It can be said, then, that the literature does not offer a clear understanding of the bond among constant improvement and organisational culture. There exists a lack of references to the organisational culture–continuous improvement relationship in Saudi Arabia's HEIs. This situation is problematic given that HEIs in the region have a culture that is distinctly different from what is found in the business sector, where the continuous improvement philosophy originates.

This is compounded by the fact that the models and methodologies used in continuous improvement originate from both national and organisational cultures that are different from those of most HEIs in Saudi Arabia.

Continuous improvement has been described as dependent on an organisation's culture, as a reflection of that culture or both (Hess and Benjamin, 2015).

Notwithstanding the apparent importance of culture in the implementation of continuous improvement (CI), the researcher did not find any studies focusing on the nexus between these two aspects, i.e., CI and cultural influence in the context of Saudi Arabia's HEIs. In linking continuous improvement to culture, Halvorson (2013) posits that CI is not only an operational variable but is also

an essential cultural factor. Therefore, This research fills this gap through integrating both the organisational culture and the CI aspects in its examination of the former's influence on the latter in the Saudi HEIs.

1.4 Research Aim, Questions and Objectives.

The aim of this study is to establish the role played by aspects of organisational culture in enhancing the implementation of continuous improvement within the HEIs. It explores the nexus between organisational culture and continuous improvement in HEIs. This leads to the research question of establishing how organisational culture can be leveraged to enhance continuous improvement. This research question is further subdivided into the following sub-questions:

- What cultural aspects facilitate continuous improvement?
- What interventions are needed to enable these cultural aspects?

Research Objectives

- i. Identify organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement, via extensive review of relevant literature.
- ii. Identify organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement within HEIs.
- iii. Establish how enablers can be encouraged and inhibitors removed in an organisational culture in HEIs.
- iv. Develop a framework of interventions that will help to leverage the organisational culture to facilitate continuous improvement HEIs.
- v. Validate the interventions framework of organisational culture via the judgments of experts from the HEIs.

1.5 Significance of the study

Major changes in the higher education sector over the last two decades have exerted pressure on the ability of HEI systems to sustain quality, meet increasing demands for accountability, and demonstrate their economic and social role (Zajda and Rust, 2016; Nash, 2019). The drive for quality management and quality assurance has manifested in the increase in accreditation and quality audits required of HEIs by government bodies and external (McKay and Kember, 1999; Harvey, 2005). Saudi Arabia higher education system is not exceptional in this regard. The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), established by the Higher Education Council in 2004, is responsible for accreditation and quality assurance (Al-Baqami, 2015; NCAAA, 2012). Most of Saudi's HEIs still adopt formal quality assurance systems, including implementing NCAAA standards (NCAAA, 2012). It is, therefore, imperative to inquire into the enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement (which is a component of quality assurance initiatives) in Saudi HEIs, through the investigation the aspects of organisational culture that either enhance or deter the continuous improvement process.

This occurs in a context within which higher education has been cited as having a role in catalysing national economic development (Becket and Brookes, 2008), being the vanguard of the knowledge economy (Ehlers and Schneckenberg, 2010) and as needing to adopt internationally accepted best practices and processes (Dickson, Kwantes and Magomaeva, 2014). Furthermore, one of the aims of Saudi government vision 2030's is the transformation of the Saudi HEIs environment through a number of measures, including attracting and retaining the finest Saudi and foreign minds, and provide them with all they need, and improving and reforming regulations to

pave the way for investors and the private sector to acquire and deliver educational services (Council of Economic and Development Affairs, 2016). Accordingly, this research will help both the government, the universities and those interested in investing in the Saudi HEIs through providing them with the cultural factors that affect the CI in the Saudi HEIs

1.6 Methodology and methods

Because of limited empirical studies on organisational culture and CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia, and because the concept of CI is based predominantly on Western models, the present study assumes that perceptions of the relationship are both subjective and multiple and, therefore, are socially constructed (Creswell 2014; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2010). Social constructivism aims to understand and reconstruct “*the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold...*” (Lincoln and Guba, 2000 p.113). In this case, the researcher plays a dual role as both facilitator and participant. Social constructivism is frequently aligned with a qualitative research paradigm, where the study depends on the participants’ opinions of enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement in their organisations. The data will be collected through the use of face-to-face and focus group interviews. A minor quantitative component is also employed, i.e., a survey, which enabled the researcher to quantify some observations (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, 2003).

As one of the study’s objectives was to develop a framework of interventions helping to leverage organisational culture and facilitate continuous improvement, the Grounded Theory design (GT) was considered appropriate for data collection and analysis. Indeed, Creswell (2014) posits that Grounded Theory design can be applied wherever there is no theory that explains a phenomenon within its specific context. In this vein, data collection and data analysis were conducted concurrently, which is consistent with the tenets of

Grounded Theory. Lastly, it should be mentioned that qualitative sampling techniques were used to obtain rich information and generate an appropriate representation of different regions of Saudi Arabia.

1.8 Conclusion and organisation of the study

This chapter presented an introduction to the study by outlining its theoretical background, purpose, problem statement, research questions, significance, definition of terms, scope and delimitations. The rest of the thesis is organised as follows:

The second chapter presents a survey of relevant literature on national culture, organisational culture and continuous improvement. It concludes by identifying gaps in the literature and presenting the study's conceptual framework. Chapter Three presents the methodology and methods used. Guided by Saunders et al.'s (2012) Onion Framework, it discusses the study's social constructivism stance and use of Grounded Theory for both data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion the ethics of the study and the mechanisms used to ensure quality. The fourth chapter presents the study's findings through five sections focusing on data collection, the data analysis process, a presentation of the results, results analysis and a presentation of the ideal position derived from the results. Chapter Five identifies inferred interventions that could facilitate CI in Saudi Arabian HEIs, based on data derived from study participants. Combining the identified interventions with those derived from the literature review, the chapter concludes by proposing interventions that are likely to close the gap between the ideal conditions for CI and the current practices in Saudi Arabian universities. Based on Schein's conceptualisation of organisational culture, as made up of three interlinked levels, Chapter Six discusses aspects of OC that were identified by participants as necessary for creating an environment that is conducive for CI. It proposes a framework that focuses on organisational culture related interventions that can ensure the successful adoption of CI. It

then proceeds to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. Chapter Seven concludes the study by summarising its major findings, contributions and limitations, followed by identifying areas for possible future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Recent years have witnessed an upsurge in studies of organisational culture that link culture to organisational outcomes such as employee motivation (Milne, 2007), retention (Anitha, 2016; Hight and Wood, 2018), commitment (Ramdhani, Ramdhani and Ainissyifa, 2017), job satisfaction (Belias and Koustelios, 2014), innovation (Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez and Sanz-Valle, 2011; Efrat, 2014; Zhu, 2015; Ali Taha, Sirkova and Ferencova, 2016; Matinaro and Liu, 2017), entrepreneurial orientation (Karyotakis and Moustakis, 2016; Lee, Howe and Kreiser, 2019), productivity (Park and Lunt, 2017) and continuous improvement (Aziz and Morita, 2016; Ng and Hempel, 2017; Millar, Cadden, Yang and Humphreys, 2018). Organisational culture has, therefore, been demonstrated to be critical for the development of positive organisational outcomes (Evans and Dobrosielska, 2019).

This chapter reviews relevant literature on organisational culture and its influence on continuous improvement in organisations with specific focus on HEIs. It starts by discussing multiple definitions of organisational culture, then highlights the main models used to interrogate it and draws attention to the strengths and weaknesses of each. The chapter proceeds to define and discuss organisational culture and its models for the purpose of providing a lens through which to understand the organisational culture of Saudi higher education institutions.

2.2 National culture vs organisational culture.

Culture is a complex notion that has been defined by Shweder and Haidt (2000) define culture as the meanings, conceptions, and interpretive schemes of

a people. On the other hand, Brown (2007) posits that culture is passed across generations through socialisation and, therefore, he defines it as those things people learn that constitute their way of life, including their language, beliefs, values and norms, customs, dress, diet, roles, knowledge and skills. With that being said, there are key differences between the national cultures and the organisation cultures.

According to Hofstede 1980 and Hofstede et al. 1990, who looked into culture differences, found that national cultures differ mainly at the level of values, whereas the differences between organisations cultures are mainly seen at the superficial symbols, practices, and rituals levels. The pioneers of national cultures study was based on the national subsidiaries of an international Business Company found that National cultures create differences between otherwise similar institutions, organizations and individuals across countries. Therefore, National culture is seen as the collective mental programming of the mind in a countrywide context (Hofstede, 2001).

Organisational culture on the other hand is has been defined by Schein (1992: p. 12) as: “A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members of the organisation as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. Castro and Martins (2010) states that uses employers’ beliefs, principles and their assumptions as its foundation. Furthermore, Cameron and Quinn (2003) explained that, OC was an implicit set of assumptions beliefs and values, shared commonly by members of organizations. Unlike national cultures which, recounts mainly on deep-seated values, OC relates predominantly to commonly shared beliefs in organizational processes and practices (Sirmon & Lane, 2004). Hofstede et al. (1990) observes that OC create differences between otherwise different organizations within the same countries.

2.3 National culture and organisational culture: mutual influences and constraints

National culture and organisational culture are two notions undoubtedly attached in a dynamic of mutual influences and constraints. On the one hand, organisational culture is part of the context of national culture in the sense that any organisational culture, such as that of HEIs, has been developed and acts in an ongoing capacity within the national cultural context. Therefore, it is expected that these organisations are influenced and constrained by the elements that constitute national culture. This statement is supported by Hofstede (2001) who pointed out that a distinction should be made between national culture and organisational culture, rationalising that, just as organisational culture in the workplace distinguishes an employee of one organisation from another, so does national culture set apart people from different countries. Hofstede et al. (2010) suggests that national culture is integral to the socialisation process of an individual from infancy, which provides them with fundamental values and beliefs. In this vein, Iorgulescu and Marcu (2015, p.97) affirmed the following:

...we want to emphasize the idea that organisational cultures are constituent parts of the culture of the nation they belong to. Organisations operating in a parent culture and many of the elements that make them up are derived from the assumptions of national culture. It is up to organisations to take over, to emphasize and to amplify sometimes deep elements of the parent culture. The composition of the organisational culture certainly reflects the national values. The language, symbols, behaviours, myths constitute the

*visible forms of the manifestation of institutional culture,
bearing the marks taken from the values of national culture.*

On the other hand, it is possible to find organisations that are working within a foreign culture, i.e., those transnational organisation that have representation in many different countries. In these cases, national culture is part of the context of organisational culture and links have been observed between the two. For example, Gelfand et al. (2007) suggest that, in a situation where the two are correlated, a significant effect will be observed. This implies that organisations working across different nations should more closely consider their practices in order to fit within the cultural context of the host country. Such organisations also need to consider the effect of cultural differences between the headquarters and the subsidiaries (Drogendijk and Holm, 2015; Yildiz, 2014). Organisational contexts vary in terms of regulatory frameworks, type of institution, labour regulations and market conditions among many other national and regional factors. These variations impose constraints on organisations as they seek to adjust to their local contexts, a situation that results in discrepancies among organisational units based in different countries (Gerhart, 2009).

As management is ‘culturally dependent’, in the case of organisations located in foreign places, Hofstede (1983) argued that successful organisations have adapted ideas from foreign management into their local contexts. Nevertheless, this proved difficult, with the best results being derived from multinational management practices seeking to align with the local culture (Hofstede, 2001).

The fundamental part of national culture has been noted by, among others, the GLOBE, project (House et al, 2004) which highlights that the relationship between national culture and organisational culture reflects the countries in which they reside, which seems consistent with the idea of constraint. A similar rationale was shared by Iorgulescu and Marcu (2015), who established

a relationship between national culture and organisational culture which they characterised thus:

The relationship between the national culture and the organisational culture is characterized by including the latter in the specificity of the nation in which organisations operate. Defined as the personality of an institutional structure, a strong organisational culture will take and adapt what is lasting and valuable in national cultures (Iorgulescu and Marcu, 2015, p.98).

According to (Hoque et al., 2013) an organisational culture which is shaped by Islamic values can be described as the “the process of transmitting and sharing philosophies, vision, mission, values, beliefs, norms, knowledge and skills among the organisational members in the light of Quran and Sunna for achieving the goals of organisation smoothly and efficiently, thereby getting the satisfaction of Allah (SWTA). Hence, it can be expected that organisations operating within Islamic cultures are influenced or affected by the unique Islamic cultural characteristics that inform its organisational performance.

2.4 Organisational culture

The presence of multiple definitions of organisational culture indicates a lack of consensus on its constituents. In one early definition, Schein (1992, p.12) suggested that organisational culture is a:

...pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new

members of the organisation as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

Viewing organisation culture as exemplifying a system of assumptions, values, norms and attitudes, Janićijević (2011) went further to indicate that these: “...*manifested through symbols which the members of an organisation have developed and adopted through mutual experience and which help them determine the meaning of the world around them and the way they behave in it*” (p.72).

Likewise, for Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey (2013) organisational culture can be viewed from three perspectives: a) culture as integrationist; b) culture as fragmented and therefore not shared, and c) culture as differentiated and therefore an amalgamation of cultures. For these authors, the integrationist perspective implies that an organisation has one culture that is shared by all. However, this view seems to ignore that people within an organisation are not necessarily homogenous, i.e., that within the same organisation there could be various sub-cultures, a position also held by the fragmented perspective of organisational culture.

According to ‘b’, the fragmented view, it is unlikely that people in an organisation can have similar views and experiences. In addition, ‘c’, the differentiated view, suggests that organisational culture is an amalgamation of the cultures those individuals who make up the organisation express. Thus, organisational culture impacts future organisational outcomes because it shapes the public’s image of the company, influences performance, and gives the company and its employees direction and motivation (Cunliffe, 2008).

In the face of globalisation, organisational culture has been juxtaposed with national culture, in a situation where the assumption has been that organisational performance depends on the alignment of employee’s values with the company’s strategy, as well as on the effect of leadership

manipulating the organisation's culture for the purpose of achieving desired objectives (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2010). Organisational culture has, therefore, been linked to many aspects of an organisation's activities and outcomes, such as high school teacher's job satisfaction (Arifin, 2015), innovation performance (Laforet, 2016), management control, motivation and employee performance (Owoyemi and Ekwoaba, 2014), continuous improvement initiatives (McLean, Antony and Dahlgaard, 2017; Brajer-Marczak, 2014), and quality culture in higher education (Bendermacher, 2017).

Finally, it should be said that organisational culture evolves gradually until it becomes an unconscious part of the way in which groups function. In this regard, organisations that retain their staff create strong cultures, which positively impacts organisational performance (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). On the other hand, high turnover is associated with a loss of cultural identity or a weak culture.

Several studies have been conducted on organisational culture, resulting in the development of a number of organisational culture models (Hofstede, 1991; Schein 1985; Hatch, 1993; Cameron and Quinn, 2011; Johnson and Scholes; 1992; Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 2008).

2.5 Models of organisational culture

The following sub-section discusses the various models of organisational culture. A summary of their key characteristics, as well as their similarities and differences will be also presented.

2.5.1 Hofstede's (1991; 2011) Model of Organisational Culture

Having portrayed organisational culture in the form of an onion ring (see figure 2.1) with the segments being values, rituals, heroes and symbols, Hofstede's (2011) model about organisational cultures can be viewed from six dimensions based on whether an organisation is:

- i. Process or results oriented, with process-oriented cultures focusing more on the means to an end and the avoidance of risks to alleviate uncertainty and results oriented focusing more on the end and the acceptance of necessary risks.
- ii. Job or employee oriented, with job-oriented cultures associated with having a higher concern for getting the job done than for the well-being of employees, as is the case in employee-oriented cultures.
- iii. Professional or parochial, with professional cultures making a clear distinction between the employee at work and the employee in their private space at home, while parochial cultures see one's job as an extension of their life.
- iv. Open or closed systems, with the former accepting outsiders and external views and the latter being more inward-looking and hostile to outside influences.
- v. Tightly or loosely controlled systems, with the former characterised by structured work and limited room for innovation, and the former being more flexible and open to innovation.
- vi. Pragmatic or normative, with the first being more customer oriented while the latter depends on rigid rules and prioritises these over being flexible when handling customer's needs.

According to Hofstede (1980), organisational culture is a manifestation of the social norms and/or values of where the organisation is located. The model shows that organisational culture manifestations serve different roles at both organisational and societal levels. Hofstede's model could, therefore, be

sufficient for studying societal culture where the focus is on those cultural values, but not for organisational culture where the focus is on organisational practices.

2.5.2 Schein's (1985) Model of Organisational Culture

Having been an integral inclusion in many studies on culture from its apparition, the Schein model has formed the basis of a considerable number of related studies on culture, such as those of Alkhoraif and McLaughlin (2017), Dimitrov (2013), and Smerek (2010). Indeed, according to Schein (2010, p.18), the culture of an organisation consists, fundamentally, of “*a pattern of shared basic assumptions*”, which shape the way the cultural members think and act. These assumptions can operate below the level of consciousness, and hence they are not easy to identify or articulate. One example that Schein provides is that of the Digital Equipment Corporation, wherein he observed an extensive debate, interruption and confrontation during the course of senior management meetings. The meetings had become acrimonious and inconclusive. He realised that the managers all shared the assumption that the value of an idea could not be validated unless it had been subjected to intensive debate. By making the DEC managers aware of their shared assumption, Schein was able to help them change the way they responded to interruption and, instead, taking this as an opportunity to restate their ideas, which subsequently led to a renewed focus on the ideas rather than the interruptions.

The framework for cultural analysis offered by Schein (2009) is based on three levels of culture within an organisation, which can be broadly divided into the visible elements (the artefacts) and invisible elements (espoused values, guiding philosophies, and underlying assumptions). Figure 2.3 illustrates their purposes.

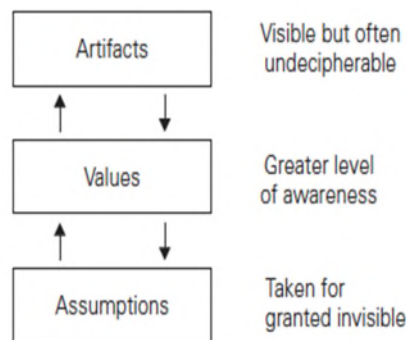


Figure 1: Three levels of organisational culture (Source: Schein, 1992)

According to the figure, Schein (2009) identifies three levels of organisational culture: artefacts (visible elements) and espoused values, guiding philosophies, and underlying assumptions (invisible components). Indeed, *artefacts* are the manifestation of the phenomena that observers can see, feel or hear when they come across a group with a different culture to their own. This can include perceivable products such as the group’s physical environment, language, style of clothing, technology, and products, as well as observable rituals. The term *Artefacts* may also include the ‘climate’ of an organisation, which is a product of shared assumptions and observed behaviour. Schein (2009) exemplifies *artefacts* by talking about the Egyptian and Mayan pyramids which, although similar structures, nevertheless served very different purposes, the former as burial chambers and the latter temples and tombs. While *artefacts* may be easy to observe, they are not easy to decipher. Table 1 describes some of the perceptible and visible forms of *artefacts* that exist within organisations:

Table 1: Forms of artefacts within an organisation (Source: Dandridge et al., 1980; Shultz, 1995; Jones, 1996)

Category	Examples
Objects	Art/design/logo Architecture/décor/furnishings Dress/appearance/costume/uniform Products/equipment/tools Displays of posters/photos/memorabilia/cartoons Signage
Verbal expressions	Jargon/names/nicknames Explanations/theories Stories/myths/legends and their heroes and villains Superstitions/rumors Humor/jokes Metaphors/proverbs/slogans Speeches/rhetoric/oratory
Activities	Ceremonies/rituals/rites of passage Meetings/retreats/parties Communication patterns Traditions/customs/social routines Gestures Play/recreation/games Rewards/punishments

Basic assumptions can pervade the next level in Schein's framework, which is that of espoused beliefs and values. According to Schein (2009), these are the ideals, goals, values and aspirations held by group members. Such beliefs are also manifest in the ideology or philosophy of an organisational. While values may define what the organisation cares about, norms describe how group members must behave. At times, espoused values and beliefs may act as the desired behaviour rather than the observed behaviour. In this context, Schein (2004) gives the example of Hewlett-Packard, an organisation which 'espoused consensus management and teamwork' as a part of the 'HP Way'. However, it was found in the HP Computer Division that engineers had to demonstrate individual competitiveness and political nous in order to get ahead. Hence, Schein urges caution in analysing espoused beliefs and values by discriminating amongst those that are consistent with the unconscious

assumption shaping performance, part of the organisational ideology and philosophy, constitute rationalisations or consist of future aspirations.

The next level in Schein's framework, namely "basic underlying assumptions", define for its members the areas they need to pay attention to, the meaning of things, acceptable emotional responses to situations and what actions to take within them (Schein, 1985). Basic assumptions are derived from consensus reached as a result of realising repeated success from using and maintaining particular beliefs. For instance, within a group that gives primacy to individual rights, it would be inconceivable for any group member to contemplate suicide or other form of self-sacrifice to atone for dishonour brought upon the group. Similarly, in a capitalist company, a business organisation would never be designed to run at a loss or to produce products that do not work.

2.5.3 Cultural Dynamics Model (Hatch, 1993)

Hatch's Cultural Dynamics Model (1993) is built on Schein's theorisation of culture. The main value of this model is the specification of the dynamic of a cultural organisation; this value is specified through the form of process, i.e., *manifestation, realisation, symbolisation, and interpretation*' procedures that allow for an understanding of the cultural members' behaviours. For instance, the Hatch's model focuses on the *organising processes*, which connect assumptions, values and artefacts. As assumptions operate in an unconscious, subjective manner (Schein, 1985), they can be '*manifested*' through the values of an organisation. Thus, the process of '*manifestation*' represents the manner within which the cultural members are able to manifest values coming from unconscious, subjective assumptions.

The same approach can be taken to rationalising the process of ‘*realization*’ where, from values, it is possible to ‘*realise*’ an artefact; the artefact comes under the form of objects, verbal expressions, or activities. *Artefacts* produced in this way become symbols, i.e., tacit *sign* + *significant*, to which is accorded a meaning (‘*symbolisation*’ process). Lastly, the cultural members of an organisation can then interpret those symbols (‘*interpretation*’ process) that are characteristic of that cultural organisation and are explained in the same way by all the cultural members. Figure 3 illustrates the dynamics of organisational culture.

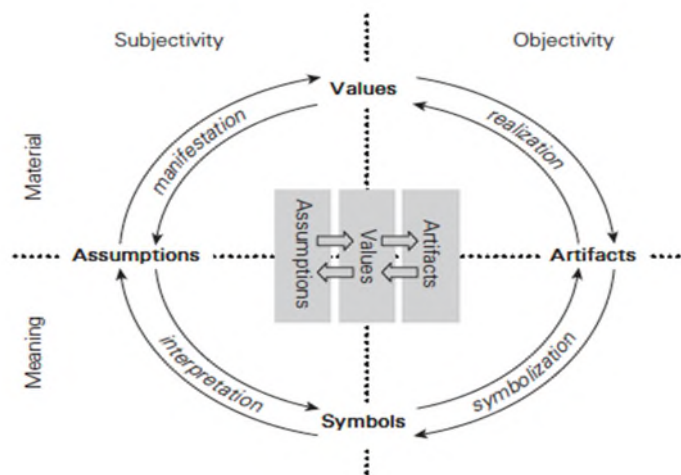


Figure 2: The dynamics of organisational culture (Source: Hatch, 1993)

The top half of the model demonstrates how culture takes material form in the artefacts, which have been created by behaviours imbued by more latent assumptions and values. In the bottom half of the model, cultural meaning-making changes artefacts into symbols that corroborate or challenge assumptions. It should be noted that the dotted line, which separates the right and left sides of the model, assigns artefacts to the domain of objectivity, and

assumptions to the domain of subjectivity. Symbols and values are placed between the domains, which show that they share properties from each domain.

Hatch illustrates these processes with the help of the following example. If an organisation works with the assumption that human beings are lazy, then laziness is likely to be considered negatively. This would then activate attempts to control employees' laziness (Value for Control), while suppressing the belief that employees can work without control and monitoring (Value of Autonomy). Hence, in line with the assumption that human beings are lazy, a parallel assumption would be that success depends on efforts made by employees. In such a case, while effort would be compatible with a Value for Autonomy, the laziness assumption would interfere and lead to the ascendancy of the Value for Control.

These values are then manifested in cultural artefacts through the process of realisation. Such artefacts can include time clocks, daily activity reports and easily visible offices. These artefacts are then available for symbolisation and interpretation. While the organisation might promote its open plan offices as participative, employees may come to see these and time clocks, as well as activity reports as indicators that they are not trusted by the management. Such feelings may lead to resentment and exclusion on the part of the employees and result in the production of symbols that would counter those of management. These symbols form the basis for the development of meaning and significance in daily organisational life. With time, the interaction of these four processes influences what people assume and value about their culture, thereby creating, stabilising and changing the artefacts and symbols that manifest its meaning.

In spite of the many advantages offered by the Hatch model, it is discarded here because it places too much emphasis on providing a better understanding

of the connections between Schein's identified domains and, to an extent, is limited by the high level of abstraction involved in the framework, which restricts the explanatory power of connectivity between organisational culture and structure, strategy and operations (Dauber et al. 2012).

2.5.4 The Competing Values Framework (CVF)

The Competing Value Framework (CVF), synthesised by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1981, 1983), pivots on a) whether the focus of the organisation is internal or external and b) whether the organisation is inclined towards flexibility and individuality as opposed to stability and control. At the convergence of both aspects, four kinds of organisational cultures are formed, namely adhocracy, clan, market and hierarchy. Based on an older model, which identified 39 factors of organisational effectiveness (Campbell, 1977), the CVF (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1981, 1983) has been able to identify a broad range of organisational phenomena including organisational design, quality, life cycle development stages, human resource managers' responsibilities and the effect of leadership and management skills.

Statistical analysis of the 39 factors conducted by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1981, 1983) led to the emergence of four key clusters which, in turn, identified three value dimensions: a) organisational focus, b) organisational structure and c) organisational means and ends. These dimensions represent values that influence the criteria used in the evaluation of organisational effectiveness. Every criterion in the structure of the effectiveness of an organisation reflects a varied combination of these values. Mixing the first two values (organisational focus and organisational structure) established four quadrants that showcase the most popular organisational effectiveness theoretical models: rational goal, internal process, human relations, and the

open systems model. Figure 4 illustrates the link between the values and effectiveness criteria.

	Flexibility	
	<u>Human Relations Model (Clan)</u>	<u>Open System Model (Adhocracy)</u>
	Means: Cohesion; morale Ends: Human resource development	Means: Flexibility; readiness Ends: Growth; resource acquisition
	Internal	External
	Means: Information management; communication Ends: Stability; control	Means: Planning; goal setting Ends: Productivity; efficiency
	<u>Internal Process Model (Hierarchy)</u>	<u>Rational Goal Model (Market)</u>
	Control	

Figure 3: The Competing Values Framework (Source: Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983)

The CVF is beneficial for examining and understanding the four types of organisational culture, namely: adhocracy, where the focus is on flexibility and readiness to initiate and respond to opportunities; clan, where there is high concern for people; hierarchy, where focus is on maintaining internal stability; and market, where focus is on responding to the external demands in terms of productivity and efficiency (Berrio, 2003).

2.5.5 The Cultural Web Model

The Cultural Web Model (Johnson and Scholes, 1992; Johnson et al., 2008) is a representation of the behavioural, symbolic and physical manifestations of a culture that are shaped by the tacit assumptions and beliefs (also called paradigms) held by the members of an organisation. Within this model, a paradigm consists of the purpose, mission and values of an organisation, what Johnson et al. (2008) refer to as the ‘collective experience’

of the organisation. Routines represent the way things are done in an organisation on a daily basis, whereas rituals reinforce what is valued in the organisation through, for instance, trainings, procedures or even more informal activities like socialising after work or casual chit chat around the photocopying machine. The stories are organisational narratives, which flag up the successes and failures of the organisation, as well as its heroes, villains and mavericks. Symbols are objects, events or acts that are imbued with a deeper meaning than the those on the surface, such as office layout, titles or even the form of language used in the organisation. The Cultural Web Model is illustrated in Figure 5.

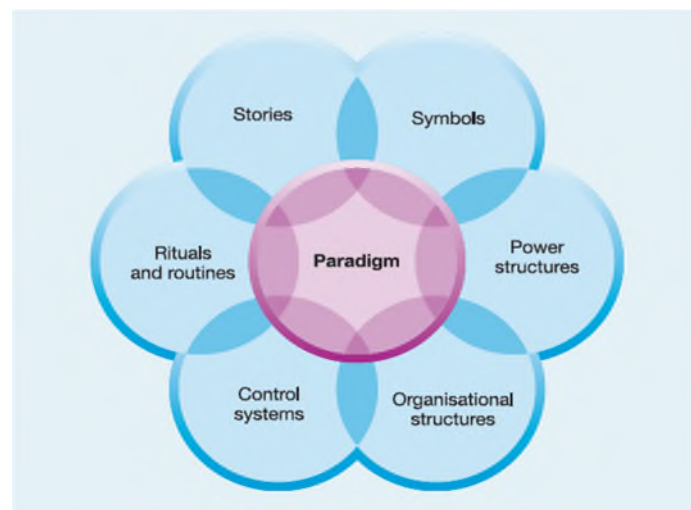


Figure 4: The Cultural Web Model (Source: Johnson et al., 2008)

Furthermore, power structures demonstrate how power is distributed throughout the organisation, as well as who is in charge decision-making. Organisational structures reflect hierarchies and define employee roles in the way the work is carried out; for instance, within hierarchical, mechanistic structures, strategy is the domain of managers and everyone else follows orders. Control systems consist of measurements and reward systems. In terms of measurement, public service organisations tend to be more focused on the

stewardship of funds rather than competitiveness, whereas, in terms of reward systems, individually based bonus schemes may show that the company values internal competition over teamwork.

The model has received some criticisms given that the identification of the culture characterising an organisation is not sufficient to obtain an in-depth understanding of the relationships and inner processes of the organisation; for instance, the influence of the culture in the quotidian actions of the members, their relationships, and their relation to the clients (Sun, 2008). Thus, even if the model portrays an important idea about the main components of the culture, it offers less of the relevant information required to implement changes in organisational culture.

2.6 Models summary

The next table (Table 2) shows the different organisational culture models, their similarities, and their differences.

Table 2: Models of organisational culture

Models of Organisational Culture	Definitions and Characteristics of Organisational Culture's Models	Similarities	Differences
Model of Organisational Culture Hofstede (1991; 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manifestation/reflect of the social norms and/or values of where the organisation is located. - Organisational culture manifestations serve different roles at both organisational and societal levels. - Focus on cultural values, but not on organisational practices. 		
Model of Organisational Culture (Schein, 1985)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consists fundamentally of a pattern of shared basic assumptions - Assumptions shape the thinking and acting manners of the cultural members - Assumptions operate unconsciously - Assumptions are difficult to identify and articulate. 	<p>Even if each model uses its own terminology to refer to its components/elements, it is possible to identify basic assumptions, such as beliefs, values, symbols, philosophy, and heroes. It is argued that all the models presented seem to share these elements</p>	<p>Different terminology is used by each model to refer to its components, processes and strategies</p> <p>Some models focus on the components of the cultural organisation, such as Hofstede's model, while others focused on the components and its relationships, such as Schein's model and Hatch's model</p>
Cultural Dynamics Model (Hatch, 1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Built on Schein's theorisation of culture. - Focuses on the <i>organising processes (manifestation, realization, symbolization, and interpretation)</i>, connecting assumptions, values and artefacts. 		

Models of Organisational Culture	Definitions and Characteristics of Organisational Culture's Models	Similarities	Differences
Competing Values Framework (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1981, 1983)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pivots on a) whether the focus of the organisation is internal or external and b) whether the organisation is inclined towards flexibility and individuality as opposed to stability and control. - Four kinds of organisational cultures are formed: adhocracy, clan, market and hierarchy. - Based on an older model, which identified 39 factors of organisational effectiveness (Campbell, 1977) - The CVF identified organisational phenomena: organisational design, quality, life cycle development stages, human resource managers' responsibilities, and the effect of leadership and management skills. - Identified three value dimensions: a) organisational focus, b) organisational structure, and c) organisational means and ends. 		
Cultural Web Model (Johnson and Scholes, 1992; Johnson et al., 2008)	Representation of the behavioural, symbolic and physical manifestations of a culture that are shaped by the tacit assumptions and beliefs (also called paradigms) held by organisation members		

As illustrated in Table 2, all included models demonstrate the main elements of Schein's three levels in one form or another. Indeed, in Johnson and Scholes' (1992) Cultural Web Model, Schein's invisible components constitute part of the paradigm, while the other seven elements – routines, rituals, stories, symbols, control systems, power structures, and organisational structure – are part of Schein's visible elements, the artefacts.

Hatch's Cultural Dynamics Models is also based on Schein's three levels, with symbolism being an additional element. Symbolism can, however, be viewed as an artefact since symbols are visible elements.

Concerning Quinn and Rohrbaugh's Competing Value Framework, the organisation gravitates towards Schein's invisible components of culture, assumptions and values idea, where the means and ends reflect Schein's visible elements. In this regard, the Competing Value Framework can be said to be underpinned by Schein's conceptualisation of organisational culture as emanating from a core of shared assumptions.

Hofstede's presentation of organisational culture as an onion ring – where values are represented in the inner most ring followed by rituals, heroes and symbols – presents a slight variation from Schein's ideas in that, for the latter, the core or base are shared assumptions. This notion notwithstanding, the models have commonalities in the level of shared values to Hofstede's rituals, heroes and symbols, which can be viewed as Schein's artefacts, the visible parts of culture. Hofstede et al.'s (1990) six dimensions framework of organisational cultures explicates an outcome of the "onion ring" process because what explains an organisation's orientation is found within its values and the orientation becomes part of the rituals and symbols.

Given that Schein's model's is at least partly portrayed, in some form, in the other models, it will guide this study's attempt to establish how organisational culture can be leveraged to support continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia's HEI.

2.7 Rationale for choosing the Schein model as Study conceptual framework

This study has examined the models of organisational culture offered in the literature. It seems evident that many components of the different models overlap – i.e., coincide among them – while other elements represent individual contributions of each model to the total comprehension of the concept of cultural organisation. It has also been noted that the Schein model (1985) reunites the aspects of coincidence in the presented models, as well as the individual contribution each makes. Indeed, by viewing the organisation as a purposive social ecosystem, this study has decided to adopt the model of culture proposed by Schein (1985). The model is both holistic and broad in its extent, considering many elements that compose the cultural organisation.

Our intention is to use the Schein model as a lens through which to view the cultural organisation of HEIs in Saudi Arabia, given that it is a particular cultural organisation that is characterised by the unique qualities of the Arabian culture. Indeed, Schein's 'tacit shared assumptions' concept is best positioned to deal with a strong culture, such as that of Saudi HEIs where, as a result of Islam, there are communally derived values and beliefs that, overtime, have become ingrained and unquestionable (Bamford et al., 2018). Lastly, it is believed that this model will help to obtain a better understanding of the Arabian cultural organisation in the selected Saudi Higher Education Institutions.

Studies have found Schein's model of organisational culture to be useful for considering innovation fostering processes (Hogon and Coote, 2014). Continuous improvement and innovation are related, as the former is, at times, classified as evolutionary innovation. It can, therefore, be expected that the Schein model provides a useful lens for understanding the nexus among organisational culture and continuous improvement because the latter can be

viewed as one of the visible elements of culture. In this sense, Ghinea and Brătianu (2012) mentioned that: “*Schein outlines the slow, but not inexistent, process of continuous transformation that this organisational culture undergoes*” (p.262). Indeed, among the visible elements, it is possible to infer continuous improvement with processes, strategies, goals, and practices, which are indeed, visible elements of a specific organisational culture, and that are particularly needed to achieve the desired improvement/innovation. Thus, Schein’s (2006) model views organisational culture at three levels: underlying assumptions, values and artefacts, which are considered to present a more comprehensive lens for understanding organisational culture.

Similarly, while it was noted that a number of instruments are used for measuring culture, Schein’s argument that such instruments do not measure culture, but rather reflect its “artefacts”, was found to be poignant. Therefore, from the review of the literature on culture, this study proposes to explore the organisational culture–continuous improvement relationship in Saudi Arabia’s HEIs through the application of Schein’s three levels of culture model. The next section defines continuous improvement, identifies and discusses its measurable dimensions and highlights its relationship with organisational culture.

2.8 Continuous Improvement (CI)

The history of continuous improvement can be traced back to the scientific management period of the 1800s and 1900s, through to the Total Quality Management (TQM) initiatives associated with Japan – in particular with Toyota, which incorporated it into its lean tools (Bhuiyan and Baghel, 2005; Liker and Morgan, 2006). Ehie and Sheu (2005) view CI as an umbrella term for techniques and tools, such as Kaizen, lean, six sigma and total quality management used to improve performance in manufacturing.

Bhuiyan and Baghel (2005 p.761) define CI as “a culture of sustained improvement targeting the elimination of waste in all systems and processes of an organisation.”. Sustained improvement is achieved in an evolutionary manner with minimum capital and involves everyone in the organisation. Notwithstanding their description of CI as evolutionary, Bhuiyan, and Baghel (2005) posit that it can also be transformational when innovation or new technology is involved.

An increase in global competition across almost all sectors has heightened the need for CI (Singh and Singh, 2015). Organisations develop their CI capabilities through continuously appraising past actions and achievements, current actions, and planned future activities with the intention of identifying areas in need of improvement (Almehareb and Graham-Jones, 2010; Schweitzer and Aurich, 2010). Therefore, CI includes all activities across the entire business network, such as processes, products and services, as illustrated in Figure 6 .

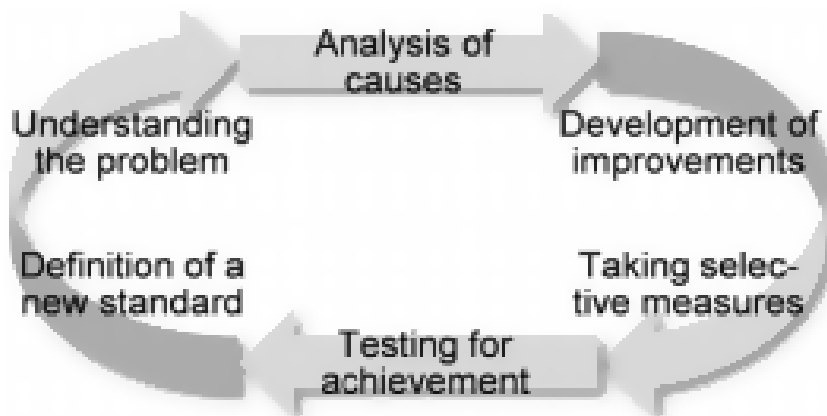


Figure 5: The continuous improvement process (Source: Schweitzer and Aurich, 2010)

The improvements can be characterised as incremental, implying occurrence over time or as breakthrough with changes occurring in a single instance (Little, 2014; Norman and Verganti, 2012). Whatever the nature of CI, at its broadest, it is about enhancing the chance of success and reducing those of failure (Juergensen, 2000; Baghel and Bhuiyan, 2005). With a view to highlighting the encompassing nature of CI, the Chartered Quality Institute (CQI) (2015) provides a concise and useful summary of continuous improvement, stating that it is:

...a type of change that is focused on increasing the effectiveness and/or efficiency of an organisation to fulfil its policy and objectives. It is not limited to quality initiatives. Improvement in business strategy, business results, customer, employee and supplier relationships can be subject to continual improvement. Put simply, it means getting better all the time.

Taking the definition offered by CQI which emphasises ‘continual improvement’ as a point of departure, it seems important to draw attention to prevalent CI models, tools and methods drawn from management research. These have been used extensively in educational contexts as well, although their efficacy has not gone unchallenged by those who believe that ‘academic culture is not receptive to TQM’. Indeed, Koch (2003) has mentioned that even if TQM has been useful in other contexts, in HEIs the TQM referred only to those non-academic aspects, such as registration or physical structure. However, TQM “*has ignored the most critical questions facing the academy such as faculty tenure, curriculum, tuition and fee levels vis-à-vis scholarship assistance...*” (Koch, 2003, p.325).

2.8.1 Continuous Improvement (CI) models

Several continuous improvement models have been applied in the industry sector and educators have tried to adopt them for educational purposes. Models relevant to this analysis include the Baldrige Quality Award Criteria (NIST, 2011; Thompson and Blazey, 2017), the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) (EFQM (2010), and Benchmarking. These models will be presented in the following sub-sections.

2.8.1.1 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA)

The MBNQA (NIST, 2011) is one of the main, universally adopted models offering continuous improvement enhancement. Its Performance Excellence Framework consists of two core components of “Process” and “Results”. Many organisations have relied on MBNQA criteria to evaluate their own standards. The model criteria and award were introduced by the US government in the late 1980s as a response to the growing concern of the poor quality of American-made goods. This model criterion is applicable to industries such as health and education. It has been described as a tool for ensuring that organisations adopt acceptable managerial practices (Goetsch and Davis, 2010).

The MBNQA was introduced to the education and health care sector in 1999 and, since then, more than 40 applications have been submitted in the education category and over 30 in the healthcare category. For educational institutions, the above criteria were contextualised to reflect the sector (Blazey et al., 2003). HEI-specific criteria include the following: having visionary leadership, a learning-centred education, learning at a personal and organisational level, valuing both academic and non-academic staff and other partners, being future focused, innovation enabling management, good

citizenship and public responsibility, generating value for students and other stakeholders, and focusing on results.

Similar to the MBNQA is the Michigan Quality Leadership Award (MQLA) (Special Tree ,2015). Both focus on capable leadership, strategic planning, focusing on customers and the market, knowledge management and analysis, having supportive human resources management practices, management of the process, and business results (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2015; Special Tree 2015). Baldrige and the MQLA criteria incorporate organisation-wide best practice concepts and a continuous improvement cycle. The 2015 Baldrige criteria for HEIs consider a well-executed approach to personal and organisational learning as essential for achieving superior organisational performance (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2015).

Although, the award has received criticism for being an award which can be bought, the judgement system is such that it requires site inspections and employee interviews spread over multiple days. This allows the judges to uncover the truth about an organisation (Goetsch and Davis, 2010). Among the traits valued by the Malcolm Baldrige awards are systematic leadership, focus, transformation of the organisational culture, training, and an understanding and integration of systems and processes as they are interlinked (Wagner, 2015).

2.8.1.2 European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)

The EFQM model was created by The European Foundation for Quality Management as a non-perspective framework, which acknowledges that excellence could be obtained sustainably via the application of various methods (Calvo-Mora et al., 2005). It posits that customer's and employees'

satisfaction and impact on society are reached via leadership, which sets and motivates organisational strategies and the management of resources and processes as illustrated in Figure 7. It is similar to the MBNQA in respect to containing two main components, “Enablers” and “Results”. The “Enablers” are leadership, human resources (people), strategy, partnerships, resources, processes, and products and services. The four sets of “Results” are human resources (people), customers, society at large, and business results. The model can be applied in various types of organisations (Citti et al. 2011). The EFQM model considers institutional learning processes to be helpful in improving performance and driving future development. Better management practices based on a clear vision, a service-orientation, well-articulated strategies and an appropriate culture stimulated by effective leadership are associated with better performance.

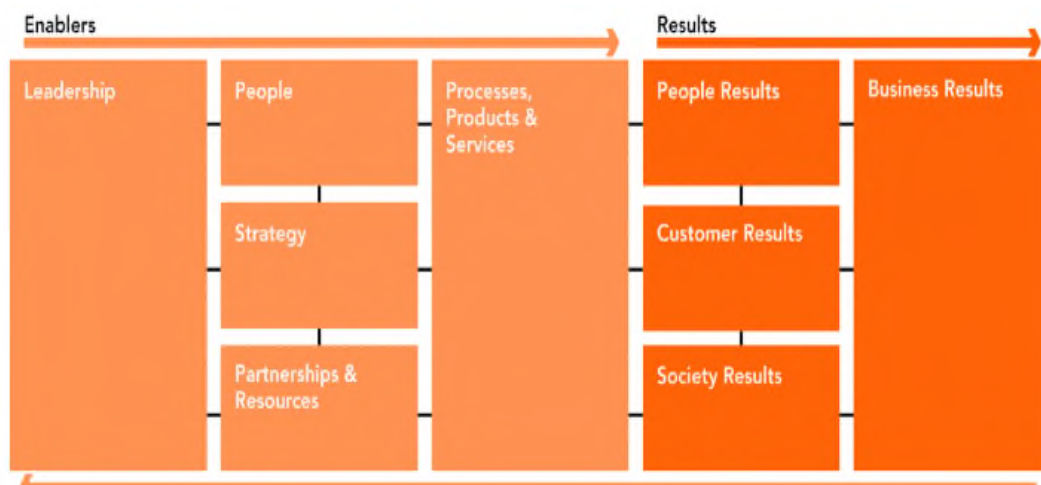


Figure 6: The EFQM Excellence Model (Source: EFQM, 2010)

The strong connection between the EFQM Excellence Model and industry has resulted in its limited acceptance within HEIs (Amaral and Rosa, 2007). This notwithstanding, increasing concerns over quality, a need for accountability and external market forces affecting the higher education sector have

heightened demand for quality assessment in all sectors of higher education (Cartmell et al., 2013). It is within this context that some HEIs have already begun to consider the adoption of the EFQM Excellence model (Farrar 2000; Saraiva et al., 2003; Citti et al., 2011). The model's offer of a distinctive structure that organisations can use and its encouragement and continuation of an improvement system has been appealing (Citti et al., 2011).

Another limitation of EFQM is that it presupposes that organisations have capable leadership mandated to set and motivate organisational strategies. However, this is not always the case. Further, it assumes the existence of a specific type of organisational culture but ignores how such a culture would be applicable in cultural contexts that are different from Western contexts.

2.8.1.3 Benchmarking

Benchmarking is “*the process of comparing and measuring an organisation's operations or its internal processes against those of a best-in-class performer from inside or outside its industry*” (Goetsch and Davis, 1997, p. 434). The process involves four steps: planning, research, analysis and adaptation of findings (Alstete, 1995) – as illustrated in Figure 8.

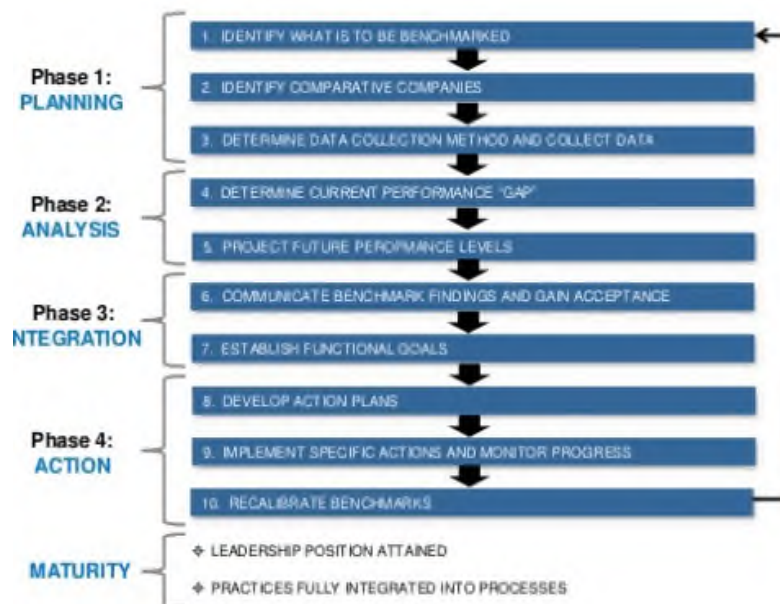


Figure 7: The benchmarking process (Source: OEC, 2011)

A basic step in benchmarking is making comparisons with institutions that are considered to be first-rate. On the surface, this model seems to offer more comfort for educational institution looking for continuous improvement than the other, more business-oriented models (Alstete, 1995). However, such a view seems to discount the possible implications of cultural differences between first-rated institutions and those seeking improvement. For the purposes of this study, it lacks specific aspects that could link to culture elements. It is, therefore, more of a CI methodology that can be used within any of the discussed models.

Out of the discussed models of CI, the one found appropriate for providing sensitising concepts on how organisational culture can be leveraged to enhance CI within Saudi Arabian HEIs is the EFQM model because it presents a systematic and clear approach to analysing aspects of continuous improvement. Further, it incorporates elements from the other two, equally compelling models (MBNQA and MQLA). The EFQM has also been

previously used in studies specific to HE sectors (Pupius and Brusoni 2000; Pupius and Steed, 2003) in part because its enabler criteria are particularly related to HE sectors, as is illustrated in Table 3. Although, ordinarily, the use of detailed literature reviews and existing models is discouraged in Grounded Theory based studies (Glaser, 1998), in this instance, it has enabled the researcher to contextualise the research and to be sensitive to the main concepts that will provide theoretical sensitivity during the research process (Dunne, 2011).

Table 3: Enabler criteria and applicability to HEI (Source: derived from Pupius and Steed, 2003; Ferreira, 2003)

Enabler Criteria	Applicability to HEI
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Espousing the institution’s vision, mission, and values • Understanding the needs of students, academics and other stakeholder needs • Building valuable partnerships
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Planning • Motivation and commitment building • Communication • Development • Continuous learning • Performance Appraisal
Policy and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy aligned policies • Faculty plans • Objectives and processes • Benchmarking • Stakeholder input • Surveys and forecasts
Partnerships and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing current and future needs • Collaboration with partner organisations • Facilities and equipment – library, ICT • Buildings • Intellectual property

Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration • Teaching and learning • Support services • Quality systems • Standards • Benchmarking • Re-engineering processes • Continuous improvement
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The EFQM model presents the process of continuous improvement and leadership's role in it as two of the prerequisites for achieving quality excellence. Leadership serves to articulate the vision, values and mission of an organisation and ensures that, through its structures, it is configured to facilitate the building of a quality enabling environment.

Quality management models use various CI methodologies to achieve improvements. Bhuiyan and Baghel (2005) identify lean manufacturing, six sigma, the balanced scorecard, and lean six sigma as some of the methodologies used to achieve CI. Näslund (2008) classifies the same as methods. Consistent with a number of studies (Salah, Rahim and Carretero, 2010) in this review, they are referred to as methodologies. The next section discusses methodologies that have been found to be relevant to the higher education sector in particular.

2.8.2 Continuous Improvement methodologies

Since the 1800s, attention has been focused on a more organised and structured manner of management. Constant improvement strategies and production problem solving initiatives were two aspects that ensured effective manufacturing processes and employee-driven improvements. Likewise, employees' collaboration with the company's improvements were rewarded,

promoting in this way the close participation of personnel with the company's development. The goal was to enhance production and reach labour standards without new capital inversions (Bhuiyan and Baghe, 2005).

It could be argued that the models mentioned above, Baldrige and EFQM, are indeed CI methodologies. However, it should be noted that a methodology is merely a group of methods/actions that are followed in order to achieve a goal. Meanwhile, a model such as the EFQM is a representation of the desired social reality in a particular organisation (Mattessich, 2003). A model presents a philosophical background (excellence in the production and client satisfaction warrants), a model definition/concepts, a specific management-employees' dynamic, and an organisational climate. A model offers a vision, a point of view or perspective about the corporate environment, while the method/methodologies provide a way to do, to go directly to the practice of such theories in order to act and reach their objectives.

A number of CI methodologies were developed in response to the need for larger scale continuous improvement in organisations (Bhuiyan and Baghel, 2005). The methodologies are premised on quality and or process improvement in order to minimise wastage, simplify the production line and enhance quality. During WWII, programs were designed to improve industrial production by strengthening the relations among management and employees. In this way, constant improvement initiatives had been made, some by the US government and others by Japanese management, which had their own ideas about control manufacturing processes and quality control (Bhuiyan and Baghel, 2005). More recently, these authors pointed out the following:

While CI initiatives in the past reflected the use of various principles related to work improvement, modern day CI is associated with organized and comprehensive methodologies. These CI programs, in which typically the

overall organisation, or a large part of it, is involved in change, are also more popularly associated with the introduction of the TQM movement... (p.762)

This discussion focuses on methods that have increasingly been used in the HE sector, namely Six Sigma (Antony et al., 2012) Lean Manufacturing (Douglas, Antony and Douglas, 2015); and Lean Six Sigma (Svensson et al., 2015; O' Reilly et al., 2017).

2.8.2.1 Lean Manufacturing

The origins of Lean Manufacturing (LM) can be traced back to post-World War II, and the Japanese motor industry's response to lack of capital to reconstruct destroyed industries (Bhamu and Sangwan, 2014).

Nonetheless, it should be noted that LM is both a philosophy and a practice. Indeed, LM is a philosophy in terms of being a way of thinking that provides guiding principles and rules, but is also a practice in that it represents a set of management practices and tools (Bhamu and Sangwan, 2014).

Authors such as Bhamu and Sangwan (2014) have considered LM as a system of methods that aim to be responsive to customers by reducing waste through eliminating all activities that add no value. Such a method leads to faster and less expansive processes, and to organisations being more efficient, flexible, and able to meet their customer's needs, as was supported by Tague (1995) and Shah & Ward (2003). Equally, Womack and Jones (1996) describe LM as an "antidote" to waste.

The goal of lean thinking is to meet customer demands through producing quality products with maximum efficiency and economy. It helps avoid the making of mistakes in the organisation because such errors in themselves are

treated as a form of waste, the elimination of which is actively pursued in lean implementation (Robinson, 1990). In short, LM can be considered as a set of methods in which the main goal is to satisfy the clients' needs while producing the least possible amount of waste.

Initially associated with manufacturing, use of LM has spread to the services sectors such as healthcare (D'Andreamatteo et al, 2015; Weiss et al, 2017; Khorasani, Cross and Maghazei, 2019), the public sector (Teeuwen, 2018), software companies (Narayanamurthy, Gurumurthy and Balagangatharan, 2019; Steele, Martinez, Bell and Smith, 2019) and education (Narayanamurthy, Gurumurthy and Chockalingam, 2017).

Although a widely accepted practice, it has been observed that LM needs multiple factors to be executed before it can be implemented successfully, among which are the need to change an organisation's culture and implement it consistently throughout the organisation (Bhasin and Burcher, 2006). This suggests that lean implementation may require a complete overhaul of the organisation because piecemeal implementation based on short-term focus may not be sustainable.

In the same way and with specific reference to the services sector, Gupta, Sharma and Sunder (2016) observed that successful implementation required organisational practices that respected both people and employment, and where employees were actively engaged. Again, emphasising that LM touches multiple parts of an organisation, Gupta, Sharma and Sunder (2016) highlighted the need to standardise principles, tools, and definitions, and to draw up clear implementation guidelines. It is apparent that, as per Bhasin and Burcher's (2006) observation, lean requires a long-term focus backed by the adoption of changes in both technical and cultural practices.

2.8.2.2 Six Sigma

Six Sigma originated in manufacturing and is specifically associated with Motorola, which employed the technique to revolutionise its quality management systems in the 1980s (Akpolat, 2017). Six sigma aims to reduce the number of defects in a process by eliminating possible causes before defects occur. This is achieved through the use of systematic statistical and mathematical tools and a clear methodology (Raisinghani et al., 2005).

The main features of Six Sigma include a reliance on data and statistical analysis with the goal of decreasing the likelihood of mistakes to approximately three in a million opportunities (Webber and Wallace, 2011). It is a systematic organisation-wide method used to enable companies to accomplish continuous breakthrough developments in their daily operations, resulting in positive outcomes (Gamal Aboelimged, 2010).

Antony (2006) classifies Six Sigma as a business strategy for achieving excellence, while Aslinger (2014) describes it as an organisation's structure for CI which, thus, illustrates its organisation-wide applicability. Hence, its success has been associated with fundamental changes to an organisation's culture.

It should be noted that important factors identified as prerequisites for the successful implementation of Six Sigma include the involvement and commitment of management, provision of appropriate training and education, changing the organisational culture, linking its success to financial benefits, rigorous use of statistical tools, and linking it to the organisation's strategy (Ismyrlis and Moschidis, 2013).

Like Lean, although Six Sigma was initially associated with the manufacturing sector, its use has spread to the services sector (Patel, 2017) such as the health industry (Antony et al., 2018; Sabry, 2014), financial services (Antony, 2015),

and education (Navas, Akash, Sathish and Azharudeen, 2016; Aldaihani, Alhussainan and Terro, 2017). Further, Lean and Six Sigma have been used in combination as a way of taking advantage of their complementarity.

2.8.2.3 Lean Six Sigma – integrated CI methods

Lean Six Sigma resulted from the combination of features of Six Sigma and Lean Manufacturing, namely the focus under Six Sigma on data and statistical analysis (Webber and Wallace, 2011) so as to eliminate mistakes, and the focus under Lean Manufacturing on waste elimination (Basu, 2009). Lean Six Sigma, therefore, is an integrated CI method focused on both measurement and the elimination of waste. According to Pepper and Spedding (2010) and Salah et al. (2010), Six Sigma provides the tools and technical knowledge on handling problems identified within the Lean process.

Over time, Lean Six Sigma has resulted in a number of CI methods (Pirasteh and Kannappan, 2013; Salah et al. 2010; Pepper and Spedding, 2010) some of which have been adopted within HEIs (Antony et al., 2012). Kumar et al. (2006 cited in Pepper and Spedding, 2010) developed a Lean Six Sigma framework for use in Indian SMEs. In their key findings there was a noticeable absence of: a) a standard framework for Lean Six Sigma, b) an understanding of the usage of tools within the framework, and c) a clear preferred strategy during the early stages of implementation. Pepper and Spedding (2010) suggest that Lean thinking must underpin the framework. This implies that Lean thinking must be part of the shared assumptions and values of an organisation. This is possible, given that Lean has been credited with empowering and educating everyone within an organisation to identify and eliminate non-value-adding activities (Pepper and Spedding, 2010 citing Higgins, 2005). The observed absence of a standard framework suggests that

the implementation of LSS is context specific, which will be discussed in more detail below.

2.8.2.4 Lean Six Sigma in the context of HEIs

A number of studies have focused on the application of Lean Six Sigma to HEIs. Indeed, authors such as Antony et al. (2012) have investigated the use of Lean Six sigma in HEIs and identified challenges and obstacles that need to be dealt with when introducing Lean Six Sigma within the sector; the same study identifies facilitative tools, techniques and factors. Identified challenges include: uneasiness with the terminologies, tools and techniques used in the manufacturing industry; seeking to improve specific processes to the exclusion of the rest of the system; a general lack of awareness of the benefits of implementation, which results in a lack of senior management support; a perception that the process is a “quick” fix; a lack of process thinking and visionary leadership and a lack of an open and trusting culture; limited understanding of customer’s needs; a lack of communication both within and across organisational levels, resulting in a “silos” culture where subunits operate in isolation; limited resources such as budgetary constraints; and an absence of or weak alignment between the organisation’s strategic plan and CI projects.

Antony et al. (2012) identified critical success factors for Lean Six Sigma within HEIs as: the availability of top management support and commitment, effective communication across all levels of the organisation both horizontally and vertically, leadership that is both visionary and strategic, fostering organisational readiness, having the resources and skills to enable implementation, and a supportive organisational culture. The latter involves combining changes to the way work gets done with matching changes in processes, as well as teaching people the new processes and new ways of

solving problems (Antony et al., 2012). Organisational culture is affected by the organisation leaders' behaviour and outlook. Where CI is concerned, what leaders focus on in terms of what is critical to quality and the measurements thereof, is what eventually makes the culture of a business change (Ionescu, 2014). Organisational culture within HEIs focuses on providing students and other stakeholders, both internal and external to the organisation, with a world class experience (Antony et al., 2012).

Likewise, Hess and Benjamin (2015) reviewed the development of Lean Six Sigma with the intention of identifying opportunities for applying it within universities. They concluded that Lean Six Sigma could be used to aid process enhancements in the delivery of a curriculum and in administrative activities resulting in noteworthy process improvements and cultural changes. They noted the existence of hurdles to the implementation of Lean Six Sigma within HEIs but maintained that the resultant benefits from improvements in both processes and culture made it worthwhile. Lastly, in their conclusion, Hess and Benjamin (2015) note that LSS can lead to a change in organisational culture, which suggests that, although CI as part of LSS needs an enabling OC, it nevertheless influences the culture to change. It should be noted that, although Hess and Benjamin (2015) provide pointers on the application of Lean Six Sigma in HEIs, their study is not backed by any empirical evidence and, to that end, leaves room for further studies to apply practical testing to their observations. Of particular interest is the possibility of observing of the interaction between LSS and culture because both are an enabler and a direct result of the implementation of LSS.

Meanwhile, Lu, Laux and Antony (2017) evaluated whether a leadership model based on Lean Six Sigma could be used to address issues of efficiency and effectiveness in HEIs. Based on a systematic review of extant literature they developed a theoretical model of an LSS leadership framework that can be utilised and which provides a basis for testing of LSS leadership

representations in HEIs. The results outline the characteristics of LSS leadership that could be adopted by HEIs. The framework hinges on leadership, thinking statistically, continuous change and continuous improvement. Lu et al. (2017) highlight aspects of LSS that, although applicable in the manufacturing sector, do not apply in HEIs. There are differences in, for example, leadership structures, incentive schemes, and performance measurement systems which present context-specific hurdles for the adoption of LSS by HEIs. These disparities point to the need for the context-specific implementation of LSS in HEIs.

In systematic reviews of the literature on LSS in higher education, Balzer, Francis, Krehbiel and Shea (2016), and Cudney et al. (2018), have observed that both Lean and Six Sigma approaches could be used to enhance the academic and administrative operations of HEIs. Balzer et al. (2016) posit that extant literature has provided the groundwork for developing conceptual frameworks on the implementation of LSS within HEIs which recognise the long-term strategic thinking required by the undertaking. Additionally, Cudney et al. (2018) highlighted how extensive research is needed to achieve a deeper understanding of the application and benefits of Lean Six Sigma and the attendant challenges for HEIs.

Nadeau (2017) conducted a literature-based review of experiences of Lean Manufacturing, Six Sigma and LSS in HEIs around the world. They observed that universities are complex and therefore present difficulties for the interpretation of some manufacturing-derived notions, such as what or who is the client, the meaning of added value and what the connection is between teaching and research. Given the complexity of HEIs, the difficulty of assimilating the technology, critical issue factors, and hurdles to implementation, it can be said that the implementation of this approach poses a significant challenge. Nonetheless, the possibility of understanding and

improving the dynamic of the cultural organisation of HEIs is of greater significance than the impediments that are hitherto identified.

In this vein, Simons (2013) puts forward a business case for the implementation of LSS in HEIs and argues that it would have the following benefits: enabling institutions to meet accreditation requirements, providing a template for solving problems, promoting total involvement, helping to the establish measures, making processes visible, obtaining the views of all stakeholders (both internal and external), and identifying and reducing hidden costs. Consistent with some of the benefits highlighted by Simon (2013), Haerizadeh and Sunder (2019), in a study based in Iran, confirmed the applicability of the LSS framework of “*define-measure-analyze-improve-control*” (p.983) in CI within a HEI setting. With specific reference to Saudi Arabia, Svensson et al. (2015) investigated the implementation of Lean Six Sigma at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST). They found that, throughout the execution or projects and training programs, improvements in efficiency had been realised.

The literature, therefore, indicates that, while studies have been conducted at a theoretical level, there is a dearth of application-based knowledge on the implementation of LSS in HEIs. Further, they demonstrate that, at the implementation level, there are HEI-specific complexities that need to be addressed. This is because of differences not just in the concepts themselves, such as customers, value added and the relationship between research and teaching (Nadeau, 2017), but also because the organisational cultures of HEIs are different from those found in the manufacturing sector, from where CI concepts are derived (Lu et al. 2017).

The above notwithstanding, organisations in all sectors experience problems with sustaining their CI initiatives (Trenkner, 2019). This is a problematic situation given that CI is not a one-off occurrence but rather is an ongoing,

long-term process of learning. In this regard, there are contexts or aspects that enable CI and some that inhibit it, regardless of the model or methodology used. The following section presents the various aspects that either enable or inhibit CI.

2.9 Enablers of CI

Based on a review of extant literature, García-Sabater et al. (2012) identified enablers of CI as the following: management strategy and involvement, leadership, objectives setting and measurement, the involvement of workers, allocating requisite resources, putting in place appropriate new structures, adopting methods for expanding CI, selecting CI projects, and relevant training and culture. The enablers identified by these authors have also been confirmed by other studies. For instance, in a study focusing on the transport, freight forwarding and logistics sector, Trenkner (2019) identified enablers of CI as organisational culture, organisational leadership, employee engagement and effective communication. Similarly, Dennis (2003) outlines the enablers of CI and strong leadership and support from management, as well as proof of commitment in the form of regular involvement of management with factory floor workers, the implementation of formal policy, adherence to quality standards such as the ISO, appropriate maintenance, and an effective organisational structure.

In an investigation of possible threats to CI in a manufacturing setting, Gamme and Lodgaard (2019) identified the enablers of CI as: having a clear definition of the product and the process in line with customer's requirements, having precise measurement mechanism, the ability to identify the origins of non-conformance, and knowing that the non-conformance can be eliminated. Sanchez-Ruiz, Blanco and Gómez-López (2019) posit that the enablers of CI do not work in a singular manner but rather as a group so that they are best

approached holistically. Based on expert knowledge, they identified key the enablers of CI as the development of clear objectives, appropriate training, the recognition of achievements, providing motivation, and deriving lessons from the process. In a study based in a services organisation, Koval et al. (2019) concluded that rewarding and recognising employees, having a quality culture, and setting positive goals and employee training affected the relationship between CI and cost reduction.

Focusing on Six Sigma, Antony and Banuelas (2002) identified the following as key enablers: the involvement of management and its commitment, changing culture, the organisation's infrastructure, staff training, skills in management, prioritising and selecting improvement projects, and employee involvement coupled with performance evaluations based on criteria that enhance quality in the company. Ismyrlis and Moschidis (2013) added to Banuela's (2002) list of enablers with linking the success of CI to financial benefits and to organisational strategy as a whole, as well as the rigorous use of statistical tools. In a study based on a university in Ireland, O'Reilly, Healy, Murphy and O'Dubhghaill (2017) identified the availability of LSS expertise in-house at inception; access to external expertise when needed; building capacity through training; the integration of training and projects into plans and operations; the cascading of the strategic plan; adequate resourcing and active unit level leadership as critical for successful implementation. The areas highlighted by O'Reilly et al. (2017) are consistent with the enablers of EFQM models.

Antony (2014) identified the factors required for the successful implementation of LSS (and therefore CIs) in HEIs as employees, leadership, management and culture. The employees' factors related to their being intrinsically motivated to achieve the vision, mission and goals of the improvements being introduced and having a positive attitude toward them. At a leadership level, the organisation has to be willing to take appropriate risks

with leaders prioritising LSS as part of their CI strategy, creating an environment that nurtures change, communicating to employees the reasons for change and the related challenges, recognising both minor and major employee change-related achievements, and providing adequate resources. The management factor concerns senior executives understanding the critical business processes and associated metrics; making decisions based on facts; documenting key business processes and making accountabilities clearly defined and communicated; making LSS goals measurable, relevant and aligned with corporate goals. Another key management factor is ensuring the organisation has relevant process performance metrics that are understood and used by all employees. The culture factor relates to the organisation having a culture that includes the collection of relevant, process performance driving data, assigns the most talented people to strategic projects that deliver measurable and quantifiable critical results, and makes champions responsible for project review, as well as ensures their alignment with strategic goals. A summary of enablers and inhibitors is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Summarising enablers

Authority	Enablers
Antony and Banuelas (2002)	Involvement and commitment of management, changing culture, organisational infrastructure, staff training, project management, prioritisation, selection skills
García-Sabater et al. (2012)	Management strategy and involvement, leadership, objectives setting and measurement, worker involvement, allocating requisite resources, installing appropriate new structures, adopting methods for expanding CI, selecting CI projects, relevant training and culture

Authority	Enablers
Ismyrlis and Moschidis (2013)	Involvement and commitment of management, provision of appropriate training and education, changing the organisational culture, linking the success of CI to financial benefits, linking CI to organisational strategy, rigorous use of statistical tools
Antony (2014)	Employees, leadership, management, culture
O'Reilly, Healy, Murphy and O'Dubhghaill (2017)	In-house availability of LSS expertise, access to external expertise, building capacity through training, integration of training and projects into plans and operations, cascading the strategic plan, adequate resourcing, active unit level leadership
García- Sabater et al. (2012)	Management strategy and involvement, leadership, objectives setting and measurement, worker involvement, allocating requisite resources, installing appropriate new structures, adopting methods for expanding CI, selecting CI projects, relevant training and culture
Trenkner (2019)	Organisational culture, organisational leadership, employee engagement, communicating effectively
Gamme and Lodgaard (2019)	Clear definition of the product and the process in line with customer requirements, precise measurement mechanism, identifying the origins of non-conformance, knowing that non-conformance can be eliminated
Sánchez-Ruiz, Blanco and Gómez-López (2019)	Developing clear objectives, training, recognising achievements, motivation and learning from the process
Koval et al. (2019)	Rewarding and recognising employees, having a quality culture, setting goals and employee training

2.10 Inhibitors of CI

In a review of the Australian manufacturing industry, Dennis (2003) found that a lack of leadership and management support along with a focus on price over long term value are inhibitors of continuous improvement. Allocating limited resources to continuous improvement, and a lack of investment in improvement-related training also served to impede the process of improvement (Dennis, 2003). Equally, Wu and Chen (2006) have identified negligent worker participation as among the inhibitors of CI.

On the subject of training, Anand et al. (2009) posit that training people in new process improvement methods is not in itself sufficient if it is not coupled with CI maintenance mechanisms that apply to all the elements of CI infrastructure which, drawing from the EFQM Excellence Model, would encompass leadership as the driver and people, strategy, partnerships, resources, processes, products and services operating in an appropriate culture. Such a situation may be indicative of a lack of coordination. It has been observed that where CI initiatives have neither coordination nor organisation-wide support, they eventually become ineffective because they lose traction (Anand et al. 2009 citing Choo et al., 2007; Wruck and Jensen, 1998).

With reference to Six Sigma, inhibitors of quality culture include: challenges faced in collecting data (given the fact that the process is driven by data); difficulty in conducting processes, especially if they interfered with the current processes of the business; a lack of information regarding previous processes; difficulty changing the control process of the company (Martins, Mergulao and Junior, 2006). In addition, other inhibitors to Six Sigma were identified by Assarlind and Aaboen (2014) as misdirected management behaviour adding to employee confusion, a lack of knowledge on how to communicate ideas to management, and a lack of motivation and direction among employees.

With specific reference to HEIs, some studies identified impediments to continuous improvement as: an absence of administrative support, which indicates a lack of leadership support; resistance from academic staff; a lack of linkage with a reward systems; failure to adequately define customers and quality; the employment of individual-based work when continuous improvement prefers team-based work; inadequate or an absence of data collection mechanisms; the culture within the HEI, which is distinctly different from that in business where quality criteria are usually used (Temponi, 2005). A summary of inhibitors is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of inhibitors

Authority	Inhibitors
Temponi (2005)	Culture of academic institutions that does not lend itself to some CI enablers, absence of administrative support, lack of leadership support, resistance from academic staff, lack of linkage with reward systems, failure to adequately define customers, failure to define quality, individual instead of team-based work, lack of comprehensive data collection mechanisms
Thalner (2005)	Absence of administrative and leadership support, resistance, no linkage with rewards, failure to define customers and quality, individual-based work, inadequate data collection mechanisms, culture
Martins, Mergulao and Junior (2006)	Data collection challenges, difficulty in conducting processes, lack of information on old processes, difficulty in changing the control process
Wu and Chen (2006)	Minimum worker participation
Anand et al. (2009)	Lack of coordination and organisation-wide support
García-Sabater et al. (2012)	Lack of strategy, insufficient focus on improvement in favour of immediately pressing problems

Assarlind and Aaboen (2014)	Misdirected management behaviour, lack of knowledge, lack of employee motivation
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What is clear from these summaries is that inhibitors are not necessarily the verso of enablers. It is also apparant that, among both quality criteria and methodologies of CI, leadership, an enabling organisation culture, strategy, and organisation-wide changes are the most widely cited as necessary elements for continuous improvement. Leadership is responsible for an organisation's culture through its articulation of an organisation's vision and values (Jaakson, 2010; Mohelska and Sokolova, 2015). Leadership is also responsible for organisational alignment in terms of the strategy and the rest of the organisation, including ensuring an enabling culture derived from shared assumptions, espoused values and stated goals. Some have defined CI as an expression of an organisation's culture or as a reflection of that culture or as both. Viewing it as both would be consistent with Hess and Benjamin's (2015) observation that the implementation of Lean Six Sigma resulted in noteworthy cultural changes. Yet, others have posited that an organisation's leadership is responsible for creating an enabling environment (Uhl-Bien and Arena, 2018), which is its culture as seen through the organisational artefacts and as is grounded in shared assumptions and values relating to, among other things, the need for continuous improvement. This seems to suggests that CI is an artefact or reflection of an organisation's values and shared assumptions. If this is the case, with specific reference to Saudi Arabia, where, as already discussed, culture is distinctly different from that in the west where the CI philosophies originate, how aspects of an HEI's organisational culture affect or are themselves affected by CI may differ.

The following section discusses the relationship between CI and organisational culture, focusing on enablers and impediments to CI. In doing

so, among the discussed methodologies of CI, Lean Six Sigma has been found most appealing for the purpose of exploring the Saudi Arabian context. Its usability has been confirmed by other studies (Hess and Benjamin (2015), for example, Haerizadeh and Sunder (2019) regarding its applicability to the Iraqi education system.

The implications of implementing Six Sigma in other cultures has been studied by Pisani et al. (2009), where the national cultural dimensions, as developed by Hofstede, have been used in order to understand the wider implications for Six sigma adoption in this context. Their results suggest that, since Six Sigma has been developed in the USA where there is low power distance, individuality, masculinity, low uncertainty avoidance and short-term orientation, the first phase of defining a problem in the country is carried out by employees involved in the process. However, in cultures with high power distance, higher level managers define the problems and how they have to be resolved. Six Sigma, however, works best in a culture where employees at the floor are able to identify issues that can be resolved in order to reduce defects (Cacciattolo, 2014). The adoption of a Six Sigma management program has been found to create a culture of quality in an organisation (Davison and Al-Shaghana, 2007).

From the reviewed literature, it is apparent that CI has been regarded as a culture that requires the presence of an enabling organisational culture to flourish. Popularised CI methodologies originate predominantly from Western culture. Given the peculiarities of the Saudi culture, the following chapter discusses the extant literature on CI within the Saudi Arabian cultural context.

2.11 Chapter conclusion

This chapter reviewed pertinent literature regarding organisational culture and its role in the adoption of continuous improvement. Multiple definitions of culture were discussed together with models that have been used to try and understand it. Hofstede's (2010) metaphor views culture as an onion that can be peeled, from the visible observable artefacts to the uncovered invisible components, which are the assumptions and values. It was found to link with Schein's (2010) portrayal of culture as existing at three levels, the base being shared assumptions, followed by espoused vision, values and goals in the middle and the visible components, the artefacts, at the apex.

It was established that aspects of culture are influenced by, among other things, leadership practices within an organisation, including those relating to CI. In looking at CI, the chapter discussed Lean, Six Sigma, and the integrated LSS approaches to continuous improvement, with the aim of understanding their contribution to the identification of CI enablers and inhibitors. The use of LSS was found to have spread from the manufacturing sector to HEIs. It was, however, noted that most of the studies focused on reviewing existing literature and coming up with theoretical models for the implementation of LSS. Limited studies were found to focus on collecting data to come up with primary data-driven models to explicate the successful implementation of CI within HEIs.

Viewing CI as a component of quality management, it was proposed that the EFQM Excellence model, with its emphasis on leadership as a major enabler of quality excellence results, be combined with the LSS methodology of CI and Schein's conceptualisation of organisational culture to provide a lens for investigating how organisational culture can be leveraged to enhance CI in the Saudi HEIs. The next chapter presents the Saudi reality concerning HEIs as

organisations where the Islamic culture influences the national Saudi culture and, therefore, the HEIs' continuous improvement enablers and inhibitors.

CHAPTER THREE: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA'S HIGH EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the reality of HEIs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as educational organisations influenced by the national culture. The features of the country will be presented as background knowledge to inform the reader about the environment of the region, its culture, and customs. The Islamic culture and its role in the national culture and daily life of the Saudis will be also exposed to explain the extent of its influence. Finally, the CI developments and former implementations in Saudi HEIs will also be presented.

3.2 A regional/ethnic/religious level: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

As reported by the The World Factbook, Saudi Arabia is among the major countries in the Arab world because of its size, which is 2,149,690km², representing twice the size of France and Germany combined (see Figure 9). It is the custodian of the birthplace of Islam as well as a major oil producer accounting for 25% of global proven reserves and a leading member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (PWC, 2016).



Figure 8: Map of Saudi Arabia (Source: Infoplease, 2016)

According to the 2019 Index of Economic Freedom, Saudi Arabia has a population of 32.4 million, while other sources place it around 33.932 million, with 78.4% classified as urban population (Worldometers, 2019). The immigrant population is estimated to constitute 37% of the country's total population (The World Factbook, 2019).

High urbanisation and a large immigrant population indicate that what is termed as the national culture of Saudi Arabia will represent largely the cultures of urban-living and immigrant Saudi's.

3.3 Saudi national culture

On Hofstede's index of national cultures scores, Saudi Arabia scores high on categories such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity vs femininity. The country scores low on individualism vs collectivism and long-term orientation (see Table 6). Comparing Saudi

Arabian national culture scores with those of the United Kingdom (for illustrative purposes) highlights differences that facilitate a better understanding of cultural dissimilarities.

Table 6: The profile of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The national culture, features and the scores on Hofstede index (Source: Geert Hofstede, 2016)

National culture dimension	SAUDI ARABIA	UNITED KINGDOM
Power Distance	95	35
Individualism vs collectivism	25	89
Masculinity vs Femininity	60	66
Uncertainty avoidance	80	35
Long term Orientation	36	51

According to Hofstede, the Saudi culture is characterised by high power distance, which Hofstede refers to as following a hierarchy structure, a structure where rules or orders do not need to be justified but rather followed. Secondly, with regard to individualism vs collectivism, Saudi Arabia does not score high according to Hofstede's index; it is considered to be a collectivistic society where members are closely integrated. This is represented through loyalty and a long-term commitment to a specific member.

With regard to the masculinity vs femininity factor, Saudi Arabia scores highly (60) meaning it is a highly masculine society. Workers and managers are expected to be men, especially at higher managerial positions. Managers are seen to be firm and decisive in making decisions. High performance is expected and problems are dealt with through arguments. Uncertainty

avoidance, as seen above, scores 80, making Saudi a society that prefers to avoid uncertainty which is evident in its strong belief system and consistent behaviour. People in such societies appear to favour the absolute truth and respect and follow traditional roles and behaviour. On the contrary, countries with a low score in this dimension, such as the UK which scores 35, are indicative of a culture that is less hostile and more accepting of personal risks. The long term orientation factor shows how societies cope with present and future difficulties while remaining capable of preserving an element of their past. As seen in the table, Saudi Arabia scores low (36) and, thus, falls within the range of normative societies. These types of societies hold tightly onto their traditions and norms and rarely accept change; in fact, they usually approach change with doubt and are not concerned about the future or saving for the future.

While Hofstede (2016)'s cultural dimensions offer insight into the shared characteristics of Arab national culture, Ali's (1998) typology provides evidence of considerable diversity amongst individual Arab nationals. Both authors, Hofstede (2016) and Ali (1998), offer distinct approaches to the analysis of Arab national culture in its possible manifestations. These individual characteristics have been summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Typology of Arab people (Source: Ali, 1998)

Traditionalists	Require directive leadership, tend to avoid risk, be rigid and conservative, and impose their own views on others
Idealists	Tend to be emotional, theoretical, politically immature and lack practicality
Spectators	Experience difficulty in processing change, stick to routines and resist change
Illusionists	Tend to be daydreamers, exaggerators and attention seekers, attribute blame for Arab ills on the outside world
Transitionalists	Are affluent yet show little compassion for others outside of this group. They are a subgroup caught between the Arab and Islamic tradition and modernization

Manipulators	Tend to be opportunists and schemers or pragmatists, motivated by wealth and money
Revivalists	Socio-centric individuals who are self-conscious Muslims, displaying awareness of the international world
Existentialists	Outstanding individuals who have the potential to serve as instruments of change and facilitate the development of others

It can be said that the table above coincides with some of the features showed in table 6 concerning the high scores obtained by Saudi Arabia in power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity vs femininity, individualism vs collectivism and long-term orientation. Both tables offer a complete portrait of the main behavioural features exhibited by Saudi society.

3.4 Islamic culture or the Islam in the national culture

In Hofstede's index, the Saudi Arabian culture is seen as collectivist due to its strong religious ties and monotheistic belief system. In this vein, Kalliny and Gentry (2007) note that Islam is one of the most formative influences in the Arab culture, with Islam significantly impacting language, social structure, and commerce. Indeed, Islam, which is the second biggest religion in the world, took birth in the Arabian Peninsula (modern day Saudi Arabia), and the country today draws millions of Muslim pilgrims from around the world every year. Islam is the state religion of Saudi Arabia and the key sources of Islam, the Quran and the Sunnah (actions) of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), are used to guide both life and work (Obeidat et al, 2012).

Hence, it is reasonable to assume that Islam is a 'way of life' within the Arab national culture and that the national cultural value system of the Arabs is led by the tenets of the Islamic faith (Anastos et al, 1980). Indeed, it has been noted that certain identifiable features of the Arab culture, for instance loyalty,

honesty, trust and flexibility are actually reinforced by Islam (Najm, 2015; Obeidat et al., 2012).

Islamic principles of management advocate for valid leadership, legitimated by relational reciprocity and the contribution toward shared goals (Ali, 2011) from which the Islamic practice of consultative decision-making, or *shoura*, is foregrounded. Islam views work positively (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008; Yousef, 2001) and offers what Rice (1999) calls a “practical life-program”, namely a detailed blueprint for establishing, carrying out, managing and regulating socio-economic activity. As such, commercial activities are considered to be a socially beneficial function in Islam (Hashim and Hamzah, 2014; Rafiki and Wahab, 2014; Rice, 1999), which accommodates the interests of different stakeholders within the work context (Wahab, Quazi and Blackman, 2016 citing Beekun and Badawi, 2005). It is also worth mentioning the strong imprint of Wahabism on the Islamic culture. Wahabism is a more puritanical Islamic movement that adheres to a strict and mostly exclusive interpretation of Islam (Richter, 2014).

The next section will discuss Saudi organisational culture. However, when considering the influence of Islamic culture on organisational culture in Saudi HEIs, it should be kept in mind that the Saudi version of Islam brings its own permutations, favouring an adherence to tradition and a strong resistance to change.

3.5 Islamic constraints over Saudi national and organisational cultures

Islam has a significant bearing on Saudi Arabian national culture, with consequent impact on organisational cultures (Rafiki and Wahab, 2014) including on higher education institutions (Ezzi et al, 2014). Nonetheless, while the influence of Islam on the Arab culture is tremendous, it is important to acknowledge that, although there are areas of commonality (importance of family and social bonds), there are also notable discrepancies in terms of educational contexts and work orientations (Sidani and Thornberry, 2010).

Organisational change and development are shaped by the values and beliefs integral to the society within which both transpire, underlining the importance of context (Willis et al., 2016; Amis et al., 2004). In this sense, it is of significance that developments in early Islamic history led to the pre-eminence of the Jabria principles within the Arabian Peninsula, with the reposing of implicit trust in leadership and the recognition of the leader as the originator of organisational change (Ali, 1996), as well as respect for generational differences (Whiteoak, Crawford and Mapstone, 2006).

In modern day Saudi organisations, strong leadership and age are accordingly valued. Other ways in which Saudi organisations display a uniquely Saudi character is in their attitude to change (by implicating continuous improvement) which, according to Rees and Althakhri (2008), is affected by factors such as religion. These factors militate against long-term planning, which is considered as a preserve of *Insh Allah* (God's willingness). For instance, while change in Western organisations tends to be linear (Marshak, 1993), in Arab organisations, it follows a non-linear pattern (Ali, 1996,) and is influenced by group and male orientation, high uncertainty avoidance and high-power distance.

It is within this context that there have been calls for further studies on the effect of Arab culture on the implementation of change in organisations in the region (Rees and Althakhri, 2008). In particular, in view of Ali's (1996) assertion that in the Arab context, the intention of action rather than the practice is more important, it becomes necessary to explore change and, therefore, continuous improvement approaches amenable to Arab culture.

The next section discusses peculiarities of Saudi Arabia culture (national culture), where the influence of Islam is discussed. It has been noted that certain identifiable features of the Arab culture, for instance loyalty, honesty, trust and flexibility are derived from and actually reinforced by Islam. The KSA's national culture is also discussed in term of how it influences organisational culture in the KSA's HEIs. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the influence of Islam on national culture presents complexities that extend to the culture of organisations, including that of HEIs.

3.6 Continuous Improvement in Saudi Arabia

Recent studies on CI in Saudi Arabia have focused on the non-profit sector (Almaiman and McLaughlin, 2018a; Almaiman and McLaughlin, 2018b), construction (Sarhan, Xia, Fawzia and Karim, 2017), and education (Alrebish,, Jolly and Molloy, 2017).

In a study focusing on factors successful in facilitating CI culture within the non-profit sector in Saudi Arabia, Almaiman, and McLaughlin (2016) identified nine factors: effective leadership, proactive team, constancy of purpose, long-term focus, customer management, communication, teamwork, employee empowerment, and ongoing evaluation and monitoring. Noting that some of the factors identified were not found in the literature, they concluded that peculiarities of the national culture made the context unique and, therefore, suggested that CI factors are influenced by cultural context. In a subsequent study investigating the role of organisational culture in facilitating

continuous improvement within Saudi non-profit organisations, Almainan, and McLaughlin (2018a) concluded that it was critical for organisations to have a climate conducive of sustained CI. Identified characteristics for such a climate are: being values driven, maintaining a creative environment, encouraging employees, external interactions, a commitment towards operations management, and the evaluation of improvement. Albliwi et al. (2017) investigated the implementation of Lean Six Sigma in a sample of 400 Saudi organisations from across different sectors and concluded that the process was still in its early stages.

Although CI is part of LSS implementation and has been associated with organisational culture, Albliwi et al. (2017) found that the latter did not emerge as critical for the implementation of LSS within Saudi Arabian organisations. This notwithstanding, Zain, Kassim and Kadasah (2017) found that CI had a significant effect on a business's competitiveness and performance. Further they conclude that organisational characteristics and culture affect firm competitiveness. Within the HEIs in Saudi Arabia, CI has been investigated as part of the TQM initiatives (Alzhrani et al., 2016). Quality issues and a need to achieve international accreditation have been highlighted as two of the major challenges facing HEIs in Saudi Arabia (Alharbi, 2016).

3.7 Continuous Improvement and quality assurance in higher education institutions (HEIs)

As an approach to quality maintenance, continuous improvement has been associated with sectors such as industry, manufacturing and healthcare, while the educational sector has lagged behind (Park et al., 2013). This notwithstanding, CI also applies to the higher education sector. In the latter, labour in the form of academic staff and administrators and capital in financial and non-financial form, are fused through formal processes to produce outputs like teaching and research. These activities occur within the context of a community where there are relationships among the members, services for creating social cohesion within the group and where values are attached to the community's activities, some of which go beyond the immediate community (Lockwood, 1985).

Commenting on the role of higher education in catalysing national economic development, Becket and Brookes (2008) note that these forces have created a need to ensure the processes of quality assurance are rigorous and transparent, in addition to the quality improvement initiatives being firmly embedded in any program of quality management. However, managing quality in HEIs has proven to be difficult, not only because education quality is an ambiguous and contested term (Cheng and Tam, 1997; Pounder, 1999) due to the perceptions of different stakeholders who imbue the concept with different meanings, but also because of the complex nature of the educational product, which can be tangible, intangible or added-value (Becket & Brookes, 2008). For example, Johnson et al. (2008) found that, as calls increased for HEIs' leadership to show accountability and transparency, universities relied more on principles and practices recognised as continuous process improvement (CPI). In their review of the literature regarding quality management in HEIs, Becket and Brookes (2008) and Tarí and Dick (2016) identified that HEIs seemed to rely heavily on industrial quality models adopted for use within their institutions.

The problematic nature of such an approach and prevalent business methodologies used in academia, have already been covered in the earlier chapter on CI models, methods and tools.

Continuous improvement and quality assurance are inextricably linked in the contemporary rhetoric regarding best practices for modern universities. An understanding of the challenges faced by higher education institutions can help to explicate the nature of the pressures faced by HEIs (Chapleo, 2015; Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016; Ruben et al., 2018). There have been major changes in the higher education sector over the last two decades, partly as a result of neo-liberalism, which has led to an increase in student numbers on the back of reduced funding from governments, the internalisation of higher education and the need to maintain quality standards in order to achieve high rankings which, in turn, affects a university's ability to attract students (Bamberger, Morris and Yemini, 2019). This has exerted pressure on the ability of HEIs systems to sustain quality, meet increasing demands for accountability and demonstrate their economic and social role (Nash, 2019; Zajda and Rust, 2016; Watson, 2006 in Baldwin, 2009). The modern university is, therefore, expected to at times balance conflicting demands as summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Conflicting demands to be balanced (Source: Derived from Baldwin, 2009)

Elements to be balanced
Conservatism vs radicalism
Critical vs supportive
Competitive vs collegial
Autonomous vs accountable
Private vs public
Excellent vs equal
Certain vs provisional
Traditional vs innovative
Ceremonial vs iconoclastic
Local vs international

Expanding further upon the challenges faced by HEIs, Brookes and Becket (2008) noted that HEIs around the globe are characterised by turbulence and dynamism, with both global and national forces driving nationwide and institutional change, and that this, in turn, has pushed the issue of quality management firmly onto national, governmental and academic agendas. Central topics under discussion in contemporary HE are the implementation of quality management, quality management models, techniques and tools, and dimensions of quality management dimensions (Tarí and Dick, 2016). These are consistent with the pursuit of accountability and quality assurance. This has been manifested in the embracement of quality models by HEIs (Laurett and Mendes, 2019) and a proliferation of accreditation and quality audits, which are increasingly required by government bodies and external entities as a way to achieve quality assurance. The desire for accountability underscores most of these mandates for efficiency (Harvey, 2005). For instance, across the world, national organisations such as QAA (UK) or the AUQA (Australia)

have been established for quality management within higher education. In the US context, HEIs voluntarily maintain quality standards through the principle of academic self-governance (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). This is achieved by gaining accreditation from organisations recognised by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Saudi Arabian higher education has not been an exception in this regard.

3.8 Accreditation and quality assurance in Saudi Arabia

In the Saudi higher education sector, the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA, established by the Higher Education Council in 2004), is responsible for accreditation and quality assurance (Al-Baqami, 2015). The mission of NCAAA (2010) is, first, to ensure the provision of quality learning experiences for students through motivating, supporting and assessing the quality of HEIs and the programs they offer. Secondly, to monitor the management of universities and support services to ensure their effectiveness and, lastly, to evaluate the contributions universities make to research and community development. NCAAA uses the self-designed National Qualifications Framework to align the quality of post-secondary education to international standards (NCAAA, 2006). The organisation considers the institutional, learning, teaching, student support, supporting infrastructure and community contribution contexts as integral indicators of quality (NCAAA, 2012).

Quality has been accepted as a meaningful factor indicating the value of the education provided by HEIs. Indeed, according to NCAAA (2016) quality has been used as an indicator that shapes the worth of the education obtained in a specific HEI. In an attempt to improve and internationalise the quality of Saudi HEIs, substantial financial support has been developed over the last few

decades. However, the outcomes of such efforts fallen short of that expected, given that a reduced number of HEIs have obtained the accreditation.

Therefore, it seems important to enquire into the state of quality assurance initiatives at Saudi HEIs by examining the challenges and impediments related to organisational culture. In this way, a better understanding can be gained of how CI occurred or did not occur within the context under study.

Earlier discussion has established that Saudi HEIs are confronted with the same CI imperatives facing other modern universities. Universities that strive to compete in the global marketplace become vulnerable to experiencing a societal dissonance. In this context, Dickson, Kwantes and Magomaeva (2014) note that global competition compels the adoption of internationally accepted best practices and processes. As a result, organisations begin to experience the same kind of economic and industrial constraints and opportunities, which results in a form of mimetic isomorphism and, perforce, a greater disassociation from their peculiar societal contexts. On the other hand, organisations that do not operate in the global marketplace are excluded from such imperatives and manifest a much stronger nexus between societal and organisational cultures (Dickson, et al, 2014). By virtue of educational reform and government policy, Saudi HEIs have no choice but to compete globally, thereby becoming vulnerable to the possibility of societal and cultural dissonance.

Against this backdrop, Schneider, Brief and Guzzo (1996) have foregrounded the centrality of organisations (meaning people) as drivers of organisational change by suggesting that organisations are, in fact, the people within them, so that if the psychology of the people does not change, other changes such as those in organisational hierarchy, communication networks and technology will not have the intended effect. This is confirmed by, among others, Jones and Harris (2014), who posit that, to achieve organisational change, there have

to be conditions that nurture interdependent professional learning among people. This notion is further supported by Fralinger's (2007) contention that university culture is shaped by a combination of beliefs and practices of both internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, Ehlers and Schneckenberg (2010) have contended that, if higher education institutions want to be at the vanguard of the knowledge economy, they will have to embrace innovation and change as an integral feature of their culture. It is this belief in the importance of change and innovation as a continuous process that has created an interest in continuous quality improvement as a way to make educational reforms sustainable and to help translate the vision of successful participation in the global knowledge economy into reality (Ehlers and Schneckenberg, 2010).

3.9 Saudi Arabian culture and Continuous Improvement

CI in HEIs has been a feature the world over. HEIs are operating in an environment that transcends the local context; there is also the influence of neoliberalism, which has brought with it an increased emphasis on policy reforms, market forces, "*increasing global competitiveness, accountability, efficiency, quality and standards-driven policy reforms, and higher education stratification*" (Zajda and Rust, 2016, p.17). As far back as 2005, Temponi noted that HEIs could, through CI, move towards operating like customer-focused private sector entities that value return on investment. Al Shobakir and Abu Naser (2017) found a strong correlation between the extent to which an educational institution engaged in excellence strategies (CI being among these) and its success in gaining sustainable competitive advantage. In a study focusing on medical schools in Saudi Arabia, Barzansky et al. (2015) concluded that continuous quality improvement enhances the quality and outcomes of educational programs, a feature that is critical to an institution

meeting international standards (Almazroa and Al-Shamrani, 2015). In this way, such institutions can attract international faculty, global partnerships (Almansour, 2015) and benefit from sharing and exchanging expertise (Khorsheed and Al-Fawzan, 2014; Hasan, et al., 2016). Other such benefits include gaining technological advancement (Alqarni, 2015), favourable global rankings (Almansour, 2015) and better academic accreditations (Alzhrani et al., 2016).

Culture has been found to impact CI initiatives within HEIs (Tasopoulou and Tsiotras, 2017; Antony, 2014; Trivellas and Dargenidou, 2009;). HEIs have a culture that is distinctly different from what is found in the business sector from which the CI philosophy originates. The issue of culture in Saudi Arabian HEIs is compounded by differences that already exist between the HE and business sectors since the models and methodologies used in CI originate from both national and organisational cultures that are significantly different from that of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Arabian culture is profoundly affected by the interpretation of Islamic teachings (Alamri, Cristea and Al-Zaidi, 2014; Idris, 2007). These attributes manifest themselves in a number of ways and are bound to affect receptivity to foreign-based CI methodologies.

Foremost the Saudis are motivated by power and status, therefore, the motivational elements of higher compensation and job satisfaction that work under most Western settings, do not function as motivators in the Saudi organisational setting (Fallatah and Syed, 2018). This is the reason why Saudi locals tend to prefer jobs in the public sector, which are considered to yield more power. The Saudi government, in line with these cultural norms, also supports locals to find such jobs by giving them preference in a process called Saudisation, in which managerial positions are preferentially given to locals, regardless of their managerial calibre (Ahmed, 2016; Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014). This is the reason why locals easily pass up jobs that are socially unacceptable (De Bel-Air, 2015).

Collectivism is an important characteristic that defines the values of Saudi society and culture. It has been noted that performance feedback cannot be directly given, instead, the use of an intermediary is needed in order to give feedback to the relevant person (Harbi, Thursfield and Bright, 2017). This cultural feature is a barrier in the process of continuous improvement (Alharbi, Al-Matari, Yusoff, and Bt Mat, 2016). Continuous improvement finds its strength from an open and candid communications structure where workers participate and give feedback on performance improvements as they are needed. Therefore, in this regard, the Saudi culture tends to prevent the development of a continuous improvement strategy because the basic cultural support that is needed from both management and employees is not present. In the absence of a transparent feedback system, few recommendations for improvement will arise since the mind-set of employees will not change. In such a situation, the deployment of a continuous improvement strategy will be a short-lived exercise (Idris, 2007).

Organisational culture plays an important role in determining the attitudes and beliefs of the employees and these attitudes and beliefs are carried forward as behaviours which tend to improve organisational performance (Carlos Pinho, Paula Rodrigues and Dibb, 2014). OC, therefore, influences the operation of organisations and affects employees' behaviours and decisions in a manner that affects organisational performance (Wu et al., 2011).

One such aspect of culture that influences the implementation of a continuous improvement philosophy is the dimension of collectivism (Harbi, Thursfield and Bright, 2017; Cho and Payne, 2016). Collectivism indicates that, within a society, groups are more important than individuals and the value of being part of a group is higher than the value of being an individual. Alongside the characteristic of collectivism is the dimension of power distance, which is very high in Saudi Arabia. When these two characteristics are juxtaposed, a group culture arises where the performance of a group is appraised as a collective.

The performances of high achievers are downplayed, while negative comments are euphemised for underachievers. This creates a demotivating work environment for high achievers who are not rewarded or recognised for their efforts, which leads to a high turnover and a lack of motivation to work towards continuous improvement (Jurburg et al., 2017).

Another aspect of culture that tends to impact the adoption of continuous improvement is the predominance of collectivism in the culture of Saudi organisations. Preference is given to relationships rather than business dealings, resulting in the neglect of operational efficiency and improvements (Harbi, Thursfield and Bright, 2017). Managers focus more on maintaining relationships and respecting old employees than on efficiency (Idris, 2007). The lack of a merit-based recognition system in Saudi organisations is an obstacle to the adoption of a continuous improvement philosophy (Alharbi et al., 2016; Iqbal, 2010). However, for Saudi firms, which have international exposure and a global workforce, national culture has less of an impact on organisational culture, therefore, it can be expected that for those, the adoption of continuous improvement is a possibility.

3.10 The relationship among cultural organisation and continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia's HEIs

Exploring the organisation culture–continuous improvement relationship in Saudi Arabia's HEIs with a view of establishing how the former can be leveraged to ensure the success of the latter can be understood from the perspective of Schein's three levels of organisation culture, EFQM's leadership as an enabler of quality and Lean Six Sigma's method of implementing continuous improvement.

3.10.1 Schein conceptualisation of culture and CI

Viewing organisational culture applying Schein's conceptualisation that culture consists of three levels – at the core being shared assumptions, at the centre being values and on the outside and visible to all being the artefacts – provides a window for analysing the culture–continuous improvement relationship. Extant literature presents continuous improvement as both a process and a culture that subsists within the culture of an organisation (Costa et al., 2018; Glover, Farris and Van Aken, 2015). In this regard, it is not only an operational variable, but also an essential cultural factor (Halvorson, 2013). In so far as culture can be defined as a way of doing things, continuous improvement can be viewed from Schein's perspective of three levels of organisational culture. This model has a pervasive impact on the perceptions of managers and employees with respect to quality management and continuous improvement.

Shared assumptions of acceptable quality is derived from Bass and Avolio's (1993) submission that organisational cultures are the creation of the founders and based on the founder's cultural schema. While Bass and Avolio (1993) were referring to entrepreneurial founders, the same applies to the leaders of educational institutions. As the leadership provides the vision and values, the shared assumptions that develop over time are guided by leadership practices (Hardman et al., 2007; Schein, 2010; Hartnell and Walumbwa, 2011; Belias and Koustelios, 2014). Such practices shape employee's assumptions and translate into, or at least influence, what becomes the organisation's values and culture (Mohelska and Sokolova, 2015; Gao, 2017).

In the case of HEI in Saudi Arabia, it can be expected that the shared assumptions and values articulated by the leadership and adopted by the employees of a HEIs, would be influenced by aspects of both national and organisational culture. Given that CI includes elements of innovation and

change, the organisations' attitude towards, for example, change can be expected to be influenced by cultural dimensions such as those relating to attitude toward risk, a willingness or otherwise to accept change and the management's practices in terms of encouraging or discouraging change and innovation.

On the back of Saudi conservatism, it can be expected that attempts to implement CI would be met with challenges emanating from shared assumptions relating to the concept of time and time horizon; orientation to work; a focus on facts and figures; concepts of stability versus acceptance of change; isolation versus collaboration; control orientation and focus, all of which are cultural aspects that have been associated with CI organisations (Detert et al., 2000; Gimenez-Espin, Jiménez-Jiménez and Martínez-Costa, 2013). Saudi culture has been described as collectivist and, therefore, privileging group ahead of individual interests, which could have implications for CI culture where openness and facts and figures are valued ahead of relationships.

3.10.2 EFQM - Leadership as a quality enabler

EFQM proposes that continuous improvement in quality is enabled by leadership through the setting of organisational tone in areas such as human resources, strategy, partnerships and resources, and ensuring that processes are in place (Atkinson, 2014). Atkinson (2014) recommends that leaders should be a catalyst of change and that, by encouraging such practices and leading by example, leaders can be effective in bringing about the change needed for continuous improvement to prevail. Leadership is, in fact, described as an enabler (Assarilind and Aaboén, 2014; Atkinson, 2013; Cheema et al., 2015) because of its influence on culture. For example, leaders can strengthen a culture that reinforces continuous improvement through open and transparent

communication among all employees (Atkinson, 2014). Such assurance would be necessary in particular in an environment where openness and transparency are not engrained in the culture (Brajer-Marczak, 2014). Further, leadership is responsible for the artefacts component of organisation culture, which includes creating pay and recognition systems that are supportive of continuous improvement initiatives.

3.10.3 Culture, Lean Six Sigma and CI

Pepper and Spedding (2010) recommended that Lean Six Sigma must be viewed as a “*platform for the initiation of cultural and operational change*” (p. 151). Given that the success of Lean Six Sigma as a methodology of CI (Albliwi, Antony, Abdul Halim Lim, and van der Wiele, 2014) hinges on, among other things, data driven decision making, total employee involvement and open reporting (Webber and Wallace, 2011), it may encounter problems in a Saudi organisational culture where, because of a bias towards collectivism, feedback cannot be directly given because the use of intermediaries is preferred. Further, collectivism discourages meritocracy so that recognition systems are not linked to CI initiatives.

Lean Six Sigma like many other CI methodologies are predominantly alien to the Saudi Arabian environment. There is, therefore, a sharp difference in both national and organisational culture in terms of shared assumptions, values and artefacts. Given that, in Saudi culture, employees are motivated by extrinsic factors such as power and status and are less concerned by intrinsic factors like job satisfaction and higher compensation, (Fallatah and Syed, 2018), it can be expected that the artefacts components of Saudi Arabian HEI culture will reflect what is valued within the culture and not necessarily link to CI enablers or to LSS measurables.

Notwithstanding differences in national and organisational culture, HEIs the world-over face the same challenges, which makes CI a culture-neutral imperative. A question that arises, however, is: given the peculiarities of Saudi culture and the foreign origins of CI models and methodologies, how can organisational culture be leveraged to enhance CI in Saudi HEIs? To answer this question, the next chapter presents the study's methodology and methods.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This research so far highlighted the limited literature regarding organisational culture and how to improve it in the KSA. Indeed, the minimal existing knowledge lead us to explore the ideas, beliefs, values and understandings of employees and students concerning the constant improvement (CI) process within higher education contexts in the KSA. In this sense, this study looks to clarify the perspectives of those involved in higher education regarding CI so as to allow us to build a proposition supported by the ideas, beliefs, and values of these professionals. In this sense, the ultimate goal of the study is to validate such a proposition, i.e., to build a framework that enhances enablers and promotes constant improvement practices within high education as a cultural organisation and limits the effects of inhibitors of the movement.

This chapter will discuss the study's research design in terms of the methodology and methods used and the justifications for the choices made by the researcher. It has four sections: research philosophy, research methodologies, rationale for the chosen methodology and data collection and analysis methods. It concludes by presenting how the study handled quality control. As researchers use different terms when describing research approaches and strategies, this study is going to use Saunders et al.'s (2012) terminologies in describing the different research terms, as shown in Figure 10.

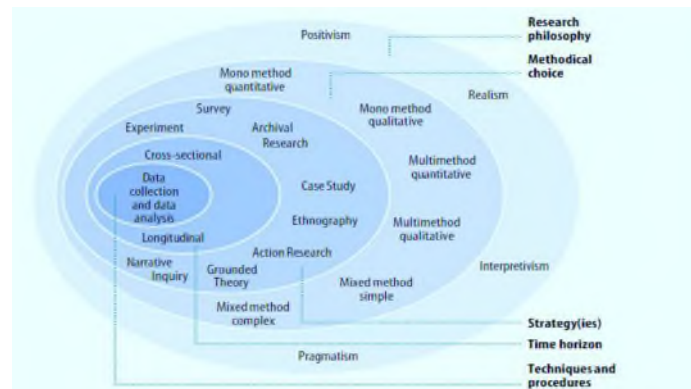


Figure 9: Research methodology, *The research 'Onion'* (Source: Saunders et al., 2012)

4.2. Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the paradigm from which the researcher will approach his study. Indeed, a paradigm can be understood as a frame of reference between the researcher and the reality that he is interested in studying. Briefly, it is a system of assumptions and beliefs regarding knowledge development (Saunders, et al., 2012). The chosen philosophy must match the research approach, as well as the researcher's intentions (Salvador, 2016; Saunders et al., 2009; Holden and Lynch, 2004; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Many authors, like Saunders et al. (2012) and Guba and Lincoln (2005), have presented four paradigms of research: positivist, phenomenological-interpretative, socio-critical and participatory; each of which hold four assumptions: ontological, axiological, epistemological and methodological.

The **ontological assumption** refers to the nature of the social phenomena that the researcher is studying. Some questions that could be addressed in this regard are: What is the nature of the knowable; what is the nature of the social reality the researcher wants to study? Formerly, ontology's concerns relate to the nature of reality in terms of what it *is* (Saunders, et al., 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Two key ontological perspectives are objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism believes in the existence of a true social reality, which is external to and independent of the researcher (Gallagher, 2008; Schuh and Barab, 2007). Objectivism emphasises that all reality has properties, consists of entities and has relationships that bind them at a particular space in time (Lakoff, 1987). Subjectivism views social reality as a co-construction among individuals who engage in social interaction to derive meaning through the process, where the researcher may find the truth through a rigorous interpretation process (Salvador, 2016; Bryne-Armstrong et al., 2001).

Similarly, the **epistemological assumption** refers the researcher to the following question: What is the nature of the relationship between the one who knows and the one who is known? Epistemology deals with how the truth is known and clarifies the relationship between the researcher and the reality being studied (Carson et al., 2001). According to Creswell (2007), it is important that the researcher gives a detailed explanation regarding their personal experience, where it is likely to influence or affect the study.

Common epistemological positions are positivism and interpretivism. On the one hand, positivism is based on the assumption that human behaviour is governed by laws and that there are objective facts that can be measured or observed in a quest for objective knowledge (Silverman, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007). It is underpinned by quantitative methods of data gathering. However, positivism has its limitations, as not all issues can be measured or observed (Cohen et al., 2007). On the other hand, interpretivism is based on the belief that reality is socially constructed through the understandings and meanings developed experientially and socially by individuals (Johnson, 2006). Interpretivists assume that it is difficult to separate oneself from the things we know, so that how we understand the world and who we are constitute a central part of how we understand the world, others and ourselves (Johnson, 2006). The interpretive paradigm is underpinned by natural methods of data

gathering such as interviewing, direct/participative observation, focus groups, and the content analysis of existing knowledge. The interpretation is based on a particular situation or context at a particular time (Johnson, 2006).

In the **axiological assumption**, the values and beliefs of the researcher are considered, e.g. what is his interest as researcher? It will try to give relevance to the voices of the participants so as to understand their performances and actions and then to explore the meanings they attribute to their efforts while trying to develop adequate CI practices. It is about translating their descriptions in order to understand their meanings, i.e. to look for the actors and their stories (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba, 1981)

Finally, in the **methodological assumption**, the way that knowledge is acquired is considered. How is it known? According to the frame of reference, the researcher will stay more or less away from his subject of study. Indeed, their beliefs and values, that is, their subjectivity, will permeate, in greater or lesser extent, the data collection and analysis processes. Hence, according to the intentionality of each researcher, the ontological and epistemological relationships are chosen in order to produce new knowledge. Finally, it was established that in order to approach the participants, the researcher plans to interview them in their own settlements, where they experience their daily lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

4.2.1 The paradigmatic position assumed by this research

Supported by previous descriptions regarding the main research paradigms, the framework of this study should be established. Indeed, what should the privileged paradigm be in order to study the social reality? It refers specifically to what should be the onto-epistemological position, where the researcher faces the social reality of exploring and understanding the professional's and student's CI practices within their university. In this sense, the paradigm most useful to the study is considered to be the interpretative paradigm, also called the constructivist paradigm. Indeed, in this case, the nature of the knowable consists of exploring the ideas, beliefs, and values of the professionals and students in relation to constant improvement practices inside their organisation, i.e., the universities in the KSA.

It was assumed that a complex network of subjectivities forms this ambiance, where every individual, including the researcher, possesses his or her own experience. From an **ontological** point of view, the nexus established between researcher and reality is that of an interrelation between the researcher and the reality of these professionals and students. It should be noted that the researcher's own subjectivity, beliefs, and values, as well as his prior experiences, will be taken into consideration and their influences will be noted in the current study (Creswell, 2014; Guba and Lincoln, 2005).

As research inspired by the interpretative paradigm, this study is based on the assumption that people live within a context and create a culture that is reproduced through their words and actions (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Research in the interpretative paradigm seeks to understand people's purposes in their lived dimension; as such, such an understanding must be obtained from within, that is, by allowing participants to freely narrate their own lived experiences.

This research seeks to explore and understand how organisational culture could be modified or leveraged to enhance or support the process of continuous

improvement in Saudi Arabia's HEIs. In this vein, constructivism will be deployed consistent with the researcher's view that reality is multiple and is better understood through interacting with the participants in order to co-construct the phenomena being studied. Applying such a paradigm will provide useful insights on what really affects the phenomena and will provide solutions regarding how organisational culture can be modified to support continuous improvement (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln, 1995).

From an **epistemological** point of view, in the present study, the results will be obtained from the interrelation between the researcher and the group of participants. The results will be co-constructions between the interviewees and the interviewer, where it has been admitted that subjectivities from all the participants will influence the results. In this sense, the researchers' personal subjectivity, as well as his values and beliefs will play a role in the analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba, 1981). Thus, in this study, interpretivism will be used since it is difficult to separate what social actors know and practice from organisational culture itself. The use of this paradigm will enable the researcher to uncover links between organisational culture and continuous improvement and to demonstrate how the interaction of various variables impacts the culture of an organisation.

Our intent is to explore and understand the different ideas, beliefs, values, actions, and practices developed by professionals and students when they develop CI practices. It is for this reason a relationship has been established that allows for such type of interaction and approach to be linked with people's views and lived experiences (Guba, 1981).

Finally, it should be noted that this study respected the individual ownership of views and beliefs, which have been socially constructed, but represent a lived-life reality that could only be narrated by the protagonist: the individuals that will participate in this study. Thus, the study arose from the researcher valuing

the understanding that people have regarding the enablers and inhibitors of organisational culture with respect to the maintenance of constant improvement. Hence, a philosophical assumption was made that the people's perceptions could shape their understanding of the main aspects that affect constant improvement and their beliefs and values systems.

4.3. Research methodology

Research methodology is a "way of thinking about and studying social phenomenon" (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.1). Bryman defined it as an "epistemological position" and a "justification for using a particular method" over of others (Bryman, 1984, p.75). Creswell (2014) refers to it as the process of research itself. The research methodology for data collection could either be qualitative, quantitative or a mixture of the two.

4.3.1 Quantitative method

Quantitative research is the mathematical representation of an observed and measured data that can be used to explain some particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Remenyi, 2014). The approach is used for testing theory through analysing relationships among the variables (Creswell, 2014). Surveys and experiments are commonly used methods of data collection for quantitative studies. Quantitative studies are generally divided into descriptive, developmental, correlational, ex post facto, experimental, and quasi-experimental (Bernard, 2013).

Patton (1999) states that: "... *it is common that quantitative methods and qualitative methods are used in a complementary fashion to answer different questions that do not easily come together to provide a single, well-integrated picture of the situation*" (p.1193). This argument supports the use of the

survey/questionnaire, which is the quantitative instrument used to establish the current and ideal positions of the constant improvement developed by the participants. These results will form a useful reference to support the development of a future intervention in the topic we are exploring. At the same time, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods allows us to achieve triangulation and, thus, confirmation of the data analysis.

4.3.2. Qualitative method

The qualitative research approach seeks to make sense of phenomenon in its natural setting, based on people's interpretations and the meanings they attach to phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The goal of qualitative research, at times referred to as interpretive research, is to try to understand a particular situation or phenomenon from the perspective of those people who are actually involved in the phenomenon (Leedy, 2010). The approach allows the researcher to record events as they happen and then interpret them in a dynamic manner (Yin, 2014). It preserves the complexities of human behaviour through adopting a holistic perspective (Black, 1994).

It should be noted that approaching the same phenomenon from a positivist or post-positivistic paradigm would necessitate different considerations. For example: the reality of the professionals and students would be outside of the researcher as an individual and, as such, it would approach them with the intention of measuring variables or predicting future behaviours (quantitative methods). Additionally, this phenomenon would be approached from outside and the researcher would not seek to obtain the data directly from the participant's voices, but through instruments that allows the researcher to 'interchange opinions' with them. In short, positivist, post-positivist paradigms, and quantitative methods do not seek to obtain narrations or experiences coming

directly from the people; inversely, the phenomenon will be understood from the measurements obtained.

4.3.3. Justification of the chosen research method

This research sought to understand aspects of organisational culture that act as inhibitors or as enablers of continuous improvement practices in Saudi higher education institutions. Our research objectives are thus:

- i. Identify organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement, via extensive review of relevant literature.
- ii. Identify organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement within HEIs in Saudi Arabia.
- iii. Establish how enablers can be encouraged and inhibitors can be removed in an organisational culture in Saudi Arabia's HEIs.
- iv. Develop a framework of interventions that will help to leverage the organisational culture to facilitate continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia's HEIs.
- v. Validate the interventions framework of the organisational culture via the judgments of experts from HEIs in Saudi Arabia.

The research focused on employee/student beliefs, ideas, and understandings regarding the CI process within the KSA. For this reason, a qualitative research aligned with an interpretivist perspective was considered most appropriate. Such matters cannot be understood merely by observing them; it is important to give the social actors a chance to reflect on their lived experiences, speak out and share their perceptions through interviews. The qualitative approach's emphasis on the representation of real lives and real voices based on lived experiences (both at micro and macro level) leads to the progressive understanding of a phenomenon, taking insights to a new level through

interpretation. Interviews facilitate a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon because participant voices assist the researcher in extracting the uniqueness of individual cases (Qu and Dumay, 2011; Ali and Yusof, 2011). This kind of enquiry, therefore, fits well within the framework of qualitative research (Khan, 2014; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Janesick, 1994). A qualitative approach has been successfully applied in other studies of culture within the context of an educational institution (Giles and Yates, 2014).

4.4 Research Strategy

The research strategy is a logical plan for moving from the initial research questions to a set of conclusions (Yin, 2003). Given this study's adoption of a constructivist paradigm, available research strategies include: phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), narrative research (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), ethnography (Fetterman, 2010; Wolcott, 2008), case study (Yin, 2009; 2012) and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2007; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

In phenomenology, which is grounded in philosophy and psychology, the researcher depends on the participant's narration of their lived experiences of a phenomenon as described through the medium of interviews (Creswell, 2014; Giorgi, 2009). Phenomenology seeks to describe the textural atmosphere around the participants' lived experiences, combined with the structural description of their practices. This phenomenological account does not coincide with the necessity of exploring the university as a cultural organisation impacting the continuous improvement demanded in Saudi higher education. The textural atmosphere and the descriptive character of the phenomenological account do not provide enough information about the phenomenon.

Moreover, narrative research is based on the researcher studying the existence of individuals through obtaining stories of their lives and then retelling them in a narrative chronology (Creswell 2014; Riessman, 2008). Similarly, ethnography, which originates from anthropology and sociology, involves studying a group's shared patterns of actions and language within a natural setting using observation and interviews (Creswell, 2014). Another interesting strategy is the so-called case study, which involves in-depth analysis of a specific case, or occurrence, using multiple data collection procedures (Yin, 2009; 2012). This research strategy is not adequate with respect to answering our research questions because we are not exploring and analysing the practices of similar universities. Indeed, the ten participating universities are not homogeneous in their practices and structure because each of them possesses its own organisational frames, substructures, and administration.

Given that, in this study, the intention is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the professionals and students beliefs, ideas, and understanding of the CI process within the KSA's universities, a less descriptive and more conceptually-focused strategy is required that is capable of obtaining powerful explanations of CI processes in this context. It is for this reasons that, despite the aforementioned designs and, considering our research intention, we decided to apply Grounded Theory (GT) in this case. Grounded Theory originates from sociology and involves multiple data collection stages which develop a thorough and informed explanation of a phenomenon grounded in participants' points of view (Corbin and Strauss 2007; Charmaz, 2006).

4.4.1. Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s and it was mainly associated with qualitative inquiry, which focuses on exploring the social processes that could impact behaviour (Goulding, 1998). The primary

application of GT is in the inductive generation of a new theory from particular data. Due to changes over time, GT has developed through three main perspectives, the leading version being the Glaser post-positivistic perspective, which is based on Glaser and Strauss's approach (1967). For Glaser, the primary purpose of the theory is to be grounded in the data, in the words of the participants that have been analysed, and capable of identifying a common pattern of behaviour to face the phenomenon. For this author, the reality is discovered through discovering data, allocating codes to it and conducting systematic comparisons. According to Glaser (2002), everything is data, and the researcher should approach their social reality without previous knowledge about what is happening in the data or how the phenomenon has been presented in other cases. The conceptual substantive theory initially obtained can be generalised by the addition of posterior complemented data.

The other central perspective is Strauss and Corbin's (1998), which constitutes an interpretative approach, with its emphasis on systematic analytical procedures. This approach is less post-positivistic and more inclined to the interpretation of the motives and reasons that lead people to behave in the manner they act regarding a problematic social phenomenon or situation. According to these authors, previous knowledge is allowed and does not interfere with the collection and analysis of data undertaken by the researcher. This second perspective offers an interesting suite of stages that collaborate to guide the constant comparison of movement between data collection and data analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Commonly shared with Glaser's perspective is the agreement for the final discovery or creation of a consistent conceptual relational system which is solid enough to be able to explain what is happening in the data, i.e., how people confront the phenomenon under study. The conceptual substantive theory that is obtained cannot be generalised, as Glaser proposed, due to it being anchored to the time and place where it was developed.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the reality can be accessed through the presentation of analytic questions, coming up with informed explanations and using particular methodological applications. Theory that is grounded in the data emerges through the processes of the constant comparison, coding and analysis of both interview and observed data. The theory referred to is, as per Strauss and Corbin's (1994) definition of a theory, a group of conceptual relationships that offer a plausible explanation of the phenomenon being studied.

Finally, Charmaz's (2006) constructivist approach suggests that researchers construct theories in a strong relationship with the research participants' stories. This means that the final construction of a substantive theory is coming from the common and shared opinions of the interviewees, who practically are the constructor of their reality, with the guide of the researcher. In this sense, It could be said that Charmaz's perspective allows participants to intensely work on the data collection and analysis, obtaining a substantive theory that is not generalisable in the sense suggested by Glaser because it is located in the time and space in which it was constructed. Other versions of GT have been elaborated, such as Clarke's (2003) situational analysis, which takes symbolic interactionism as the main theoretical current with which interpret the data. The three main versions of GT fall, indeed, into two main perspectives, i.e., Glaser's perspective and Strauss-Corbin's perspective, as is illustrated in Table 9 (Onions, 2006).

Table 9: Comparisons of the two schools of Grounded Theory (Source: adapted from Onions, 2016)

'GLASERIAN'	'STRAUSSIAN'
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Starting with an empty mind – no review of literature	Having a general idea as to the starting point
Allowing theory to emerge through neutral questioning	Using structured questions to extract theory
Conceptual theory development	Description of studied situation
Get theoretical sensitivity from immersion in the data being collected	Get theoretical sensitivity from methods, tools and extant literature
The theory is derived from the data	The theory is derived from the observer's interpretation
Theory credibility and or verification is based on its grounding in the data	Theory credibility based on method's rigor
Need to identify a basic social process	No need to identify basic social processes
Researcher is passive and restrained	The researcher is an active participant
Theory is revealed by the data	The researcher structures the data to reveal the theory
Coding not rigorous, comparisons are conducted incident by incident, identifying key points	Coding is rigorous, with codes derived from word-by-word analysis of data
Two phases of coding – simple and substantive, leading to categories and their properties	Three phases of coding – open, axial and selective
Considered to be the only 'true' Grounded Theory method	Considered to be a form of qualitative data analysis

4.4.2. Justification of the adoption of the Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is usually used to generate a substantive theory within a grey area of research where there is insufficient knowledge about the subject matter, which could be because the subject of interest has not been studied or only superficially touched upon (Goulding, 1998). In addition, Birks and Mills (2011) argue that, when there is a need to generate a new theory in order to understand and explain phenomena, then GT is the most preferred research

approach. Fernandez (2004) also emphasises that GT promises a suitable foundation when seeking to understand and explain a new social contextual phenomenon.

Likewise, it should be noted that the use of GT enables the researcher to follow a systematic study on human interactions, such that it contains the interrelationship between actions, the contexts that impact on the action and the effects of taking the action (Goulding, 1998). Grounded Theory has been adopted in different fields such as nursing, management, business and education (Parry, 1999a), corporate turnaround (Pandit, 1996), management knowledge (Peter et al, 2004), analysis of management action (Partington, 2000) and leadership (Parry, 1999).

This research is focused on studying continuous improvement in higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia from an organisational culture perspective. This area of study involves social interaction among various entities in an organisation as the researcher seeks to understand aspects of HEI's cultural practices that affect continuous improvement. Grounded Theory enables the researcher to establish symbolic meanings, words, gestures and artefacts associated with people as they interact within their social context or within an organisation (Cutcliffe, 2000). As GT enables the researcher to follow a systematic approach to studying human interaction (Goulding, 1998) it focuses on the interrelationships between actions, the contexts that impact those action and the effects of taking them. This study will adopt the Strauss-Corbin's perspective, given the researcher's interests and research objectives. Such an approach will allow the researcher to identify the enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement from a cultural organisational perspective in Saudi higher education.

4.4.3 Criticisms of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory has been criticised on the basis of a lack of definitional clarity. It has been referred to as a method (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007; Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Parry, 2003); as a methodology (Glaser, 2009; Goulding, 1998) and as a set of principles and practices (Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont, 2003). Notwithstanding variations between Glaserian and Straussian versions and those of others, e.g. Charmaz (2005) and Clarke (2009), the common denominator among all of them is the final elaboration of a substantive theory grounded in data that uses iterative procedures involving concomitantly collecting, coding and analysing data, as well as theoretical sampling, constant comparison, the development of categories with properties and dimensions, systematic coding, generating memos, theoretical saturation, and sorting (Jones and Noble, 2007; Strauss and Corbin, 1994;1990). Guided by the need to derive an understanding of organisational culture and continuous improvement in HEIs in Saudi Arabia, this study uses Strauss-Corbin's perspective to approach data analysis.

4.5 Methods and techniques

Methods are procedures and techniques that are used for gathering relevant data and analysing it (Corbin and Strauss 1990). Blaikie describe methods as the procedures and activities employed in the selection, collection, organisation and analysis of data (Blaikie, 2009). In order to answer the research questions, it is essential to obtain sufficient and relevant data. This research adopted Blaikie's definition because it includes key aspects of research, specifically, sampling, data gathering and post interview activities and data analysis. These aspects are described in the following sections.

4.5.1. Participants

The research participants consisted of the staffs and students of ten universities across Saudi Arabia, including the cities of Riyadh and Shagra in the Central region (known as Najd); Jeddah, Makka and Taif in the Western region (known as Hejaz); Tabuk in the Northern region; and Dammam in the Eastern region. Out of these ten universities, two are privately owned and the remaining eight are government-funded public universities. The two private universities were selected to identify whether the lack of CI improvement is found across public and private universities. Furthermore, most of the universities selected were from the Najd region. This is due to the fact that most Saudi universities are located in this region. Additionally, these universities suffer from significant resistance to CI initiatives due to cultural and religious bonds (Baki, 2004 and Alnzawi, 2012). The cultural features of other regions, such as Hejaz and the Eastern region, differ from that of the Najd region (Yamani, 2008 and Alnzawi, 2012). Therefore, universities from other regions were also included in the sample to capture the array of cultural perspectives.

Regarding the characteristics of participants, it should be noted that the researcher obtained the profiles of all participants to ensure that the research results were presented within their context and were based on their views and experiences. The group of participants is composed of active students currently attending the aforementioned universities, as well as administrators, vice-presidents, faculty deans, deputies of colleges, student advisors, heads of department, research supervisors, lecturers, and assistant/associate teachers; all participant have extensive experience (4-36 years) of working in higher education.

The various roles that they perform ensure the coverage of almost all aspects of university life. The compilation of background information helped in the interpretation of the participant's views because these were likely shaped by their experiences. There were three respondents holding vice president level positions at their universities and six respondents who were holding deanship positions in different disciplines. Other respondents holding key management positions were six faculty deputies, two heads of different academic and functional departments and six administrators. The researcher also interviewed six students, considering that they are important stakeholders and that their input is crucial in conducting and managing CI efforts in HEIs. There were nine faculty members with vast experience in different fields of higher education. Table 10 summarizes the backgrounds of the interviewees.

Table 10: Interviewees and their backgrounds

Code	Associated institution	Role	Experience
AU1	Alfaisal	Administrator	9 years
DU1	Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal (Dammam)	Associate Professor & Head of Department	10 years
DA1	Dar Al-Uloom	Assistant Professor	4 Years
IU1	Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud	Administrator	17 years
KAU1	King Abdulaziz	Vice President	22 years
KAU2	King Abdulaziz	Professor & Deputy of College	36 years
KSU1	King Saud	Student	4 years
AU2	Alfaisal	Professor	12 years
KSU2	King Saud	Associate Professor & Dean	25 years
KSU3	King Saud	Lecturer	5 years
TU1	Tabuk	Vice President	25 years
TU2	Tabuk	Associate Professor, Deputy of College	30 years
AU3	Alfaisal	Student	4 years
UQU2	Umm Al-Qura	Assistant Professor & Research Supervisor	14 years
UQU3	Umm Al-Qura	Associate Professor & Head of Department	20 years
KSU4	King Saud	Professor	14 years
KAU3	King Abdulaziz	Student	4 years
SU4	Shaqra	Associate Professor & Faculty Dean	11 years
KAU5	King Abdulaziz	Associate Professor & Faculty Dean	15 years
TU3	Tabuk University	Assistant Professor & Student Advisor	9 years
TIU1	Taif University	Student	4 years
DA2	Dar Al-Uloom	Lecturer	7 years
IU2	Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud	Deputy of College	8 years
AU4	Alfaisal	Lecturer	5 years
TIU2	Taif	Administrator	13 years
DU2	Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal (Dammam)	Assistant Professor & Deputy of College	9 years
SU1	Shaqra	Assistant Professor & Dean	7 years
IU3	Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud	Associate Professor	13 years
SU2	Shaqra	Administrator	6 years
DU3	Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal (Dammam)	Student	4 years
IU4	Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud	Assistant Professor	9 years
DA3	Dar Al-Uloom	Assistant Professor & Deputy of College	8 years
UQU3	Umm Al-Qura	Assistant Professor & Acting Dean	9 years
UQU4	Umm Al-Qura	Assistant Professor	4 years
DM4	Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal (Dammam)	Associate Professor & Faculty Deputy	8 years
SU3	Shaqra	Student	4 years
KAU4	King Abdulaziz	Vice President	35 years
TIU3	Taif	Associate Professor & Faculty Dean	8 years

As the participant recruitment in qualitative research is guided by the need to collect information-rich data (Parry, 2003), the groups of participants are generally smaller than those of quantitative analysis-based studies. The

recruitment is based upon the need to interview people that have lived the phenomenon in the study, i.e., the constant improvement from a cultural, organisational point of view. The richness of their detailed experiences and the continuous comparison between data and analysis will allow the researcher to add more participant as needed. Therefore, our study uses the so-called **purposive sample**, where new individuals will be added to the initial group of participants as the continuous data collection-analysis process is pursued.

Purposive or purposeful sampling is considered appropriate for conducting this research. Purposeful sampling involves the careful selection of participants likely to provide information with the necessary depth and variation, in terms of both degree of breadth, to address a given problem (Patton, 2002). It is based on preconceived guidelines (Breckenridge and Jones, 2009 citing Glaser, 1978). The researcher predetermines the type of participants before carrying out his study to be inclusive of administrators, academics and students. He also predetermined the data collection period to be from HEIs between November 2016 to January 2017. Selected participants, therefore, were required to fit into this framework. The researcher also predetermined the institutions to be studied, which consist of ten well-known data-rich universities from different geographical locations across four regions in Saudi Arabia: Central, North, East and West. Furthermore, this research relies on snowball sampling, which is a type of purposeful sampling where participants identify other rich sources of data for inclusion, leading to referral chains (Robinson, 2014). Although this type of sample is inherently biased, the bias is deliberate.

With specific reference to GT, there are no guidelines for the ideal number of participants for qualitative studies. The use of constant comparison and emergent analysis guides the sampling procedures (Gentles et al., 2015; Charmaz, 2006). Indeed, GT research is typical of qualitative studies in that sample sizes are small and the number of participants can vary based on the

needs of the study; sizes as small as four (Clegg, 2003) and as much as 28 (Glacken et al., 2003) and 55 (Rogan et al., 1997) have been demonstrated.

Additionally, studies consistently refer to the **theoretical saturation** of a category as the stage at which a researcher can abandon further sampling (Morse, 2007; Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006). Saturation is the stage at which identified core theoretical categories are accounted for as conclusively as possible (O'Reilley and Parker, 2013; Gentles et al., 2015 citing Glaser and Strauss, 1967). According to Morse, 2007; Morse et al., 2016) category saturation is reached when the GT researcher is persuaded that they have a full understanding of what they see, are able to identify it in many forms and feel it is consistent with the culture. In this research, chain referral sampling was used to select 38 interviewees. Although a sense of saturation was reached after the 33rd interview, the researcher continued for another five interviews, three of which were interviews in a focus group, hoping to gain further novel explanations. When this did not occur, as per Morse, 2007; Morse et al., 2016) saturation was presumed to have been reached.

4.6 Types of data

This study will use both secondary and primary sources of data. This is consistent with Goulding 's (2005) assertion that GT permits a wide range of data, and Glaser and Strauss' (1967) dictum that "all is data."

Primary data is that which is collected specifically for the study underway. Methods of collecting primary data within a qualitative study, as is the case in this instance, include observation, interviews and focus group discussions (Aldridge & Cameron,1999). The data for this study was collected through interviews, focus group discussions and a questionnaire-based survey. The face-to-face interviews sought to obtain primary data through the researcher's

personal interchange with the participants. Using interviews facilitates the generation of participant-led data, which forms the basis for theory development (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010; Charmaz, 2010) and participant–researcher face-to-face interaction generates new knowledge (Charmaz, 2006). The focus group was used after the first codification stage in the data analysis process, with the objective of allowing the participating interviewees to discuss the first aspect and demand their revision and subsequent approbation. The questionnaire was employed to establish the present state of continuous improvement in high education and the ideal point to which Saudi high education should move. Lastly, the observation data has been consigned to the field journal where the researcher recorded their impressions and decision making throughout this study.

The secondary data used in this study provides a baseline for the researcher and clarifies the identification of an appropriate research design. Thus, following the principles of Strauss-Corbin’s grounded theory perspective, it is possible for this research to approach data and also consider the existing knowledge on the field, i.e., secondary sources, which include other existing research, company reports, official surveys and academic research journal reports, published books and articles from periodicals and journals, as well as online resources (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.7 Instruments for data collection

This study will use different data gathering instruments. Indeed, survey, face-to-face interviews, focus groups, direct observation, as well as field notes have been employed during the data collection period. Each instrument will be presented in the following section.

4.7.1 Open-ended interviews

This study used an open-ended, issue-focused interviewing method because it is suitable for surfacing an organisation's cultural aspects and allows the researcher to drill down to specific aspects of a phenomenon. In the case of culture, this includes deriving assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that constitute the tacit components of organisational culture (Sackmann, 1991). Open-ended, issue-focused interviews have been used in organisational culture studies (Alkhorraif and McLaughlin, 2018; Al Shehri, 2017; Taylor and Goates, 2017; Almainan and McLaughlin, 2016). While Sackmann (1991) avers that a focused interview can use multiple issues as a way of surfacing cultural assumptions and beliefs, in this study, the chosen issue was the need to identify the cultural drivers of CI in Saudi's HEIs. Involving participants who are experiencing the issue under investigation enabled the researcher to obtain participant interpretive perceptions of the influence of cultural organisation on CI within their institutions.

4.7.1.1 Interview settings

All of the face-to-face interviews with male participants were conducted in their offices at their universities (a calm and quiet environment) to assure the freedom of these exchanges. However, mainly due to cultural and religious reasons, the face-to-face interviews with female participants were conducted in a public place (while taking care to choose a calm and quiet

public location). Lastly, it should be noted that, for both male and females participants, confidentiality and anonymity were assured.

4.7.1.2 Interview protocol

A moderately structured interview guide was used by the researcher as a way of ensuring that key issues that were identified pre-interview were consistently addressed. According to McNamara (2009), some principles to be followed during the preparation stage of interviewing include explaining the purpose of the interview, addressing confidentiality issues, explaining the interview format and answering any pre-interview questions informants may have. There are, however, conflicting opinions on whether or not to use structure during interviews. McNamara (2009) and Creswell (2009) recommend that a guide be used because it facilitates the provision of more focused data. Others discourage the use of a guide recommending, instead, that in GT, interviews should not have a prescribed format (Goulding, 1999) as this may impair the interviewees' free contribution. Given the need to deal with the realities within a limited timeframe, the interviewees were only asked two questions which were:

1. Could you give an example of when continuous improvement has worked well?
2. Could you give an example of when continuous improvement did not work well or perhaps something went wrong?

The interviews commenced with an introduction of the researcher and a concise description of the study objectives, assuring the interviewee of the confidentiality of the interview, explaining the interview format and answering any pre-interview questions informants had. The two main questions presented to interviewees were tailed by follow up questions to clarify some of their answers.

To facilitate free expression, all of the interviews were conducted in Arabic. Participants were allocated ample time to respond to questions as the researcher did not interject during the course of question answering. Although it is important for participants to freely address issues without the researcher's interjection, it is also important for the researcher to encourage participants to elaborate on their answers (Patton 2002). Furthermore, issues that lacked relevance to the research questions were not pursued. The researcher intermittently refocused the discussion consistent with the broad question at hand and knowledge derived from the literature review (Pidgeon, 1996; Strauss, 1987).

The last part of each interview was given over to open discussion and responding to questions raised by the interviewee. This is consistent with Yin's (2009) recommendation that interviews should be more conversational and less constrained by structured questioning. The average duration of the interviews was an hour. The longest interview was an hour and forty-five (45) minutes and the shortest was thirty (30) minutes. Informed consent to record the interviews was obtained through the participant's signing an informed consent form. However, two participants refused to have their interview recorded and, therefore, the researcher took notes of the participants' answers. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), audio recording interviews is a way of ensuring that the researcher captures all of the salient issues raised in the interview. Both recordings and notes were further supplemented by the researcher's observation of the interview surroundings, which he recorded in writing and considered during the analysis stage.

The researcher transcribed each interview soon after it ended, while details were still fresh in the mind. This also accorded the researcher the opportunity to clarify issues while the interviewee still remembered what transpired during the interview. Summaries of interview transcripts were prepared and these were sent to interviewees so that the facts and interpretations may be verified.

Two participants preferred to have the actual recording of the interview sent to them for verification purposes and their desire was met.

It should be noted that returning to the participants with the results of the transcript or the records of interviews is part of the triangulation strategy that looks to assure the confirmability and validity of this study. Equally, it should be noted that, according to Saunders et al. (2012), this strategy assists in controlling possible researcher bias or misunderstanding by redirecting the transcription and considering the participants' suggestions, with the aim of ensuring that the data collected was reliable (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.7.2 Observations and field notes

Concomitant to the interviews, the researcher has generated observations and field notes consigned in his field journal. Maintaining systematic field notes is consistent with the canons of Grounded Theory, as it was expressed by Clarke (2003) and Corbin and Strauss (1990). Field notes include the researcher's thoughts and observations, aspects of the context of the study, participant facial expressions, and gestures, as well as any decisions taken during data collection or data analysis. The detailed circumstances and reasons that have led to a new decision were consigned in the field journal. This is another strategy to improve the reliability of the findings. This strategy is supported by the arguments developed by Cho and Lee (2014) concerning how fieldnotes enrich and complement primary data. Equally, Denzin and Lincoln (2000; 1994) and Guba and Lincoln (2005), coincide to states that this assures the trustworthiness of the data analysis and interpretations.

4.7.3 Focus group

The focus group interview can be defined as a technique to collect data where a group of participants offer their opinion about a specific topic, discuss them amongst themselves and arrive at some conclusions while also interacting with the researcher, who acts only as the facilitator of the exercise (Vaughn et al., 1996; Kitzinger, 1995). In this study, the lower-level codes that emerged from analysing the thirty-eight (38) face-to-face interviews conducted in ten university organisations were presented to the participants of the focus group in order to assure their acceptance and require their participation to lead these initial lower-level codes to a higher and denser level, i.e., a central theme. At the end of the focus group discussion, participants were able to develop eight high-level codes or themes.

It should be noted that the focus group equally allows the researcher to mitigate biases and beliefs because the initial aspects were modified in light of the opinions and beliefs of each of the individuals who participated in the focus group. A triangulation strategy helped preserve the maximum possible level of objectivity within the final study findings.

Returning to the focus group strategy's development, it should be said that the eight themes were researched in the literature to establish what will be the ideal version of a CI culture, i.e., the ideal level of each theme and towards which Saudi higher education institutions should move. Finally, a self-assessment survey was distributed to participants in a number of Saudi university organisations to gauge their proximity to the ideal. The survey characteristics will be the object of the next section.

4.7.4 Survey

The survey component of data collection involved administering a questionnaire survey among some participants in order to make a specific assessment between the current and ideal situation of constant improvement in Saudi HEIs. Although surveys are usually associated with quantitative studies, in this instance, the survey was meant to assist the researcher to quantify and present a visual impression of the ideal situation compared to the current, in order to understand the areas of improvements. This is consistent with Patton's (1991) view, who argues that a qualitative researcher can also use quantitative processes to decipher patterns emerging from the data.

Following on from the results of the interviews and focus group discussions, the researcher sent out a questionnaire to participants in a number of Saudi universities. The questionnaire survey was intended to provide comparative data between the ideal position of the themes and the current practices. The questionnaire consisted of a seven-level assessment scale, which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (Vagias, 2006).

Thus, the survey allowed for the establishment of two portraits, that of the current situation and that of the ideal situation according to the participants' perspectives. The findings of the survey indicated a gap between the current practices of this study's eight themes and the themes' ideal positions. All of the survey respondents considered the practices of the eight themes within the Saudi universities as not supportive of the ideal culture of CI.

It should be noted that the outcomes of this survey gave us a reference to take into account the participants' point of views at the moment of designing and developing a framework of interventions, which will help to leverage the organisational culture to facilitate continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia's HEIs. Indeed, after this assessment, proposed interventions were developed to help organisations shift gradually towards the ideal position of a continuous

improvement culture. These interventions were developed from the basis of the literature and main study data.

4.8 Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research

Internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity are the marks of rigor in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be seen in the trustworthiness of the results which have elements of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A specific strategy to support the credibility of qualitative findings was identified by Lincoln & Guba (1985) and further developed by Creswell (2009).

On the one hand, Creswell (2009) highlighted eight specific techniques, at least two of which he believed must be employed in any valid qualitative study. Such techniques include peer review, triangulation, negative case analysis, participants' validation, reflexivity (clarifying researcher bias), thick description and external audits. On the other hand, Angen (2000) has identified limitations with the use of four of these specific criteria. Criticisms of member checking are that respondents' views may have changed and they may disagree with the researcher's interpretation, which raises the question of whose interpretation is right. Reflexivity has been criticised on the basis that it is an attempt to obtain objectivism, on the basis that distance is being sought between the self and the work (Angen, 2000). Triangulation is problematic for qualitative researchers on the basis that it assumes some objective reality to be converged upon. Peer review is also not recommended on the basis that peers can never have the same involvement with the information as the principle investigator had (Angen, 2000).

Despite these criticisms, credibility is needed (particularly when using Grounded Theory methodology), to make substantive contributions to

knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Thus, Creswell's (2008) techniques can be seen as a method to enable qualitative researchers to apply rigour to their research. As this study is looking to develop a substantive theory, generalisability and reliability are not an issue because the focus is on presenting a detailed understanding of the specific case of CI in higher education from a cultural organisation perspective in the KSA. Specific actions taken by the researcher to ensure trustworthiness are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11: Actions taken to ensure quality and reliability

Technique	Definition	Action in this research
Credibility Triangulation	The validation of data against other sources. (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999)	Methods employed to triangulate the data included conducting interviews with three type of HEI stakeholders (administrators, academics and students) to examine the data from different perspectives
Participants' validation	Researcher going back to participants to check the accuracy of the interview transcripts or of the researcher's interpretation of what was said (Seale, 1999)	A copy of each participant's transcript was returned to them to examine their validity. Following participant's validation of the transcripts, the researcher provided them with a list of the aspects identified from the transcripts and requested feedback on the interpretation of the participant's words
Peer Review	Inviting objective peers to check aspects of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.308)	Researcher provided some of the data to a fellow researcher in the same field and asked them to analyse it
Transferability Thick description	Describing data in detail in order to evaluate the transferability of the conclusions made	Researcher described, in detail, the participants' positions within HEIs, using participants' direct words. Described in detail the methodology used and the interpretation of findings

	(Lincoln and Guba, 1985)	
Dependability Audit trail	Detailed description of research steps up to the reporting of the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)	Clear steps in collecting data that should be implemented in the same way every time, applying inter-rater reliability assessment, documenting all the materials used in data collection and analysis
Confirmability Audit trail	Focuses on end results	Describing the details of the social settings which allow the reader to decide how far they resemble other social settings

The table above specifies the strategies that the researcher has employed to assure the reliability and validity of the study. To diminish the personal biases, the researcher asked a research fellow to follow his data analysis process; in remaking the data analysis process, the researcher assures that his subjectivity, beliefs and values were mitigated by comparing the outcomes of both data analysis processes. In this comparison, some aspects mentioned by the researcher were corroborated by the second analysis. However, the aspects that were different in both analyses were re-discussed in order to arrive at a common assumption. These shared conclusions were taken into consideration and adopted. Likewise, the focus group allows for the mitigation of the initial researcher's subjectivity because the initial codes were presented to be analysed by the people participating in the focus group.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the study's methodology and methods. Guided by Saunders et al.'s (2012) Onion framework, the study's research design was presented as constructivist and as making use of Grounded Theory principles for data collection and analysis. The study's

target population together with the purposive sampling procedures to be used were explained and discussed. The use of interviews for data collection was explained and the procedures used were discussed at length. Aspects of data analysis were, however, left out as they overlap with the findings and will therefore be discussed in the next chapter. The chapter ended by presenting the mechanisms that will be used to ensure trust worthiness in the qualitative study. Chapter Four presents the study's findings and details the data analysis process.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA COLLECTION FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings from the three progressive primary data collection methods employed: interviews, focus group discussion and questionnaire survey. The chapter is divided into three sections: interviews and focus group-based data collection and findings, discussion of findings in the context of extant literature, collection and analysis of survey-based questionnaire data that analyses the current and ideal situation in terms of the influencers of CI in HEIs.

5.2 Data collection

Data for the study was collected from the ten participating HEIs, which were purposefully selected to achieve representation (Table 12), and was based on the following two questions (as explained in details in chapter 4 section 4.7) :

- Could you give an example of when continuous improvement has worked well?
- Could you give an example of when continuous improvement did not work well or perhaps something went wrong?

Table 12: List of participating universities

University	Region	City	Type	Participant No.	Universities in Region
King Saud University	Najd	Riyadh	Public	4	15
Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University			Public	4	
Alfaisal University			Private	4	
Dar Al-Uloom University			Private	3	
Shaqra University		Shaqra	Public	4	
Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University (Dammam University)	Eastern Region	Dammam	Public	4	5
King Abdulaziz University	Western Region (Hejaz)	Jeddah	Public	5	7
Umm Al-Qura University		Mecca	Public	4	
Taif University		Tiaf	Public	3	
Tabuk University	Southern Region	Tabuk	Public	3	2

5.2.1 Qualitative interview

A qualitative interview-based approach was adopted to collect information. Participant interviews were undertaken in four phases. In phase I, interviews were conducted with eight participants obtained from the list provided by a university's Dean of Quality and Development, who was chosen due to his position. The purpose of this phase was to assess the effectiveness of the interview format and acquire an initial appreciation of cultural assumptions and beliefs and their influence on the implementation of CI.

Phase II involved eight participants, selected based on recommendations made by Phase I participants. The phase aimed to discover more success and or failure stories, revealing more OC enablers and/or inhibitors to CI. The

participants were requested to recommend people to be included in Phase III of the study.

Phase III was conducted with ten participants, again in order to explore success stories and accordingly identify more enablers and inhibitors to CI. These participants were asked to recommend other personnel for participation in phase IV of this study. The final phase was conducted with twelve participants, with the aim of identifying more enablers and inhibitors and assessing whether saturation was satisfied or not. It is noteworthy that, throughout the four stages, interviews were analysed to extract relevant data before moving to the following phase.

5.3 Data analysis

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Strauss and Corbin (1994; 1990), in Grounded Theory, data analysis starts immediately after collecting the first piece of data and involves concept generation, i.e. a category made up of similar codes grouped by properties and dimensions, development and verification. There are five tenets of GT analysis: coding, theoretical sampling, constant comparison, categorising, saturation of categories, and theoretical sensitivity, all of which have guided this analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1994; 1990; Tan, 2010). The following stages were followed: familiarity with data through listening to the audio recordings and re-reading transcripts; generating initial codes; themes development, review and naming. In this regard, the analysis followed a five-stage process, as illustrated in Figure 11.

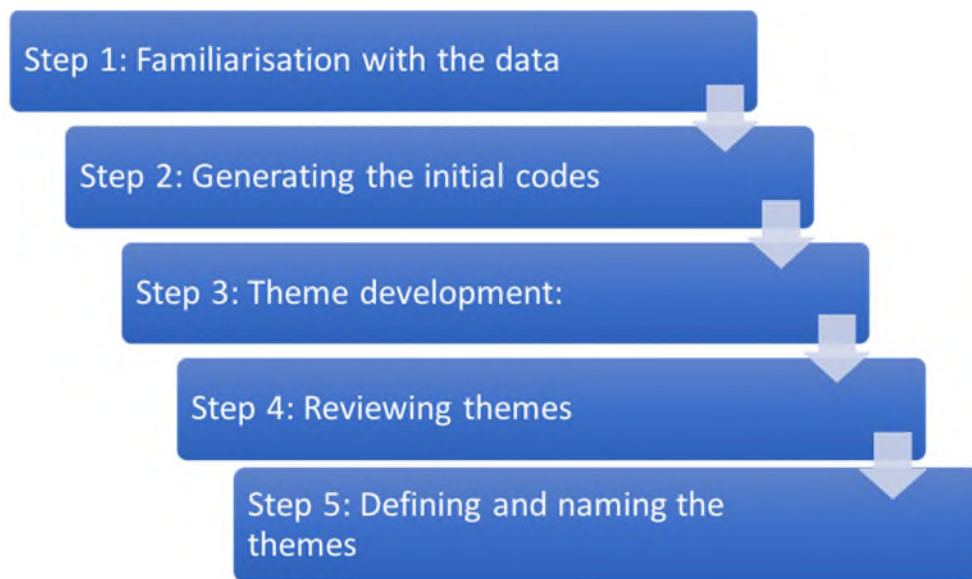


Figure 10: Data analysis process

5.3.1 Familiarization with the data

Data analysis started with the researcher familiarizing himself with the data by listening to the audio recordings and reading the field notes. The researcher further familiarized himself with the data by transcribing the recordings and then re-reading the transcripts. Using the transcription of interviews as the first step of data analysis is an effective way for the researcher to begin familiarising themselves with the data (Stuckey, 2014). Bird (2005) argues that such a transcription process should be considered “*a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology*”. It is believed that the transcription process should not be mechanical, whereby spoken sounds are recorded on paper, rather, it should be recognized as part of the interpretation process, where meanings are actually developed (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006; Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). Therefore, the researcher, while not transcribing everything stated in the interviews, as some interviews go out of context, nonetheless did not insert new information into the transcripts. Furthermore, the researcher, based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006)

suggestion, actively familiarised himself with the data by looking for issues of interest, as well as possible relationships between such issues. During the familiarisation stage, the researcher categorised potentially relevant issues, identified and grouped patterns of meaning and their linkages and took copious notes to be used to generate coding ideas.

5.3.2. Generating codes and themes development

Following the researcher's data familiarisation, he developed an initial list of thoughts regarding the content of the data, and what could be considered interesting, following the research questions as a guide. The second stage of this process was that of generating data-based initial codes that formed the labels allocated to segments of the data from the transcripts and field notes (Strauss and Corbin, 1994;1990, Henning et al., 2004; Neuman, 2011). Coding is an integral stage of the analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994) because the researcher is arranging his data into meaningful units (Tuckett, 2005). NVivo software was used to organize the transcribed text into meaningful groups. The total process of data analysis followed three stages: open, axial and selective coding consistent with Strauss and Corbin (1994; 1990), Neuman (2011), and Thiétart (2007). Themes were then developed, reviewed, named and defined.

The five-stage process ,as illustrated in Figure 11 ensured the systematization of the main data (unstructured interviews and observations) by arranging them thematically to come up with research data representing logical patterns of meanings, as is shown in table 13.

Table 13: Aspects (codes) that were responsible for the performance of CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia

NO.	Aspects	Description	Frequency
1	Technology utilisation	The continuing update and effective utilisation of technology as an integral part of the daily activities in HEIs	31
2	Incentives	Employees are motivated to do well through both financial and non-financial incentives	28
3	Equality	The equal treatment of employees, regardless of their relationship proximity to a decision maker, or on their intrinsic characteristics which includes if they are tribal or not, and/or if they are nationals or expatriates	27
4	Local-international organisational collaboration	Coordination of efforts either within an organisation or with other organisations to achieve a set goal	26
5	Develop curriculum to meet international standards	The use of different educationally developed country curriculums to guide the development of the Saudi universities' curriculums, in order to improve their positions in international rankings and meet the best education indicators worldwide	26
6	Employee skills development	Enhancing employees' ability to execute their jobs by training them and equipping them with the required skills	24
7	Exchange of expertise	Enabling academics to interact with field professionals to ensure the relevance of the educational output. Both academics and professionals benefit from each other, whereby the latter provides real-life experience issues, and the former studies such issues and provides possible solutions. The former has real-life issues to research and teach and the latter provides possible solutions for these issues	22

NO.	Aspects	Description	Frequency
8	Top-down encouragement	Where top management build a motivating environment with their employees through showing interest in the staff as individuals, praising and recognising their efforts and providing them with feedback and guidance where needed	18
9	Competing for better academic accreditation	The universities' use of academic accreditation from well-known international institutions as competitive tool for better recognition	18
10	Leadership influence significance	Leaders' influence relies on them perceiving the future of their institutions through a strategic vision of how their institutions should look when the vision targets are achieved, and mobilising resources and people to follow the leaders' footsteps. Their importance lies in their ability not only to guide the direction to achieve the vision, but also to convince relevant people of the possibility of such a vision and motivate them to achieve it	18
11	Change resistance	Change initiatives are met with refusal and resistance due to a fear of change. University staff fear that change initiatives might affect their personal work experience, as well as their cultural and religious values	17
12	Cultural hegemony	The domination of cultural values over the way HEIs operate, through strongly influencing the ideas, values, norms and even the expectations of such institutions.	16
13	Bureaucracy as a barrier	All the processes and decision-making processes are linked to one person or entity, who must give their assent before any further steps can be taken.	16
14	Strategic planning	The timetabling of the university's long-term vision performance and objectives	16

NO.	Aspects	Description	Frequency
15	Attraction of qualified employees	Attracting employees with impressive qualifications to drive change for development	16
16	Provide an appropriate study environment	Maintaining a suitable environment for all the university's stakeholders to achieve their goals	16
17	Improvements through regular reflection	Frequent reflection by universities to examine the organisation's recent performance in order to seek improvements	15
18	Social responsibility contribution	The university assumes, strategically plans and carries out its responsibilities towards resolving some societal issues	14
19	Collective decision making	Before any decision or suggestion for a change initiative is implemented, it is processed and discussed with the members of staff, rather than with a single manager which encourages them to participate in decision-making processes	14
20	Infrastructural needs	Universities must provide the appropriate equipment and facilities that are deemed necessary for the provision of an appropriate environment for its stakeholders to carry out their roles effectively	13
21	Management accessibility	Managers are easily reached by their employees and students in both a formal and informal capacity.	13
22	Lack of awareness of regulations and procedures	University stakeholders' lack of awareness of their rights and obligations within the institution, which make them vulnerable to abuse and manipulation	12
23	Research supporting environment	Providing the research essentials in order for them to effectively carry out their research, e.g. utilities and funds for researchers	12

NO.	Aspects	Description	Frequency
24	Leadership support importance	The university managers' provision of appropriate support to both employees and students to execute their obligations and/or achieve their goals, through facilitating easier accessibility to the necessary logistical, administrative and/or financial support	11
25	Enhancing academic counselling	Providing an academic help point for any academic issues	11
26	Exposure to foreign education	Sending their students to acquire knowledge from an internationally known academic institution as part of their academic progression	10
27	Loyalty	The university employees enjoy a sense of belonging that drives them to work in the university's best interests	10
28	Staff empowerment via delegation	Empower employees by providing them with the appropriate level of independence to execute their roles	10
29	Lack of employee productivity	Employees use their time at the university to socialise, as opposed to working productively	10
30	Welfare environment arrangements	Providing welfare facilities that help enhance the welfare of employees/students	10
31	Teamwork	Facilitating a teamwork environment, wherein a group of employees or students work collaboratively to achieve/execute their respective goals/obligations	10
32	Enthusiasm towards work	Employees feel energetic and passionate about their work to the extent that they work beyond their legal obligations to achieve the necessary results	10
33	Monitoring and accountability	Supervising activities in progress to ensure they are meeting the objectives and performance targets and holding individuals responsible when such targets are not effectively achieved	10

NO.	Aspects	Description	Frequency
34	The promotion of voluntary work	Motivating the university's stakeholders to participate in an uncompensated work	10
35	Mismanagement of human resources	Human resources are inappropriately utilised when the tasks are assigned to unqualified individuals who may be better positioned executing other tasks. Such lack of qualification emerges when an individual is assigned a task where they lack specialisation, or where they do not have enough experience to effectively execute the task	9
36	Respect-driven performance	Employee–manager mutual respect acts as a driver of good performance	9
37	Employment trust relationship	The existence of a trust relationship among employees and between employees and employers	8
38	Abuse of power	When employees use their job powers for personal gain	7
39	Financial resources obstacles	Universities suffer from lack of funds since they are totally dependent upon government funding, resulting in more focus on self-funding	7
40	Communication efficiency	An efficient communication system within the working environment resulting in better executed tasks	6
41	Intra-employment interaction benefits	When employees with different academic/role backgrounds effectively execute a certain task through interacting with one another	6
42	Participation in educational competitions	Students with high marks are given the chance to participate in educational contests to help develop and build their confidence and mix with future colleagues	5

NO.	Aspects	Description	Frequency
43	Reputation-driven improvements	The university's desire to maintain its reputation for proud achievements, which includes its research outcomes, its teaching experiences and its student satisfaction levels	5
44	Complicated procedures as a barrier	Sophisticated procedural requirements often lead to delays in the execution of tasks	5
45	Dominance of religious powers	The domination of the religious principles over the way HEIs operate, through strongly influencing the ideas, values, norms and even expectations of such institutions	4
46	Alumni connection for self-assessment	University keeps in contact with its graduates in an organised manner and on a regular basis to self-examine how well they provided their past students with useful employment skills. They use such self-assessments to further develop their study programmes and ensure that past programme deficiencies are avoided, and employment beneficial programmes are given extra emphasis	4
47	Efficient resource use	The efficient use of the university's finance, personnel, infrastructure and other assets in a strategic manner. The proper management of the university's finance, investment in its personnel and infrastructure, and the utilisation of any of its other assets to meet its long-term targets	4
48	Over-burdening student finance	Academic requirements tend to over-burden students financially. Students are required to purchase specific study materials. Their academic success depends on their ability to acquire such materials, which might be difficult for some students since university finance is usually not sufficient to cover such costs	4
49	Partnership with other	Local Saudi universities are partnering with well-recognised overseas	3

NO.	Aspects	Description	Frequency
	international universities	universities to help share their educational experiences	
50	Partnership with private business	Making deals with private businesses to supply the university its material or personnel needs, and train and employ its students	3
51	Privatisation initiatives tendency	Initiatives that propose the transfer of public-owned facilities to the private sector	3
52	Feedback-driven improvement	Using employees/students' feedback in relation to their experiences within a university as a reflection tool in order to improve both the study and work environments	3
53	Academic and administrator role overlaps	The blurring line between academic and administrative roles, where an overlap between what each entails occurs, especially concerning managerial roles occupied by academics	3
54	Equity	The appropriate undertaking of decisions related to employees/students that are based on an objective criterion as opposed to decisions being driven by bias or the preferred benefit of one person at the cost of another	3
55	Dispute resolution	Disputes with other institutions tend to be managed in a way that negatively impact the university's employees. Due to an institutional disagreement with a bank, the university refuses to provide its employees with the bank's required documents for its services. The employees cannot enjoy the bank's services unless they provide specific work documents and the university refuses to provide such work documents for that specific bank	3
56	Lack of success documentation and recognition	Documenting and sharing successful implementation of certain CI initiatives, either within a university or with fellow local universities	2

NO.	Aspects	Description	Frequency
57	Reporting issues	The tendency to avoid and failure to report any misconduct and shortcomings to the relevant department in the university. The tendency to cover for one another's misconduct, regardless of its potential impact	2
58	Obsession with maintaining facade	The university's over-emphasis on providing an appealing picture to outside stakeholders, at the cost of providing effective educational outcomes. The over-emphasis on infrastructural investments at the cost of efficient, knowledge-equipped professionals who are supposed to use such infrastructure. The over-emphasis on marketing courses to students at the cost of actually providing courses to students that equip them with the relevant skills to pursue their future careers	2
59	Employee self-confidence	Building employees' abilities to believe in themselves as efficient work executors whose contribution is essential to the development of the work. Such confidence is built by equipping employees with the required skills and equipment, encouraging them to do the required tasks, empowering them by delegating such tasks to them and providing them with frequent appropriate feedback	2
60	Work over-burdening	Work over-burdening is where employees/students are required to do work beyond their ability and are expected to carry out this work effectively. They might be overburdened with work-load, or with long working hours, which result in a low-achieving, stressed environment	2
61	Ambiguity of tasks	Lack of clarity between senior and junior lecturers' roles, results in the over-reliance of the former on the latter to carry out most lecturing tasks	2

NO.	Aspects	Description	Frequency
62	Unsustainable success	Universities' inability to maintain their successful achievements. Universities strive for certain accreditations, through planning and taking the appropriate steps to achieve the accreditations in question; however, their improving performance stops upon the achievement of such accreditation. The lack of post-achievement plans affects their ability to prolong their successful performance.	2

The process facilitated a systemised, step-by-step, logical approach to qualitative data analysis and assisted the researcher to compare and explain the data (as opposed to merely describing it), in order to learn the motivation and rationale of the study participants' responses (Thiétart, 2007).

5.3.3 Findings from interviews

The first step of open coding identified and named units of meaning derived from the field notes and interview transcripts. Open coding focuses on words, phrase consistency, context extensiveness, and the frequency and specificity of comments. Ninety-seven (97) units of meaning were extracted from transcripts and field notes; these were highlighted and descriptively labelled.

The second step, axial coding, involved reviewing and examining previously identified codes, identifying patterns and categories, and arranging them according to context, causality and coherence.

The final step involved selective scanning of all identified codes, drawing comparisons and linking them to the research topic, and subsequently developing core categories. The coding process concluded with 62 codes

(referred to as aspects in this research) that were responsible for the performance of CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia. The identified aspects could serve as either enablers or inhibitors of CI

The identified aspects were presented in Table 13, which shows in the first column the aspect and the order of its significance according to the number of times it was mentioned, while the second column provides a brief description of the aspect and the third column shows the number of interviewees who cited that particular aspect as an influencer of CI implementation.

The aspects in Table 13 have been examined against the existing literature to provide an overview of the current knowledge gap in the Saudi context. The researcher has searched the literature to discover whether these developed aspects already exist in the Saudi higher education-related literature. The researcher followed a four (4) stage exhaustive research criteria, where he firstly searched exhaustively for these aspects in the Saudi higher education-related literature; if not found, the researcher then attempted to find these aspects in other Saudi-related literature; if still not found, the researcher widened the search to include world-wide HEI-related literature; lastly, if all the previous stages were unsuccessful in this respect, then the researcher attempted to find such aspects in the general literature. The findings are divided into four groups as indicated in Table 14.

Table 14: Organisational cultural aspects in the literature

Aspects	Saudi Higher Education Institutions (HEI)	Saudi but Non-HEI	Non- Saudi HEI	Others
Technology utilisation	Alqarni, (2015)			
Incentives	Abdul-cader, et al (2014)			
Equality	Faridi, et al (2014)			
local-international organisational collaboration	Almansour (2015)			
Develop curriculum to meet international standards	Almazroa & Al-Shamrani, (2015)			
Employee skills development	Hasan, et al. (2016)			
Exchange of expertise	Khorsheed & Al-Fawzan (2014)			
Top down encouragement	Alzhrani et al, (2016)			
Competing for better academic accreditation	Alzhrani et al, (2016)			
Leadership influence significance	Larry Smith &Abouammoh (2013)			
Change resistance	Larry Smith &Abouammoh (2013)			
Cultural hegemony	Zaidi, et al (2016)			
Strategic planning	Onsman (2011)			
Attraction of qualified employees	Shin, et al (2012)			
Provide an appropriate study environment	Alhazimi, et al (2004)			
Improvements through regular reflection	Alqahtani (2010)			
Social responsibility contribution	Alharthey (2016)			
Collective decision making	Larry Smith &Abouammoh (2013)			
Employment trust relationship		Ben Mansur (2013)		
Financial resources obstacles	Almansour (2015)			
Abuse of power			Waite & Allen (2003)	
Communication efficiency	Ezzeldin (2017)			
Intra-employment interaction benefits			Weger (2009)	
Participation in educational competitions			Yuging, et al (2010)	
Reputation- driven improvements	Alzahrani, et al (2016)			
Complicated procedures as a barrier	Bawzeer (2015).			
Dominance of religious powers	Alresheed (2015)			
Efficient resource use	Hamdan (2015)			
Alumni connection for self-assessment			Bauer & Bennett (2003)	

Aspects	Saudi Higher Education Institutions (HEI)	Saudi but Non-HEI	Non- Saudi HEI	Others
Over-burdening student finance			McPherson, (2012)	
Dispute resolution			KatzJameson (1998)	
Infrastructural needs	Larry Smith &Abouammoh (2013)			
Management accessibility	Gonaim 2015			
Research supporting environment	Aldiab, et al (2016)			
Lack of employee productivity	Allui & Sahni (2016)			
Lack of awareness of regulations and procedures		Al-amoudi (2017)		
Leadership support importance	Hamdan (2015)			
Enhancing academic counselling	Noaman & Ahmed (2015)			
Bureaucracy as a barrier	Alamri (2011)			
Exposure to foreign education	Taylor & Albasri (2014)			
Loyalty	Onsman (2010)			
Staff empowerment via delegation	Gonaim (2015)			
The promotion of voluntary work	Alfares, <i>et al</i> (2013)			
Welfare environment arrangements				Odeku & Odeku, (2015)
Teamwork	Larry Smith &Abouammoh (2013)			
Enthusiasm towards work	Allui & Sahni (2016)			
Monitoring and accountability	Larry Smith &Abouammoh (2013)			
Respect driven performance	Al-Hendy (1995)			
Mismanagement of human resources	Allui & Sahni (2016)			
Equity	Al-Yami (2016)			
Partnership with other international universities	Almansour (2015)			
Partnership with private business	Al-Hawaj, et al (2008)			
Privatisation initiatives tendency	Sager (2016)			
Feedback driven improvement	Hamdan (2015)			
Academic / administrator role overlaps			Smart (2006)	
Lack of success, documentation and recognition		Albugami (2016)		
Ambiguity of tasks			Schulz (2013)	
Reporting issues	AL-Omri (2013)			

Aspects	Saudi Higher Education Institutions (HEI)	Saudi but Non-HEI	Non- Saudi HEI	Others
Obsession with maintaining facade		Alyami, (2016)		
Employee self-confidence	AlDoubi, (2014)			
Work Over-burdening	Hasan & Gupta (2013)			
Unsustainable success	Alrebeish (2017)			

Although the cited literature generally does not address the individual aspects in relation to CI, it nonetheless talks about their importance within their cited contexts and, thus, indirectly reflects its importance to CI. For example, within Saudi HEI-related literature, Almansour (2015) discusses the international collaboration challenges faced by Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University. Khorsheed and Al-Fawzan (2014) talk about the importance of collaboration among academics and industry practitioners. Alhazimi, et al. (2004) examine the importance of the educational environment of the medical school in king Abdul Aziz university. Furthermore, within Saudi non-higher education literature, Ben Mansur (2013) talks about how trust factors affect business relationships in Saudi Arabian companies. Al-amoudi (2017), while talking about health rights in Saudi Arabia, addresses health professionals' lack of awareness of health rules and the regulations of the Saudi Ministry of Health. In addition, for those aspects in worldwide higher education-related literature, Waite and Allen (2003) address the corruption and abuse of power in educational administration in different countries, and Bauer and Bennett (2003) discuss how Alumni perceptions have been used to examine undergraduate research experience. Lastly, Welfare environment arrangements are the only aspect not found in the previous categories, which has been addressed by Odeku and Odeku, (2015), who examined the importance of employee welfare facilities to the success of an organisation. Accordingly, it is clear that these aspects are essential components of the CI efforts in any organisation and especially in HEIs.

5.4 Focus Group Discussion and Development of Themes

In order to further analyze and validate the main study findings, there was a need to group the sixty-two (62) identified codes from the coding process into higher-level codes (themes). By definition, a focus group is a structured interview or discussion, involving a certain group of individuals who are brought together to discuss a predefined, specific and limited topic, with the direction of a moderator or facilitator (Blackburn, 2000; Robinson, 1999). A focus group comprising some of the main study participants (Table 15) was tasked to critically discuss the list of identified aspects and group them into meaningful themes. The procedure involved arranging different codes into possible themes, as well as organising all the appropriate extracted codes within the arranged themes. The researcher's role in this exercise was limited to that of facilitator.

Table 15: Focus group demographics

Participant Code	University Name	Participant Role at Their University	Experience
1.KSU1	King Saud	Associate Professor & Faculty Dean	25 years
2. IU1	Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud	Administrator	17 years
3. KSU4	King Saud	Professor	14 years
4. IU4	Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud	Assistant Professor	9 years
5. SU4	Shaqra	Associate Professor & Faculty Dean	11 years
6. IU2	Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud	Faculty Deputy	8 years
7. AU2	Alfaisal	Professor	12 years
8. DA3	Dar Al-Uloom	Faculty Deputy & Assistant Professor	8 years

5.4.1 Extraction of themes

The sixty-two (62) aspects obtained (Table 13) from the main data, together with the text that represented the context from which the aspects were collated, were emailed to focus group members three days before the scheduled focus group meeting. This enabled the participants to gain an overview of the identified cultural aspects. The meeting was held in a private conference room in Riyadh city. The meeting with the focus group participants commenced with the researcher welcoming the participants and presenting them with a description of the organisational culture aspects on A4 paper. They were then asked to place the most similar aspects in groups. Initially, some participants found it difficult to get started, but after encouraging them to discuss their thoughts with other participants, they started grouping the aspects together. Within an hour, all aspects were grouped into six broad categories of similar aspects, which were potential themes, as exposed in Table 16 below.

Table 14: Grouping of aspects to produce themes and participant description of themes

Themes	Grouped aspects	Participants' description of the theme
External Engagement	Social responsibility Contribution Cultural hegemony	This theme is formed by aspects that are most related to engagement with entities external to the HEIs. The aspects related to this theme are externally oriented from the university since they concern the institution's influence in society and vice versa
Institutional Management	Leadership influence significance Top-down encouragement Management accessibility Promotion of voluntary work Respect-driven performance Staff empowerment via delegation Teamwork Monitoring and accountability Collective decision making Employment trust relationship Incentives Leadership support importance Loyalty	This theme refers to an institution leaders' role in managing different activities and programmes to achieve the institution's primary goals. The aspects contained under this theme signify how effective management of institutions should appear and what techniques are needed to achieve such effective institutional management
Skills Enhancement	Exposure to foreign education Enhancing academic counselling Providing an appropriate study environment Employee skills development Welfare environment arrangements	This theme relates to the adoption of measures required to enhance the university's staff and students with relevant skills to ensure their ability to execute their assigned tasks

Themes	Grouped aspects	Participants' description of the theme
Institutional Strategies	Strategic planning Attracting qualified employees Improvements through regular reflection Research supporting environment Intra-employment interaction benefits Partnership with other international universities Partnerships with private business Privatisation initiative tendencies Feedback-driven improvement Participation in educational competitions Alumni connection for self-assessment Efficient resource use	This refers to a universities' ability to set an aim of what they want to become and work on long- and short-term plans to achieve their aims. The aspects in this theme cover different techniques that are believed to be important to the fulfilment of such plans
Development and Growth	Develop curriculum to meet international standards Exchange of expertise Competing for a better academic accreditation Enthusiasm towards work Reputation-driven improvements Local, international organisational collaboration Technology utilisation Communication efficiency	This theme refers to an HEI's eagerness to fascilitate an innovation-friendly, growth-supporting environment. The theme relates to the desire to build experience and gain knowledge from both inside and outside the scope of the HEIs, which are essential features of such innovation goals. This objective is achieved by both developing skilled personnel and making available the necessary equipment and facilities
Obstacles to Success	Resistance to change Obstacles to financial resources Complicated procedures as a barrier	This relates to success barriers that exist within the HEI environment. This theme groups the aspects that reflect such barriers, which are perceived to

Themes	Grouped aspects	Participants' description of the theme
	Over-burdening student finance Dominance of religious power Academic/administrator role overlaps Lack of success documentation and recognition Mismanagement of human resources Task ambiguity Obsession with facade Employee self-confidence Work over-burdening	be mostly a direct or indirect result of poor management
Ethical Issues	Equality between employees Equity Abuse of power Dispute resolution Reporting issues	This theme refers to the underlying ethical issues that negatively influence the values upon which the HEIs are founded. These aspects cover the notion of justice in terms of procedural fairness and disciplinary measure efficiencies
University Infrastructure	Lack of productivity Bureaucracy Lack of awareness of regulations and procedures Unsustainable success Infrastructural needs	This theme is related to the infrastructure in its cultural and physical terms. The cultural infrastructure of a university consists of the long-standing practices of successive working generations that have become an integral part of how a university operates. Regarding the physical infrastructure, this represents those resources necessary for the development and delivery of educational programs

5.4.2. Reviewing themes

Following the initial identification of potential themes, this stage involved the refining of the themes that were identified. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that data within every theme ought to meaningfully cohere together; however, every theme must also be clearly and identifiably distinct from one another. Therefore, the researcher asked the focus group to reconsider the six broader categories to ensure the clarity and distinction of the themes. He provided them with Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommended two-stage criteria for the refining and reviewing of themes. Firstly, during the coded data stage, participants determined whether the extracts are organised based on a coherent pattern. If so, the second stage determines whether the coherent pattern fits the candidate themes.

At this stage, the focus group lost its decision-making unanimity as some participants showed differences of opinions and the decisions were then taken by a majority. In arranging the themes and their underlying aspects, the focus group relied on their interpretations and subjective understanding of the data. The focus group's refinement was concluded with eight clear, distinct themes to represent the research data.

5.4.3 Defining and naming themes

The final analysis stage involved defining the developed themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the theme definitions entail the identification of the "essence" of every theme and the determination of what part of the data each theme covers. The development of such definitions was also a task assigned to the focus group, since they developed these themes. The researcher recommended that the focus group refresh their understanding of each theme before considering the applicable definition, and suggested they do this by revisiting each theme's data collated extracts, which the researcher provided to them before the initial theme development process.

As a result, the sixty-two (62) individual organisation culture aspects (OCA) were clustered into aggregate themes. These themes were empirically acquired via an inductive process through which the selected participants collectively refined their meanings and, thus, established their internal validity. The grouping of aspects to produce themes is demonstrated in Table 17, where the themes and their definition as developed by the participants are listed.

Table 17: Themes developed by participants in the focus group

Themes	Participants' description of the theme
External Engagement	Theme is formed by aspects that are most related to engagement, with external entities to the HEIs. The aspects related to this theme are externally oriented from the university, since they concern the institution's influence in society and vice versa
Institutional Management	Refers to an institution leaders' role in managing the different activities and programs that achieve such an institution's primary goals. The aspects contained under this theme signify how effective management of institutions should appear and what techniques are needed to achieve such effective institutional management
Skills Enhancement	Relates to the adoption of measures required to enhance the university's staff and students with relevant skills to ensure their ability to execute their assigned tasks
Institutional Strategies	Refers to the universities' ability to set an aim of what they want to become and work on long- and short-term plans to achieve their aims. The aspects in this theme cover different techniques that are believed to be important to the fulfilment of such plans.
Development and Growth	Refers to HEI's eagerness for the facilitation of an innovation-friendly, growth-supporting environment. This theme relates to the desire to build experience and gain knowledge from both inside and outside the scope of the HEIs, which are essential features for such innovation goals. This objective is achieved by both developing skilled personnel and making available the necessary equipment and facilities

Themes	Participants' description of the theme
Obstacles to Success	Relates to success barriers that exist within the HEI environment. This theme groups the aspects that reflect such barriers, which are perceived to be mostly a direct or indirect result of poor management
Ethical Issues	Refers to the underlying ethical issues negatively influencing the values upon which the HEIs are founded. These aspects cover the notion of justice in terms of procedural fairness and disciplinary measure efficiencies
University Infrastructure	Related to the infrastructure in its cultural and physical terms. The cultural infrastructure of a university is in the long-standing practices of successive working generations that have become an integral part of how a university operates. The physical infrastructure refers to the resources needed to develop and deliver educational programs

5.5 Analysis – themes in relation to literature and main data

This section attempts to provide a contextual understanding of the developed themes by analysing the data against the existing literature. It will provide a critical interpretive understanding of the data in order to identify how the developed themes are influential in terms of CI in HEIs. Each theme shall be discussed with regard to the existing literature, with the use of participant quotations to support such analysis. It will explain the extent of importance attributed to each theme by participants and will compare aspects within themes in order to emphasise aspects that are thought to be critical influencers for the success of CI, along with the aspects that participants regard as not having such importance. The researcher will not discuss every aspect in every theme, rather, he will use some aspects as samples to convey his conclusions. The researcher will rely on these aspects shown in Table 13 to discuss the importance of the individual aspects – according to this study's participants – and will rely on Table 18 to emphasise the themes' overall importance in the success of CI implementation in Saudi HEIs.

Following the development of eight, clearly distinct themes and the focus group’s definition of each theme, Table 18 illustrates each theme’s occurrence in the 38 interviews. This illustration indicates how some themes are felt to have more importance to CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia.

Table 15: Occurrence of themes in interviews

Interviewees	External Engagement	Institutional Management	Skills Enhancement	Institutional Strategies	Development and Growth	Obstacles to Success	Ethical Issues	University Infrastructure
1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
2		•	•	•	•	•	•	
3	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
4	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
5		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
6	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
7		•	•	•	•	•	•	
8	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
9	•		•	•	•	•		•
10		•	•	•	•	•	•	
11	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
12		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
13	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
14	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
15		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
16			•	•	•	•	•	•
17	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
18		•	•	•	•	•	•	
19	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
20		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
21		•	•	•	•		•	•
22	•		•	•	•	•		•
23	•	•			•	•	•	•
24		•	•		•		•	•
25	•	•		•	•		•	
26	•		•	•	•	•	•	
27	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
28		•	•	•	•	•	•	
29	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
30		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
31	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
32		•	•	•	•		•	
33	•	•		•	•			•
34		•	•	•	•	•	•	
35		•	•		•		•	•
36	•	•		•	•	•		
37	•	•	•	•	•	•		
38		•		•	•		•	•
Total	21	34	28	33	35	27	30	25

5.5.1 External engagement theme

The organisation's external engagement with outside society is of great significance in its pursuit for CI since it determines the relationship with one of its main stakeholders. According to Singh (2007), the notion of socially engaged universities relates to efforts to appropriate or assign universities to socially driven purposes. The university's role goes beyond knowledge production, dissemination or use (Audretsch, 2014; Guerrero, 2016; Ramaley, 2014), and their engagement with wider society is also expected to reflect their core values (Singh, 2007).

In this research, aspects of the external engagement theme were cited in 55% of the interviews, as shown in Table 18. This was the least-mentioned theme, which may be due to the participants' lack of awareness regarding their university's external engagements (we shall see later that there is a lack of corporate social responsibility (CSR) awareness in Saudi Arabia). On the other hand, this theme might be the least-cited because it also consists of the lowest number of aspects compared with other themes.

The **external engagement** theme is formed of two aspects, which are mostly related to engagement with society. These two aspects are a university's social responsibility (USR), which governs the university's societal contributions, and cultural hegemony (CH), which concerns how society's core beliefs and inherent practices influence how the university functions.

Social responsibility involves actions undertaken by an organisation to further the social good beyond legal compliance and the integration of both societal and organisational interests in the decision-making process; the converse approach being prioritising the organisation's own interests at the cost of the interests of wider society (McWilliams et al., 2006). The USR is exercised through the effective management of human resources, educational resources and environmental impacts by universities in a shared dialogue with the

university's own communities and society in general. Such management should include the encouragement of education regarding sustainable human development, service provision, teaching, and relevant research and scholarships, which all highlight an ethical cooperation between stakeholders within a university's own communities and/or with the wider society (Esfijani et al., 2012; Reiser, 2007; Vallaey, 2013). Accordingly, USR represents the voluntary practices of an assumed responsibility governing the university's influential inputs to the society in which it operates.

In the case of Saudi HEIs, it is clear that there is still a lack of effectively implemented USR practices. *KAU5* provides an example of his university's social responsibility; he states:

...one of our university's social responsibilities is the facilitation of evening concentrated skills courses for free, or at limited cost, for anyone who wants to enhance his/her skills, courses which have been hosting 'a variety of people in our society, such as soldiers, retired or unemployed people.

Although this seems a good practice in terms of university social responsibility, *TIU3* undermines such a presumption by stating that:

The provision of the evening courses, which is practised widely by universities across the kingdom, was supposed to play an important role in enhancing students' skills in their respective fields; however, the outcome of these courses is not satisfactory, and such courses have been mainly taken by soldiers and security forces personnel for promotion purposes only, as opposed to the actual enhancement of their skills.

Hence, although there is an attempt to be socially responsible, Saudi HEIs still lack an effective understanding and mode of implementation of USR, which would be recognised as an effective social influence.

Cultural hegemony (CH) is the second aspect of the **external engagement** theme. It refers to the strong influence or domination that is achieved through ideological means (Gramsci, 1978 cited in Cole, 2017). It could be understood as society's inherently strong influence on universities, whereby society mandates how universities operate through long-standing practices that are sometimes enacted as regulatory requirements. Cultural hegemony (CH) involves institutionalisation and the setting of standards and social policies regarding what is correct and what is not, usually derived from cultural ideologies (Lears, 1985). Within the Saudi HEI context, *UQU2* states that “one cultural practice that has been overcome was in relation to girls studying, which was, until the 1970s, culturally unacceptable; however, now females outnumber males in Saudi Arabia”. He further adds:

...however, up until now it is still culturally unacceptable and is practiced in many universities that male lecturers are not allowed to teach female students face to face, but have to be through a connected projector, as the lecturer will not be in the same room as his female students.

This view is supported by *DU4*, who stated that “the lack of direct communication between the lecturer and his students will have an effect on the students' learning, since the students will not be able to comfortably ask their questions, and the lecturers might not effectively answer them”. Adler (2008) argues that organisations having advanced integration and open channels to cultural diversity reveals signs of accomplishing the continuous enhancement of their internal environment. Therefore, it is believed that the university should be driving cultural output, assuming the role of moderator and

positively influencing the society's culture, as opposed to being at the receiving end of the society's culturally outdated practices.

In their previous exploration of continuous improvement, a number of researchers have considered CI to be a cultural concept, as opposed to it merely being a set of techniques or tools used by an organisation (Cameron, 1991; Powell, 1995; Lapiņa et al., 2012). The findings of several studies indicate that the successful implementation of CI is influenced by the hegemonic culture of the institution – society's input in the university (Cameron and Quinn, 2011) – and by the institution's social responsibility activities, which are the university's output in society (Zgaga, 2009). Accordingly, a major component of CI initiatives is the institution's external engagement with wider society, and the extent to which the latter has an influence on the institution. The extent to which this study's participants considered both aspects critical in influencing the successful implementation of CI was low. For example, only 42% of respondents regarded CH to be a factor that influences the successful implementation of CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia, while the remaining 58% did not attribute much importance to this aspect. This could be a result of an implied bias towards the practised culture in HEIs, since there is a lack of cultural diversity in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, only 37% of participants consider USR to be an important factor in the success of CI initiatives in Saudi Arabia, whereas the other 63% do not consider it to be important. This could result from the participants' unawareness of how effective USR is and the benefits that can emerge from its implementation. Informa Middle East (2015) confirmed this in a study that revealed a lack of a proper understanding of CSR. Therefore, if those who specialise in CSR do not fully understand what the term means or how CSR is conducted, it is not surprising that the study participants, who are not specialists in CSR, do not consider it to be an important factor for CI initiatives.

5.5.2. Institutional management theme

Institutional management is a cornerstone for every institution that ensures the successful implementation of work and the achievement of targets. It has been defined by this study's participant focus group as the "institution leaders' role in managing the different activities and programmes to achieve the institution's primary goals". Effective leadership represents a critical role in every organisation's performance, since it involves ensuring that there are guidelines, policies and infrastructure that facilitate effective role performance in the organisation (Baporikar, 2016). An organisation's leadership can assist it to achieve excellence, since it is the organisation's leaders that inspires employees to execute their work in an effective manner (Kok and McDonald, 2017; Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube, 2015; Wong, 2001). This argument shows that leadership significantly affects the success of institutions' CI initiatives.

Stensaker et al., (2014) highlighted how strategic changes in universities depend on leadership procedures relating to institutional decision-making, communication and evaluation. This supports the observed need for leaders to be more strategic in the manner in which they introduce change in an institution (Simmons, 1997). Effective leadership empowers all of an institution's stakeholders to develop a shared vision, enable an innovation and CI culture, and empower everyone in the institution to contribute their best work (Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube, 2015). Studies have indicated that leadership is a critical factor in the development of change (Collins, 2014; Mayo and Lank, 1994). Additionally, leadership has a significant influence on an organisation's culture (Ali et al., 2015). Accordingly, it seems clear that leaders have a significant impact on the planning and implementation of CI in HEIs.

The importance of the institutions' management to the success of CI in HEIs was confirmed by the findings of this empirical research. The theme comprised 14 different aspects and hence informs the wider and diverse nature of the theme of institutional management. This theme was cited in 90% of interviews, making it the second-most-cited theme, which is indicative of a general consensus regarding its importance. Out of these 14 aspects, several were highly cited by respondents as crucial. One significant aspect, identified by 28 interviewees, was the use of incentives for the people involved in the affairs of institutions, indicating that this is one of the most influential factors in the implementation of CI. It was identified that the lack of incentives for university employees played a major role in their poor performance and sometimes in their decision to leave the university. For instance, *KAU2* stated that *"the recent cuts in the financial income of university staff led to a large number of qualified personnel leaving the university to look for better opportunities in the private sector"*. On the other hand, *TIU2*, while explaining how incentives have been a positive force for CI, stated that:

...in our department, employees' productivity has been rewarded with training courses outside the KSA, which has not only acted as a skills enhancement method but also as a competitive way for employees to acquire such rewards and improve their performances.

The importance of incentives was also considered in the literature on effective enablers for the success of CI implementation. According to Alfandi and Alkawsaneh (2014), the facilitation of incentives is considered to be a primary factor in employees' encouragement and their work efficiency because the reward system or the provision of incentives directs employees' abilities in their work more efficiently, particularly as they aspire to achieve the goals of the institution. (Gana and Bababe, 2011). In addition, a lack of appropriate incentives in the workplace can adversely impact on the

performance of hardworking employees and reduce work productivity, consequently decreasing the possibility of institutional goals being achieved (Palmer, 2012). Pasaribu (2008) explained that the financial incentive is an important driving tool for employee loyalty and hard work because it drives individuals to satisfy the expectations of their workplace. Anthony and Bueno (1993) and Ronald (2015) further argue that incentives could increase employee loyalty, as well as their self-confidence. The motivating effect of incentives lies in the value employees' place on them, which depends on two conditions: 1) if employees believe that the desired reward is achieved through good performance, and 2) if they believe their effort could achieve this level. Locke and Braver (2008) explain that employees' own skills cannot sufficiently drive a culture of highly productive work and that incentive systems are instrumental in building employees' internal motivations, which leads them to work harder and more effectively.

Other aspects under this theme that were also highly cited by respondents. For example, about 47.5% of employees considered leadership influence significance and top-down encouragement to be prompting factors for CI implementation. For instance, while complementing his university chancellor SU1 stated:

Since he was appointed as our university chancellor, we started noticing different attitudes towards the development of the university, especially regarding academic departments. He started asking what used to be uncomfortable questions in the university, such as what each faculty vision is, and how far did they work to achieve such a vision, what has been the output of each faculty in terms of research and study outcomes, and what development steps faculties have taken, if any.

He explains how the chancellor's productivity-seeking behaviour was apparent *"in the first few months of his arrival; there was a widespread sense of a lack of comfort between faculty deans and their staff as they had not been used to such pressures."* SUI continues:

Two years since his appointment, I can tell you that we witnessed more productivity in the university and started witnessing more cooperation between faculties and different university departments to archive the university's overall vision of improvements.

On the flipside, UQU4 explained the negative influence of ineffective leaders by stating *"it has become normal that you don't find the faculty dean and you meet his secretariat, who would pass your enquiry to the dean when he comes to work"*. This is supported by TIU1, who revealed:

Our dean usually comes to work after 11am and takes some of the enquiries his secretariat has prepared for him, and locks himself in his office for a few hours, where he finishes some of the enquires. Also, a number of our department managers do not come to work on time; sometimes they are absent for 2–3 days a week and when they do come, they usually spend most of the time socialising.

Conversely, KAU5, confirming the importance of management encouragement, states:

...from personal experience, I found that individual encouragement by the direct manager, even if productivity is low, will increase employee productivity within a few months. ... " I found that with constant personal encouragement for employees, two primary factors are

gained: the employees' work loyalty and the productivity of such employees has been greatly reflected in the success of the faculty.

The notions of management influence and encouragement importance is confirmed by the literature. For example, Oliver (2009) investigated the impact of quality management practices through an empirical work, finding that a substantial number of respondents acknowledged receiving management-driven encouragement to work smarter, rather than work harder, to improve performance. Other studies confirmed this study's finding of the importance of ambitious envisioning by the leadership in the strategic planning and effective implementation of CI initiatives (Herrmann and Nadkarni, 2014; Holten and Brenner, 2015; Wong, 2001; Simmons, 1997; Mayo and Lank, 1994).

The last type of aspects are those that cited by respondents only to a limited extent in the case of CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia. Only 26% of respondents considered the presence of manager-driven initiatives aimed at empowering employees with an appropriate level of independence to be of relevant importance. *UQU2* states that:

One of the problems we face in our department is the individualisation of decision making, where almost every decision my colleagues and I take – small or big – has to be firstly approved by our manager. Therefore, when our manager is not at work, we don't feel confident enough to make decisions and we have to delay such decisions until he comes to work.

UQU2's statement is supported by DU1, who explained his frustration with the staff under his department: "I sometimes feel that my staff are school boys, as they come to me for every matter they face, despite the repeated request

that they attempt to address the matter in question before coming to me". It is believed that empowering employees through work delegation not only enhances their skills, but also provides a platform from which to nurture positive attitudes from the organisation's management, thereby facilitating improvement, confidence and organisational loyalty among employees (Andish et al., 2013). This implies that greater empowerment enhances positive job-related attitudes.

Furthermore, only 26% of respondents viewed teamwork as an important aspect of institutional management that could influence the successful implementation of CI initiatives in HEIs in Saudi Arabia. The participants expressed different opinions concerning working in a team and how that might affect CI efforts. For instance, *AU1* states *"I don't like working in a team, as there are always team members who over-depend on other members and don't take their job seriously, as they know that the job will be done anyway"*. Other participants believe that working in a team *"complements employees' skills"* (*TU1*) *"saves team members' time and effort"* (*AU2*) and *"enhances employees' knowledge"* (*KAU5*). In addition, *DUI* emphasised *"our department's staff cooperation has been our main driver in competing and winning best quality department within our university"*. Therefore, it is believed that teamwork is an essential part of CI success. Such a presumption is supported by different studies, which demonstrate a positive link between an institution's services and team-based work (Gibson et al., 2007).

According to Rico et al. (2011), the importance of team-based work lies in the collective use of diverse knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes, the incorporation of which helps institutions to offer innovative, flexible and rapid solutions to challenges and problems, as well as encouraging high performance and increasing team member satisfaction. Team members' interactions increases their capability to succeeding under different types of performance (Salas et al., 2009). There are many benefits to working in teams,

including the enhancement of team members' skills, increasing their autonomy (Geary and Dobbins, 2006), boosting innovation and creativity, encouraging expression and involvement in the culture of the workplace, and improving overall work productivity and quality (Parker, Holesgrove and Pathak, 2015; Reed, 1992). Therefore, as Wuchty et al. (2007) argue, institutional success and the general production of knowledge depend largely on the effectiveness of the team as a whole.

5.5.3. Skills enhancement theme

Skills enhancement for students/staff is believed to be one of the main enablers of successful CI initiatives in HEIs. The focus group defines this skills enhancement theme as *“the adoption of measures that are needed to enhance the university’s staff and students with the relevant skills to ensure their ability to execute their assigned tasks.”* Skills enhancement can be achieved through the continuous provision of requisite training and development and addressing identified gaps in skills and competences (Saeed and Shabir, 2013). Maruping and Magni (2012) argue that skills enhancement should occur within an environment that is conducive to individual and team learning. The absence of CI initiatives is a gap in the pursuit of organisational excellence, given its role in enhancing skills. Continuous skills development makes the CI process more inspiring and dynamic and this significantly impacts positive outcomes (Seekr, 2011).

From the students' perspective, it is believed that WIL (work-integrated learning) – the practice of exposing students to real-life work alongside their academic study – is vital because it enhances their employability skills (Jackson, 2015). WIL plays a significant role in the job-readiness of graduates (Billet, 2011). It enhances students' confidence in their abilities with regard to carrying out tasks in the workplace (Billet, 2011; Clinton and Thomas, 2011),

provides them with an enhanced understanding of industry-required skills (Gamble, Patrick and Peach, 2010) and enhances their appreciation of the work environment (Wilton, 2012). A number of studies have shown that WIL graduates are better equipped with employability skills than other traditionally educated students. Such skills include problem-solving, team working, professionalism, communication and information literacy (Coll et al., 2009; Freudenberg, Brimble and Cameron, 2011). These skills are considered to be major contributors to a graduates' capability to effectively function in the contemporary workplace.

The empirical findings of this research have further confirmed the importance of enhancing student/staff skills within HEIs. The theme's overall citation was 74%, which suggests more than two thirds of the participants believe it to be a critical factor for the success of CI in Saudi HEIs. This overall majority agreement reflects the theme's overall importance; however, aspects within it are deemed to be of varying importance. The participants of this study have identified four aspects that constitute the skills enhancement theme, which are divided into limited importance and reasonable importance, depending on the number of times they are cited. The aspects of limited importance are "exposure to foreign education", cited by 10 participants, and "enhancing academic counselling", cited by 11. Accordingly, both were cited by a limited number of participants. The aspects of reasonable importance are "provide an appropriate study environment", which was cited by 16 participants, constituting almost half of the study's participants and "employee skills development", which was highly cited by participants, totalling 24 times – constituting more than half of the study's participants. The theme, in general, was mentioned by 74% of interviewees, which indicates its high importance in the success of CI initiatives.

Enhancing academic counselling, is of limited importance, with only 29% of participants citing academic counselling as of importance in influencing CI in

HEIs in Saudi Arabia. The other 71% did not consider it to have much importance. This may be due to the Saudi HEI culture, where, in most universities, there is no awareness of the academic advisor and students generally do not know of their right to seek academic counselling from university staff (Almuharib, 2009). This view is supported by a number of this study's participants. *TIU1*, for instance, states "*I, and every other student I know, don't have enough understanding of what academic counselling entails, or what to expect from our academic advisors*". *AU3* adds:

...despite the fact I found academic advising very helpful, I only knew about counselling by chance when I went to one of my lecturers to ask about a book, and started complaining to him about my study difficulties, when he enlightened me with the academic advising services

He adds "*I don't think many students know about their right to academic advising*". On the other hand, *TU2* explains:

...since I started to teach, I have pointed out to students more than once that they should visit me during my office hours whenever they need help, either with the content of my module, or general career advice; nonetheless, less than 5% of students do in fact visit me for advice.

Therefore, it is clear that there is a lack of awareness of academic counselling within HEIs in Saudi Arabia.

With that being said, it is still believed that academic counselling is instrumental to the academic success of students by way of mentoring their academic performance and enhancing their learning and development by providing them with appropriate resources and expert advice (Pargett, 2011). Campbell and Nutt (2008) argue that academic counselling can act as an

effective tool that connects students with learning opportunities that promote and encourage their success and the attainment of the main learning outcomes. The knowledge sharing of degree requirements by academic advisors can assist students to effectively plan their degrees in a timely manner (Baker and Griffin, 2010). Metzner (1989) argues that high-quality academic advising plays an important role in student satisfaction, better grades and a lower intent to leave an institution (Hale et al., 2009). Accordingly, academic counselling can be a major enabler to successful CI initiatives in HEIs.

Employee skills development, as an example of aspects with reasonable importance, is the most-cited aspect of skills enhancement. Approximately 63% of the interviewed respondents considered it to be a critical element. For example, *SU4* explains that “*we keep training our staff through sending a number of them annually for short courses, which are mostly outside the KSA, to ensure that their skills are coping with international standards*”. He provides an example that before they purchase advanced IT products they send their IT staff to attend training courses in developed countries such as the United States or Japan in order to progress their skills to ensure effective use of new products. Furthermore, *AUI* explains that, in their department, staff are free to apply for any course they deem necessary to sharpen their work skills. In that way, staff are able to “*prioritise what skills we think are essential to our career development, which helps us effectively carry out work, because no one knows our skills deficiencies better than us*”. Accordingly, employee skills development is a critical part of the success of such employees and HEIs in general.

This finding is supported by Nda and Fard (2013), who argue that an organisation’s success depends on a skilled, experienced and knowledgeable workforce. Therefore, for organisations to maintain their sustainability, they must continuously train their employees and develop their skills. Development and training are instrumental at all levels because skills erode and, over a

period of time, become obsolete and need to be replenished (Nishtha and Amit, 2010). Paradise (2007), in emphasising the importance of development and training, gives the example of how much organisations in the US spend on developing and training their employees – more than \$126 billion every year. Such high spending reflects the importance that employee training has on the success of organisations.

5.5.4. Institutional strategies theme

The **institutional strategy** theme is another primary driver in the successful implementation of CI initiatives. It was defined by the focus group as *“the universities’ ability to set an aim of what they want to become and working on long- and short-term plans to achieve their aims”*. An in-depth definition was provided by Lawrence (1999), who defined institutional strategy as *“the patterns of organisational action concerned with the formation and transformation of institutions, fields and the rules and standards that control those structures in order to establish a strategically favourable set of conditions”*.

According to Keller (1983), institutions should scan the external environment, assess internal strengths and weaknesses, and then identify major initiatives that will promote institutional strategic viability. The external environment of HEIs comprises factors such as political, social, cultural, technological and economic development of the society. It also includes competing with other HEIs, students and community members’ expectations and educational innovations. Huang and Lee (2012) argue that education institutions should match their internal resources against the external industry environment, in order to achieve a competitive advantage. The combination of external and internal examination of HEIs can produce the insights and understanding to recognise opportunities and strengths, which can help in achieving competitive

advantages and gaining institutional performance superiority, while also identifying the threats and weaknesses that need to be avoided, if not countered. Accordingly, an effectively designed and executed institutional strategy is essential for the success of CI initiatives.

The importance of having an institutional strategy has been highlighted in the empirical findings of this research. The institutional strategy theme was cited by 87% of participants, indicating the consensus view on its influence as a factor for effective CI implementation in Saudi HEIs. This theme consists of 12 aspects, which refer to the institution's development plans and the methods adopted, or planned to be adopted, to achieve such strategic objectives. The aspects under this theme can be divided into those that are believed to have reasonable importance and those that have limited importance to CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia, which depends on the number of participants citing them. The aspects with reasonable importance include HEI's strategic planning and their policies of attracting qualified employees, which were cited by more than a third of participants. Aspects with limited importance include partnerships with businesses and feedback-driven improvement. These aspects were cited by no more than 15% of the study's participants.

Aspects under the institutional strategy theme included strategic planning and attracting qualified employees, which were both highly cited by the study's participants. Both aspects were cited by 42% of participants, which signifies their reasonable importance to CI in Saudi HEIs. The study participants explained the importance of both aspects in the effective implementation of CI efforts. For instance, *KSUI* emphasises his university's long-term plan by stating that:

...we are currently one of the best if not the best university in Saudi Arabia, and we are aiming to be among the top 100 universities worldwide...we planned the aims of our

strategic vision, which include excellency in graduate skills, excellency in faculty members and research outcomes, and a financially sustainable university... and we are currently mobilising our resources to achieve such a long-term plan.

He further explains that *“among the different steps we took in order to achieve the university’s strategic aim, we started to look for and recruit qualified academics, researchers and experienced professionals either from within or outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”*. This strategy of recruiting qualified employees was also mentioned by KAU5, who explained that the university recruited *“qualified academics and researchers from different countries to create a diverse workplace and to enhance knowledge production by learning from different experiences”*. DU3 explains the benefits of attracting qualified professionals from abroad by stating:

...in our department students tend to learn from foreign lecturers better than national ones, because unlike national lecturers’ tendency of emphasising memorising information, foreign lecturers tend to emphasise critical thinking and knowledge understanding.

Accordingly, strategic planning and the attraction of qualified employees are important pillars of CI efforts in Saudi HEIs. The literature further confirms their importance to overall institutional strategy. Furthermore, the establishment of initiatives and policies to attract qualified employees is essential for CI success. According to Adu-darkoh (2014), for an organisation to succeed and survive, or effectively compete globally, employers must be in a position to propound and practise the recruitment and selection of employees in a strategic manner. Such recruitment policies need to be developed to meet the institutions’ objectives and realise its strategic plans (Jackson et al., 2009). Montgomery (1996) posits that recruitment and selection strategy should focus

on matching a prospective candidate's capabilities with job demands and the rewards it offers. In this regard, organisations are adopting recruitment models that enable them to check applicant's suitability (Bratton and Gold, 2017).

Other aspects were cited to a limited extent, indicating that the participants believe their importance to be limited. These aspects include partnerships with private businesses and feedback-driven improvement. University's partnerships with outside businesses was cited by only 8% of participants which, according to study participants, reflects its limited importance to the process of CI of HEIs in Saudi Arabia. Although these aspects have not been widely cited, those who did cite both aspects emphasised their importance and benefits. *TU1* explained:

One positive step taken by my university is their partnership agreement with different Saudi-based private businesses such as banks and private hospitals – to employ and train students for a year. This partnership has solved the 'work experience' employment barrier, where businesses require relevant work experience for their employment vacancies and freshly graduated students do not generally have such experience.

DA2 confirms the importance of such HEI/private business partnerships by stating:

...among the benefits of these agreements with private businesses that I have personally seen, and that have been noticed by our department, is that, unlike previous students, our newly graduated students find jobs much easier and many of them end up being employed by these businesses.

Therefore, it is believed that HEI's engagement and partnerships with business is essential for their sustainability. Gumpert and Snyderman (2002) explain the need for institutions to transform their academic structures in order for them to compete for change and stability. Universities compete globally through partnerships between universities and industries and the incorporation of such collaborations into their programmes (Tumuti et al., 2013). Ahmad and Junaid (2008) argue that the university–industry partnership is considered to be a primary cooperative effort between the separate entities of industry and academia, which utilises their resources effectively and efficiently to gain shared objectives of enhance global competitiveness, technological innovation and act as an economic growth engine. Bramwell and Wolfe (2008) point out the role of collaborations and partnerships between universities and industries in innovation and economic growth. The collaboration between universities and industries plays a significant role in strengthening the universities' ability to conduct relevant, high-quality research, while developing industries' capabilities in terms of global competitiveness. Such partnerships are generally regarded as vehicles for, not only the attainment of such aims, but also the promotion of high levels of innovation and competitiveness (Othman, 2011; Al-Agtash and Al-Fahoum, 2008; Liyanage and Mitcheil, 1994).

Similarly, the feedback-driven improvement aspect was only cited by 8% of participants, indicating that it is considered to be of low importance. It is believed that feedback is an essential part of CI for both students and the employees of HEIs. From a student's perspective, the study participants indicated that the lack of assessment feedback as a major inhibitor in the CI of HEIs. *KSUI* explains:

One thing I'm sure of is that all students who did not achieve full marks on their exams or assignments are wondering what mistakes did they make; however, because we are not told where we went wrong, we might be committing the same

mistakes in different assessments. I do not have the right to question my marks and, unless I am 100% sure that I deserve better than the given marks and I pay certain fees, I am not allowed to see my mistakes, if I have any.

It is, therefore, clear that students consider feedback to be an instrumental factor in their success and believe it should be an integral part of the education system in Saudi HEIs. In addition, based on *KSUI*'s second cited statement, it can be understood that the lack of assessment feedback may lead to students questioning the fairness of the given results and the overall integrity of their HEI.

The literature further supports the notion of assessment feedback as an essential feature of efficient and effective learning and teaching and indicates that it could also be a powerful tool for enhancing student learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 2010). According to Price et al. (2010), feedback is the most critical component of assessment because it supports learning through the provision of information, which could be utilised to improve future performance. A number of studies have shown feedback to be an effective way to enhance learning outcomes (Hattie and Timperley, 2007) because it provides information that can be used to close gaps in performance. Hence, the provision of feedback is a necessary feature of the CI of student learning.

From an institutional perspective, it is believed that an effectively operating feedback system is an important element of an institution's development. *KAU5* states "*one of the steps we took to improve our staff productivity and work quality was through providing them with periodic performance feedback*". He provides an example: "*our administrative staff are examined every three months based on the number of tasks they complete and the quality and duration of the tasks completed*". He continues "*one of our academic performance assessments is through students' feedback at the end of every*

course, which assesses lecturer teaching techniques, the module teaching content and the overall performance of the lecturers”. While explaining the benefits that academics have gained from student feedback, UQU4 states:

I started to understand where my weaknesses were in relation to my module preparation and teaching, which included, according to my recent students’ feedback, my lack of use of PowerPoint and not interacting enough with students in the lecture. I relied on such feedback to prepare this year’s lectures, and I started to notice better student attendance than last year.

The importance of feedback in the CI of HEIs is also supported by the literature which indicates that feedback helps institutions to understand their current status. Ferguson (2011) emphasise that feedback is an essential component of institutional strategy. The frequent provision of feedback can also enhance employee skills and performance by keeping it in check (Vancouver and Morrison, 1995; Morrison, 2002). Lastly, by proactively seeking feedback, the institution can build social support structures that maintain passion in their projects and courses (Collewaert et al., 2016). Accordingly, feedback can be viewed as an instrumental for the continuing success of students, employees and their institutions.

5.5.5. Development and growth theme

A major contributor to CI in HEIs is the institutional strategy for **development and growth (D&G)**. According to the focus group, D&G may be defined as the:

...HEIs eagerness for the facilitation of an innovation-friendly, growth-supporting environment... Which relates to

the desire to build experience and gain knowledge from both inside and outside the scope of the HEIs, which are essential features for such innovation goals.

The literature has highlighted the importance of HEI's continual engagement in improvement efforts, which maintain their status as knowledge communities. Studies have argued for the need for HEIs to be open to experimentation and change (Louvel, 2013; Fahey, 2012; Kirschner, 2012; Joyce et al., 1999) and become involved in CI through the re-examination of existing practices and the adoption of evidence-based innovation (Carneiro, Looney and Vincent-Lancrin, 2015).

HEIs should examine their data on a continuous basis to determine the extent of the success or failure of their initiatives, as well as to identify potential issues with particular stakeholders (Barth et al., 1999). External support is another factor found to be important in improving HEIs (Thomson and Stoll, 2017; Potter et al., 2002; Stoll and Myers, 1998). HEIs ought to create external links of support via the establishment of external networks that facilitate the generation of innovations and the dissemination of good practices. Howes and Ainscow (2006) argue that collaboration between and within HEIs not only transfers existing knowledge but, more crucially, creates new knowledge of contextual specificity, which may be particularly advantageous for HEIs confronting challenging circumstances.

The empirical findings of this research further support the importance of D&G in HEIs, especially for CI initiatives in Saudi-based universities. The focus group's developed D&G theme is the most-cited theme in this study – 92% of participants have cited it, giving it critical importance in the effectiveness of CI efforts. This theme consists of nine aspects, which differ in their importance according to the number of participants who cited them. These aspects could be divided on the basis of their importance. Those that are of

high importance the success of CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia have been cited by more than two thirds of the study participants, an example being technology use. Those with reasonable importance were cited by more than a third of participants, such as the exchange of expertise. Lastly, those with limited importance were cited by less than a third of participants, for instance, employees' enthusiasm towards work.

The effective use of technology, as a sample of those aspects with high importance in CI success in HEIs in Saudi Arabia, was cited by 81% of study participants, reflecting its critical role in the success of CI initiatives. *UQU1* explained the important role of technology in the CI of his university by stating that “*our recent reliance on technology has not only increased our work performance but also improved its efficiency*”. He provides an example by stating: “*our move from paper-reliant work processes into a digitalised system has helped overcome the time-consuming procedural requirement of the in-person handing over of documents, as well as the saving and searching of paper files*”. *TIU1* supports the importance of technology use in the effective conveyance of module materials. He states, “*I don't actually understand a lot from many lecturers during the lectures, but rather I upload the lecture video tapes when I have free time and start taking notes from the recorded lecture*”. *AU3* also states that this helps students to interact with each other and with their lecturers, thereby improving their understanding of the module. *KAU3* states:

There is a discussion section in the blackboard where I and other students ask each other questions that we don't understand or ask the module conveyer for clarification; we also use this blackboard section to share relevant course materials such as articles or student-made notes.

A number of studies have demonstrated the importance of technology use by both students and the rest of a HEI's staff. According to Zhang et al. (2004), technology utilisation enhances students' independence and helps them to become researchers and proficient members of their institution. Mayer (2005) argues that technology enhances people's learning, since people learn considerably better from the combination of images and words, as opposed to words alone. On an employment level, Dasgupta et al, (2011) argues that the use of IT systems has increased the effectiveness of organisations because it provides quality services to clients and has a significantly positive impact on employee productivity. IT usage has been found to increase the pace of work, enhance work practices, reduce operating costs and enhance overall productivity (Jahromi, 2005) and student learning (Chowdhry, Sieler and Alwis, 2014; Kirkwood and Price, 2014).

The exchange of expertise is an example of the second type of aspect occurring under the D&G theme which, according to this study, is of reasonable importance to the success of CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia. This aspect was cited by 58% of participants, meaning that more than half of the study's participants consider to play a reasonably significant role in the success of CI. For example, from a research perspective, *DU4* argues:

It is of benefit to us as a university that our academic staff are connected with the practical realities in the kingdom, in a sense that when cooperation or governmental bodies face problems, they transfer them to us to study the problem in question and propose a solution for it, which contributes to the university's knowledge of the actual problems and variables that are happening and benefits its academics and researchers with real issues to research and teach, as well as benefiting the university financially.

On the other hand, from a student's perspective, *KAU3* states:

I generally like to be taught by a lecturer who has a practical background because, beside teaching the university-set curriculum, he also conveys his practical experience in his teaching and gives experience-based practical examples of how the taught module is applied in practice.

This is supported by *KSU3*, who said: “*we noticed, in our department, better student attendance and more students registered for courses which are taught by academics who were also practitioners*”.

The collaboration between academics and practitioners throughout the research process has been widely recognised as a primary solution that decreases the applicability gap between the outcomes of academic research and the practical relevance of that research's findings (Toffel, 2016; Rynes and McNatt, 2001). It enhances the relevancy and usefulness of emerging research to both its practitioners and businesses (Panda and Gupta, 2014; Perkmann et al., 2013). The importance of the content of the research depends, to a large extent, on the researcher's ability to show that the anticipated research results are of value to stakeholders (Bryman, 1988; Mesny, 2009). Therefore, the collaboration between academics and practitioners usually refers to the alignment of process between individual research objectives, which is essential to encourage high-quality research results that have a real and direct influence on important societal issues (Starbuck, 2006). Accordingly, collaboration between academics and practitioners is essential in ensuring the relevance of the research, which will be taught in academia and applied in practice. Hence, students need to learn the relevant knowledge in a practical sense and businesses will employ students equipped with practical knowledge of the relevant job field.

Employee work enthusiasm represents those aspects with limited importance to CI in HEIs. This aspect has been cited by only 26% of participants, indicating that it is not widely considered to be critical to CI success. It is believed that, without employees' enthusiasm towards work, the work will not be effectively executed, hence compromising the quality of the work. Such a presumption is supported by Smith (1994), who argues that the survival of an institution is dependent on its enthusiastic workforce. Amabile (1993) further argues that it is important for employers to ensure their employees' enthusiasm towards their work because an unenthusiastic employee is not likely to invest significant effort in their job and tend to generate low-quality work, avoid the workplace wherever possible and may even leave the role. Employee enthusiasm is further highlighted by Sirota and Klein (2013). Accordingly, it is believed that an enthusiastic workforce is a critical pillar in the development and growth of an HEI.

This argument is supported by a number of this study's participants. For example, *SU2* explains how a lack of employee enthusiasm towards work affects their productivity and job effectiveness. He states, "*we sometimes, as administrators, suffer from the lack of an enthusiasm-supporting environment, with the employees being restricted by a daily work routine and a lack of powers to entertain their creativity*". This is supported by *TIU2*, who, as he explains their experience of work enthusiasm, states:

...we have some employees who work overtime, which sometimes can be without compensation out of respect to our manager who, besides financially compensating them for their efforts wherever possible, also helps them to achieve their potential though sending them to important training courses.

KAU2 explains that “a number of academics, after achieving their PhD degrees, start losing interest in pursuing further research and self-development, despite being encouraged with financial and non-financial incentives”.

5.5.6. Obstacles to success theme

The barriers that an institution faces in its quest for CI, and the way it deals with such barriers, determines its ability to succeed in its CI initiatives. The focus group defined the obstacle to success theme as the “success barriers that exist within the HEI environment”. The success of HEIs is realised, fundamentally, through the success of their students. Therefore, it is believed that student success is an important institutional value in promoting the mission of HEIs. Groves (2014) argues that HEI leaders and their stakeholders consider student success to be one of their most important priorities and they communicate this priority in an effective manner across their institutions. A number of researchers consequently pointed out that well-performing HEIs share an institutionally-based culture of student success (Bradley and Blanco, 2010; O’Brien and Engle, 2007; Carey, 2005; Kuh et al., 2005). Accordingly, the success of its students becomes a critical factor in all campus community members’ job descriptions (Bradley and Blanco, 2010).

HEIs also consider commitment to institutional success in general, and student success in particular, as critical considerations when hiring their staff. They encourage the commitment of staff and faculty members through acknowledging and rewarding those contributing towards institutional success (Benton and Radziwill, 2016; Terpstra and Honoree, 2009; Carey, 2005; Kuh et al., 2005; Tinto, 1993). However, institutions may face different challenges as they aspire to succeed.

In the case of this research, the obstacles to success theme was cited by 71% of participants, which demonstrates agreement regarding its importance in the implementation of CI in HEIs. This theme is formed by eleven aspects, which reflect the wide-ranging success barriers that exist within HEIs in Saudi Arabia. The aspects that constitute this theme can be divided into those that the participants believe to have reasonable importance and those they believe to have limited importance, which depends on the number of times they were cited. Other than the “change resistance aspect”, these aspects, according to the study findings, have limited importance in the implementation of CI in HEIs, as is demonstrated by the fact that they were cited by less than a third of participants.

The ‘employee resistance to change’ aspect is the only aspect carrying reasonable importance; it was cited by 45% of participants. The participants explained a number of reasons for resistance to change. For example, *DAU2* states:

One of the barriers to the university’s ability to acquire its desired change is its leaders, who have an old mentality that does not realise the benefits and necessity of change; they are afraid that such a proposed change may threaten their job security and financial benefits.

This is supported by *KSU3* who argues:

The management of the faculties are generally old; we as young lecturers are enthusiastic about using technology in our teaching, but they are unable to utilise such technology; therefore, they like the old-school way of teaching through board-only lectures, and they have influenced other academics to follow their way.

Another reason was given by *SUI*, who explained:

We notice employees' lack of enthusiasm towards our recently implemented technical changes, as they are not qualified enough to operate such technical systems... although I think the technical moderation of the university is very important in the operation of the university, I personally don't think that the environment within our university is ready for such technical implementations.

Clearly, a lack of qualifications is a major driving force behind employees' change to resistance. The university plays a role in developing employee's culture of change resistance. For example, *TIU2* explains:

Unfortunately, some employees spend up to nine years at the same position without any promotion or being able to sign up for courses to develop their skills, which leads to an indirect resistance to the university's proposed development, as they want to avoid any development-based challenges and simply enjoy their routine work.

DU4 indicated that universities should always seek the frequent and up-to-date development of their employees so as to avoid later resistance to their proposed changes. The reasons behind employees' resistance to change are nothing new; the literature provides a number of them, including threats to job security, comfort, status, loss of pay, outdated knowledge and competence gaps (Aslam, Ilyas, Imran and Rahman, 2016; Bareil, 2013; Bateh, Castaneda and Farah, 2013; Val and Fuentes, 2003, Dent and Goldberg, 1999).

Failure to implement change has been associated with employee's resistance to it (Egan and Fjermestad, 2005; Haslam et al., 2004). Employee's resistance to change has negative impacts on institutions, such as slowing down

necessary changes, leading to increasing costs, lower productivity and, in extreme cases, organisational failure (Mathews and Linski, 2016; Bryant, 2006).

Student financial over-burdening is an example of aspects that the study findings suggest have limited importance. This aspect has been cited by only 10% of participants, which reflects how they regard its importance in the success of the implementation of CI in Saudi HEIs. Despite its low citation, which could be as a result of the low number of student participants (only 15%), it is believed to be a significantly important factor in students' success. For example, *KSU2*, while complaining about the costs of books, argued:

...some lecturers ask us to buy specific books which we can't afford to buy, and sometimes we share books with each other... some lecturers try to make course booklets and sell them at a minimum cost, which are better to understand and cheaper than books.

AU3 explains that, at her university, some lecturers give students options: “*some of our lectures require students to either buy the course books from particular bookshops, or, if they do not want or cannot afford to purchase the books, they can download a free PDF version of the book*”. However, she also explains that “*the PDF version only works for students who possess laptops, and I know many students who do not have laptops*”. Although students may be expected to use the computers in the university library to download the required books, not all universities have libraries (*TIUI*). The non-existence of libraries is a deficiency in the university infrastructure, which will be explored below under the theme “university infrastructure”. However, even though the student finance over-burdening aspect was considered to be of limited importance, it nonetheless can have a significant impact on students. A financial stress-focused survey has shown that, out of the most common five

stressors for students, four were linked to personal finances (Trombitas, 2012). Other studies have shown that financially stressed students are more likely to experience anxiety, depression and even suicidal thoughts (Eisenberg et al., 2007; McPherson, 2012). From an academic perspective, it is believed that financial stress is more likely to lower students' academic performance (Ross et al., 2006).

Human resources mismanagement is another example of a group of aspects that have limited importance that addresses HEI employees. These aspects have only been cited by 23% of participants, which reflects their importance in HEIs in Saudi Arabia. The participants have described different forms of the mismanagement of human resources and some of the reasons behind such mismanagement. *SUI* explained how an unqualified person was placed in a leading position. He states:

Not long ago, the computer science department was led by a graduate in Islamic Studies, who, with all respect to his major, is not qualified to have such a position, and cannot properly lead the department nor could he develop it, as he does not have experience in the field. ... it was clear the computer science department was lagging behind other departments, and therefore a newly qualified person is now leading the department, and he has been trying to overcome many of the issues his predecessor caused.

IUI explains that the problem might stem from the beginning of the recruitment process. She argues “*despite the advertisement of job vacancies, most of the time the job has already been taken by individuals who are lucky enough to have connections in the university*”. *IUI*, sharing her own experience of how she was employed, revealed “*if it was not for my file being taken by mistake to the head of the university, alongside the other files of*

individuals who have connections in the university, I would not have acquired this job". She adds *"I was shocked, when I started working, to find that most of the university employees had relatives at the university, as if the university was a family business"*. IUI, while complaining about the personalisation of issues and how it might have an adverse impact on the careers of academics, provides an example. She revealed that *"due to the fact that she gave an opinion of what is right and wrong, an administrative manager of 20 years' experience was transferred to become a correspondence officer"*. It is clear that she meant to highlight that the role of correspondence officer is a much lower position in the university than administration, hence the 20 years' experienced manager deserves better than such position. Accordingly, it is clear that there has been mismanagement of human resources within Saudi HEIs.

The mismanagement of the university's human capital is a critical inhibitor for any CI initiatives. Sharabati et al. (2010) argue that human capital not only represents the institution's human factor, but also the combined skills, intelligence and expertise, which provide the institution's distinctive character. The ineffective management of human resources negatively impacts workplace productivity and may lead to employing unqualified or incompetent persons, resulting in reduced organisational efficiency (Syverson, 2011).

5.5.7. Ethical issues theme

Ethical issues within HEIs in Saudi Arabia are considered to be major inhibitors to the success of their CI initiatives. Ethical issues were defined by the focus group as *"the underlying ethical issues negatively influencing the values upon which the HEIs are founded, which cover the notion of justice in terms of procedural fairness and disciplinary measure efficiencies"*. The ethical issues theme is formed by aspects that are believed to undermine Saudi

HEIs on supposed ethical grounds. Education is expected to be a major player in the teaching and learning of morals and values (Reimer et al., 1983). Where there are ethical violations, the reputation of a HEI is undermined, resulting in the development of a negative reputation and a loss of credibility (Kelley et al., 2006; Caldwell et al., 2005; Yeo and Chien, 2007). Reputation and credibility damage results in weakened organisational legitimacy, which critically harms the effective governance of institutions (Caldwell et al., 2005; Eckel, 2000). The failure to ensure consistent institutional policies and behaviour damages trust in institutions (Caldwell et al., 2005). Even more insidious are the unethical practices that become part of the institutional culture, since this allows for the establishment of poorly behaved role models and spreads poor conduct among other members. In higher education, students have been found to be more likely to copy the behaviour of their lecturers than to respond to codes of conduct (Kelley et al., 2006). Therefore, Kelley and Chang (2007) believe that, for a healthy university system to be achieved, ethical behaviour in HEIs needs to be adequate.

The empirical findings of this research further confirm that HEI ethics must be preserved and that any violation of such ethics may affect CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia. The ethical issue theme was cited by 79% of interviewees, reflecting an overall consensus on its critical role in the success or failure of CI initiatives. This theme consists of five aspects, which are divided into those of high importance, such as equality between employees, and those with limited importance, such as equity. Although both terms are used interchangeably, it is believed that each has its own distinct characteristics. According to Nowakowski and Conlon (2005), equity refers to the fairness of an outcome based on the relationship between inputs and outputs, while equality refers to everyone having the same opportunity relating to an outcome. In the workplace, equity is the creation of just consequences for employees via providing equal chances to experience such consequences.

Equality between employees was the only aspect with high importance in this theme; it was cited by 71% of study participants, reflecting how the participants consider its role in the implementation of CI in HEIs to be important. The participants explained some forms of the equality issues that exist within Saudi HEIs. For example, *IU1* states:

It is commonly known in this university that those associated with the Islamic sciences department have generally better treatment than other department employees, and they have a superiority as regards promotion, development opportunities and the university's overall decision making.

On the other hand, *IU3* complained about the expatriate employees' unequal treatment compared with the national employees by stating that "*we always have more hours of teaching than our Saudi colleagues, especially during the summertime*". He adds "*I wouldn't personally mind having to teach more hours if I was to be compensated like my Saudi colleagues; however, our salaries are far less than theirs*". *DA3*, while complaining about the lack of equal treatment, claims:

When it comes to development courses, highly prestigious courses, which are generally found outside the Kingdom, are always reserved for the Saudis, whereas us as foreigners, unless you have a good connection within your department, you might not even be able to attend development courses inside the Kingdom, unless you are self-sponsored.

This lack of equality between employees is considered to be a major factor in scuppering CI initiatives. The need to emphasise equality is supported by a number of scholars who argue that a lack of equality in the workplace affects the employees' productivity (Brief, 1998), job satisfaction (Brown, 1996), and teamwork and job effectiveness (Hu and Liden, 2015), while increasing

employee turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000) and affecting employees' relationships with their managers (Latif et al., 2015). As a result, it may be considered vital for employees be treated equally for CI initiatives to succeed.

Equity was considered to have limited importance. Only 8% of the study participants considered equity to be an important factor involved in CI success in HEIs in Saudi Arabia. For instance, *IUI* stated:

All of the employees who were promoted were promoted because of their relationship with the officials, or because it was to their mutual benefit. The promotions were unfair. They were not based on qualifications or the employees' effectiveness on the job.

This is supported by *KAU5*, who claims that “*in the academic environment, bias can not only be found, but is very deeply rooted, which is a major obstacle to achieving a fair and successful university*”. On the other hand, *SUI*, complimenting the easier accessibility to his university management, stated “*of course we hear, and it is commonly talked about – the racist and discriminatory treatment of employees; however, I personally do not expect such a thing to happen, as I have not met anyone who was discriminated against*”. Nonetheless, he did not explicitly deny this lack of equality and equity and qualified his earlier statement with the following: “*such discriminatory treatment might happen at different departments, as I don't completely deny it, but I have not personally witnessed such treatment of employees*”.

The low citation of the equity aspect by participants may result from the term being sometimes confused with equality; nonetheless, it could be said that equity is as important as equality. Failure by employers to demonstrate clear links between the rewards system and employee's performance has been associated with low job performance, high turnover intention and high actual

turnover (Buttner and Lowe, 2017). Accordingly, equity would appear to be an important pillar for the successful implementation of CI.

5.5.8. University infrastructure theme

University infrastructure emerged as one of the most influential factors in implementing CI in Saudi HEIs. The focus group, in defining this theme, distinguished between its cultural and physical terms. They defined cultural infrastructure as *“the long-standing practices of successive working generations that have become an integral part of how a university operates”*, and the physical infrastructure as *“those resources necessary to the development and delivery of educational programmes”*. The physical infrastructure includes all kinds of buildings and equipment for both academic- and non-academic-related activities, sports and games areas, farms, landscapes, gardens, trees, and roads (Subedi, 2003). It is clear that most of the aspects in this theme relate to the cultural term of infrastructure, as it reflects the university environment in which students and employees have been carrying out their work. Anifowose and Lawal (2013) argue that, for an ideal teaching and learning environment to exist, an HEI must have appropriate infrastructure.

The empirical findings of this research further emphasise the importance of a universities' cultural and physical infrastructure in the CI of HEIs. This university infrastructure theme, although being the second-least-cited theme by this study's participants, nonetheless was considered by more than half of participants to be an influencing factor for CI within HEIs, as it was cited by 65% of interviewees. Four out of the five aspects contained in the theme relate to university cultural infrastructure, reflecting its different roles in the success of CI initiatives. The aspects concerning cultural infrastructure can be divided into those that are considered by participants to have reasonable importance –

such as bureaucracy within HEIs, which was cited by more than a third of participants – and aspects that have limited importance, such as employees’ lack of productivity, which was cited by less than a third of participants.

The bureaucratic environment in HEIs in Saudi Arabia, as an example of aspects with reasonable importance, has been considered by 42% to be a critical influencing factor for CI success in Saudi HEIs. It is clear that the study participants understand how such an aspect can adversely affect CI initiatives. While complaining about how bureaucracy undermines CI, *KSU3* explained:

When we as members of the department propose a change, such a proposal would need to be considered by the department board, then the faculty board, then the university management board, who refer a proposal to a specialist committee to study it before approving it; this bureaucratic ladder inhibits not only the department members’ spirit of innovation, but also the overall university continuous improvement efforts.

Furthermore, *DU2* reveals “*this bureaucratic process of seeking approval from different boards delays the continuous improvement efforts, as every board needs sufficient time to study the proposed change*”.

Supporting the participants’ argument, Cunningham (2017) discussed the challenges associated with bureaucratic processes within universities, while Beetham (1996) asserted that the adherence to bureaucratic norms can hamper efficiency. The bureaucratic tendency to control individuals’ activities and restrict their autonomy adversely affects employees’ work spirit and suppresses their creativity (du Gay, 2000). The bureaucracy–creativity tension lies in the bureaucratic tendency to support systemised knowledge (MacDonald 1995) and promote predictability (Kanter 1989), which counters

the requirements of critical thinking and creativity for originality (Daymon, 2000), therefore hindering innovation, which is essential for the survival of HEIs. Accordingly, HEIs should take a more participative approach to the way they operate. Such participative practices not only have an impact on perceptions of work-related outcomes (Anon, 2004), but also, as Al-Yahya (2009) suggested, are significant predictors of the effective utilisation of competence (knowledge, skill and ability).

Employees' lack of productivity is one of the aspects that the study participants have considered to have limited importance in the success of CI in Saudi HEIs; it was only mentioned by 26% of study participants. KAU5 explained some of the reasons for the lack of productivity within HEIs by stating: "*the university work environment does not support productivity, as there are social and legal barriers to productive work*". He provided the following example:

A lot of our staff's productivity is exhausted outside the university, as they have to take their children to and from school, take their family members to hospitals, commute from different cities, or try to squeeze their schedules so the rest of the day they can go back to their families, who might be living as far as 300 km from the university.

He adds to this with a complaint about how the law is helping those unproductive staff by explaining:

One of our staff is frequently asking for holidays and taking job leave, and her productivity is very low; we tried to ask her so she does not influence other employees' by reporting her to the faculty dean and the university deputy manager, however the laws protect her, as we cannot fire her or transfer her to another department.

Moreover, *IUI* explained how this lack of productivity became a pervasive culture:

When I was first hired, I asked to see the staff performance report and I came to understand that there is no such one; even worse, if I were to describe the staff's daily activities, I would say it is mostly a social gathering event as opposed to daily work. Therefore, I would agree with the labour minister's statement that the average productivity of the university staff is only one hour; however, I would not generalise such a statement.

She was referring to the former labour minister's statement, where it was claimed that *"the productivity of the Saudi employee does not exceed one hour, according to a study by the Economic and Planning Ministry"* (Alkhalisi, 2016).

It is believed that employee productivity is a cornerstone of any institution's survival. Singh et al. (2000) argue that productivity is a primary determining feature of any organisational output actions. It was also argued that productivity is one of the most most critical factors affecting the organisation's competitiveness. According to Pritchard (1995), an institution's productivity is critical to its survival which, in turn, largely depends on employee productivity. Pritchard (1995) further asserts that the improvement of organisational productivity will continue to be important, with the largest unexplored opportunity for increasing organisational productivity being through the effective use of employees, a position that is confirmed by other studies (Caniëls and Veld, 2016; Katou and Budhwar, 2015; Isabirye, 2007). Accordingly, it is believed that 'any HEI without a productive workforce' will not be able to effectively implement its CI initiatives.

On the other hand, physical infrastructure was considered by a third of participants to be importance to the success of CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia. The participants explained the different infrastructure deficiencies in various HEIs in Saudi Arabia and how they might affect their success. For instance, AU4 states, *“we don’t have engineering laboratories which allow students to practice their taught lessons”*. As stated earlier, TIU1 revealed *“unlike many universities with libraries, which are very helpful in creating a study environment, our university does not have one”*. This is supported by TU2, who states *“some students can’t study at home as they have too many distractions and, when they want to study, they have to go to a coffee shop because they don’t have a library or other study areas in the university”*. IU2 explained that one of the issues they faced is the lack of sufficient rooms to host students’ classes. She states: *“in the past, the number of students was not as high as it is now, so we have to divide the classes into morning and evening shifts, which might be inconvenient for some students”*. This is supported by KAU4, who argues: *“One of the things that hinders improvement is that the universities are not well-prepared to receive the number of students, with limited staff and class sizes. This has impacted the learning process very seriously.*

The literature further confirms the importance of physical infrastructure to the success of HEIs (Porter, Graham, Spring and Welch, 2014; Musa and Ahmad, 2012). Babatofe (2010) claims that student’s learning achievement in the educational system is affected by the provision of instructional materials. Such a claim is supported by Knirk (1992), who explained that a lack of available and adequate HEI facilities is instrumental in both student’s and lecturers’ performances. Further, Nambi Karuhanga and Werner (2013) cited poor physical infrastructure as a hindrance to lecturer performance and Rivera-Batiz and Marti (1995) found that lecturers’ professionalism is affected by the physical environment or facilities at their institutions. Thor-Erik and Solvoll

(2015) argue that the accessibility, quantity and quality of appropriate physical resources in HEIs is a critical factor in achieving curriculum objectives. A number of studies have demonstrated direct links between physical resources and learning outcomes (Vieluf et al., 2012; Trang and Lap, 2016). Facilities in HEIs represent the operational contribution that allows lecturers to store a certain level of instructional effectiveness and efficiency (Ehiametalor, 2001; Emetarom, 2003).

5.6 Themes ideal position

The research data and the literature review demonstrate the existence of an ideal position for each of the eight themes. These ideal positions will be exposed in the following sub-sections.

5.6.1 External engagement ideal position

Under external engagement, the ideal position is where the university engages with the wider society by contributing to the social good beyond legal compliance through integrating the societal interests in its decision-making processes, thereby ensuring its long-term sustainability (Pinheiro, Normann and Johnsen, 2016; Duke and Hinzen, 2014; Sam, and Van Der Sijde, 2014; Gibbons et al., 1994). Such contributions include the encouragement of sustainable human development, service provision, teaching and research and the facilitation of scholarships (Nicolescu, 2018; McCowan, 2016). It also includes playing a role in influencing a society's culture, as opposed to being at the receiving end of culturally outdated practices.

5.6.2 Institutional management |ideal position

The ideal position for institutional management is where the university' leaders facilitate success and encourage a friendly environment by

managing a range of activities and programs to achieve the University's primary goals (Taylor, de Lourdes Machado and Peterson, 2008; Anyamele, 2005). Such leaders have built friendly relationships with their employees by respecting, motivating and empowering and, ultimately, gaining their loyalty (Interview *KAU5*; Oliver, 2009). They facilitate participatory decision-making and encourage their employees to work in teams, thereby ensuring efficiency in work-execution.

5.6.3 Skills enhancement ideal position

The university regularly takes measures to enhance and update the skills of its staff and students to ensure they are equipped with the relevant skills to carry out their tasks. Such skills enhancement measures include sending students to study or staff to practice in internationally renowned universities and organisations, facilitating an academic advising environment for students, or providing regular, subject-specific training courses for both staff and students (Maruping and Magni, 2012; Seekr, 2011). Such skills enhancement measures should contribute to the skillfulness, experience and effective work outcomes of the university's staff and students.

5.6.4 Institutional strategies ideal position

The university ensures its sustainability through setting strategic goal and then effectively planning to achieve them. It scans the external environment, assesses its internal strengths and weaknesses and then identify major initiatives that promote its institutional strategic viability (Goldman and Salem, 2015). It needs to efficiently utilise its resources, make strategic partnerships and provide an environment that supports the achievement of its aims. It also carries out regular reflections to take stock and then work towards improving its performance.

5.6.5 Development and growth ideal position

The university continually engages in innovation and growth efforts to survive the competitive higher education sector. It expends reasonable efforts on staff development and makes available the innovations necessary to update its resources. It also creates external, supportive links via the establishment of external networks that facilitate the generation of innovations and ideas and disseminate good practices (Muijs, West and Ainscow, 2010; Howes and Ainscow, 2006). Such development efforts include the creation of up to date skills enhancing curriculums, collaboration between academia and practice to ensure the relevance and applicability of research (Guan and Zhao, 2013; Interview *KAU3*), and the utilisation of technology for the benefit of student's learning experience as well as higher quality servicesprovisions (Interview *TIU1*).

5.6.6 Ethical issues ideal position

The university understands its major role in the teaching and learning of morals and values and that its reputation and credibility are grounded on the effective utilisation and representation of such a role (Wymer and Rundle-Thiele, 2017; Ehrich et al., 2012; Kelley and Chang, 2007)). Therefore, the university ensures the equal and equitable treatment of its employees and that powers within its jurisdiction are exercised appropriately. It also maintains its ethical legitimacy through the creation of appropriate transparent reporting channels (Caldwell et al., 2005). The university creates cultural practices that support student's and employees' autonomy, encourages their critical thinking and creativity and allows them to participate in decision-making processes to ensure their productivity and overall institutional sustainability. It also provides them with the essential equipment and facilities and other resources that allow them to not only effectively execute their work but also be creative,

innovative and increase their work-spirit and loyalty (Anifowose and Lawal, 2013).

5.6.7 Obstacles to success ideal position

As an organisation, the university confronts many obstacles to achieve its ideal functioning. One of these obstacles is the social factor that affects the environment of the HEI. The inadequate use of the community's social capital is one of these elements that hinders or prevents the right development and performance of the organisation. It should be noted that social capital is understood as the relationships that can be built among the different members of the university. Indeed, possible issues could emerge from the insufficient establishment of social capital among its members and also the relationships that the organisation can build with external actors when exercising its USR. In short, the potential influence of social factors became one of these obstacles to be surveilled (Evangelinos and Jones, 2009).

Another obstacle to the success of CI in HEIs includes a high levels of work stress, which is caused by inadequate relationship development among academic staff members and the impact this has on their job satisfaction, involvement, and engagement. Among the elements creating job stress are: ineffective performance management, a lack of training and development opportunities, a lack of support concerning research outputs, the presence of discriminatory practices, the absence of job security, and a lack of improvement concerning working conditions and equipment (Pienaar and Bester, 2009).

5.6.8 University infrastructure ideal position

The university creates cultural practices that supports student's and employees' autonomy, and encourages their critical thinking and creativity. These practices allow students to participate in decision-making processes,

ensuring their productivity and overall institutional sustainability (West and Bogers, 2014; Van de Vrande et al. 2009). It also provides them with the essential equipment, facilities and other resources that allows them, not only to effectively execute their work, but also to be creative, innovative and increase their work-spirit and loyalty (Koruna, 2004; Cassiman and Valentini, 2016). For instance, one of these innovations is the Electronic Education Environment (E3), which was created to support the processes of virtual courses in a virtual university environment (VUE), assist on-line students, and expand their educative practice and learning possibilities (Chellappa et al. 1997).

Likewise, universities must achieve significant development regarding data management. One important strategy involves connecting the different individual research data management (RDM) systems and empowering researchers with access to such data (Wilson and Jeffrey, 2013)

5.7 Current and ideal situations

In order to provide a specific assessment of the present gap between the current and the ideal situation, the researcher developed a survey containing the ideal position of the themes and a seven-level assessment scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Vagias, 2006). The survey should gauge the view of the university stakeholders about the proximity between the developed themes’ current situation and their ideal position, in order to understand the areas of improvements.

The survey was sent to participants across a number of Saudi universities, who were asked to distribute it among their colleagues at theirs and other universities. One hundred and one (101) participants responded to the survey from both genders, who hold different positions at their universities, ranging

from a university Vice President to attending students. The findings of the survey indicate a gap between the current practices of this study's eight themes and the themes' ideal positions. It should be noted that all survey respondents considered the practices of the eight themes in the Saudi universities as not supporting an ideal culture of CI (Figure 12). The result of the survey are presented in the following graph to provide a visual impression of the participants views regarding the developed themes' current situation and their ideal position.

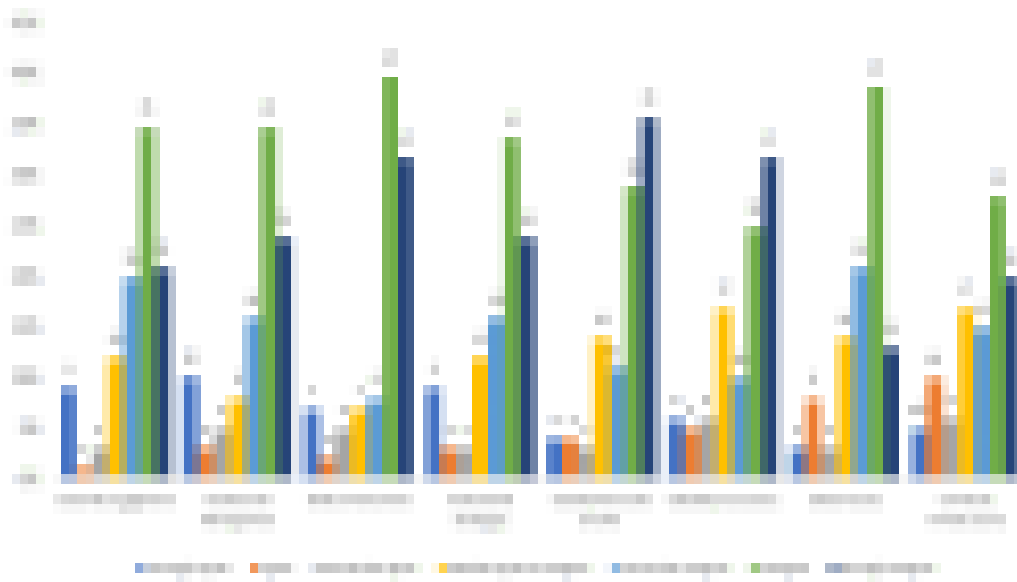


Figure 11: Description of participant's opinions concerning their current situation when compared with their ideal situation

Concerning the first theme, **External Engagement**, participants' responses show that only 13% (9 + 1 + 3) agree that it is an ideal situation expected for university institutions, while 71% expressly disagree that the current situation is ideal. Similar opinions highlighted regarding the theme **Institutional Management**, where it is stated that only 18% of the participants agree that their current situation is ideal (10 + 3 + 5), while 75%

(15 + 35 + 24) have expressed disagreement with respect to being in the ideal possession at present. For the theme **Skills Enhancement**, it should be noted that only 13% (7 + 2 + 5) acknowledge that the university is in the ideal position and providing adequate and expected skills. However, the majority 78% (8+ 40 + 30) disagree that their university provides ideal skills to their students.

In the theme **Institutional Strategies**, 15% (9 + 3 + 3) of participant expressly agree that universities apply adequate institutional strategies, while the rest, constituting 74% (16 + 34 + 24), disagree with the strategies employed by universities and express that such strategies are not closely related to the ideal. For the theme **Development and Growth**, 11% of respondents share the opinion that universities develop and achieve their goals, while 76% (11 + 26 + 39) express disagreement with the development and goals they are aware of, given that such goals are not close to the ideal situation.

Regarding the theme **Obstacles to Success**, 17% of the respondents agree that their universities meet the ideal situation, i.e., their universities have been able to overcome the usual barriers. However, 67% (10+25+30) admit that this is not the case.

For the theme named **Ethical Issues**, barely 14% (3 + 8 + 3) agree that their university currently meets the ideal situation for handling ethical. However, it should be noted that 73% (21 + 39 + 13) of the participants stated their disagreement with the Ethical Issues ideal position regarding their current experiences. Thus, they are showing that their university does not currently maintain the ideal situation to handle ethical issues.

Concerning the theme **University Infrastructure**, 21% (5 + 10 + 6) of the participants express agreement that their university's infrastructure is in line with the expected ideal situation. However, 63% (15 + 28 + 20) disagree with

this statement, suggesting their universities do not have the necessary infrastructure for success.

As has been demonstrated, across the different themes, there are gaps between the expected ideal situation of the universities and their current realities. The participants' opinions have described these themes as being weak, with low operability, and having/ experiencing inadequate infrastructure; they also suggest that universities have difficulties overcoming barriers and achieving their goals. One of the weakest themes concerns the enhancement of skills acquired while at the universities. This is a worrying issue because these students will be future professionals who must demonstrate the skills they have learned in the university setting. Equally, the theme in question places the universities in a precarious position to adopt strategies that will allow the current situation to be elevated to the ideal status.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher explained, in detail, how the main data collection was conducted and what steps he took to analyse the data. The chapter was divided into five sections: data collection, data analysis process, presentation of results, results analysis and the ideal position derived from the results. The researcher discussed the chosen data collection method and how and where the interviews were conducted. The Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) chosen for the research were described in terms of their types and geographical locations. Study participants were described in terms of their roles and their respective institutions. The data analysis methods used were discussed and the results presented in the form of 62 developed aspects, defined through focus group discussions, which were then condensed into eight themes. The developed themes and their influence on CI efforts within HEIs were discussed within the context of existing literature. Quotations from

the participants were used to complement the arguments defined from the data and literature. The final section compared extant practices with the developed ideal position of each theme meant to ensure effective CI implementation in HEIs. The next chapter discusses relevant interventions that were study participants identified as capable of facilitating a CI culture in Saudi Arabian HEIs.

CHAPTER SIX: INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on identifying interventions that could facilitate continuous improvement (CI) in Saudi Arabian HEIs. It identifies the main interventions inferred from participant contributions (PC) and other sources of relevant evidence, as well as those interventions derived from the literature that could close the gap between the ideal position and current practices in Saudi Arabian universities. The proposed interventions serve as enablers for the effective implementation of CI in Saudi HEIs.

The chapter presents tables to demonstrate the progressive stages taken to develop the proposed interventions (Tables 19 – 20), themes of the ideal position and relevant intervention from the literature and main data that contribute toward that position (Table 21), as well as the proposed interventions and their desired effects on the targeted themes (Table 22) and the relationships among the proposed interventions (Table 23). The chapter concludes by presenting findings from the opinions of three experts meant to evaluate and validate the developed framework.

6.2 Interventions from primary data

The researcher has evaluated primary data to look for interventions that may close the gap between the current practices of the themes in Saudi Arabian higher education institutions (HEIs) and their ideal positions. Sixteen relevant interventions were identified through which the study participants have directly or by implication indicated their role in the facilitation of a CI culture in Saudi Arabian HEIs. The indication, by implication, covers not what the participants have expressed, but what could be understood by implication. Table 19 summarises the main interventions inferred from participant's contributions and sources of relevant evidence. The next section outlines both in more detail.

6.2.1 PC1 Create university shared values and an understanding of societal engagement

Creating university shared values, an understanding of societal engagement and building societal-engagement-specific roles for the university's staff and students were identified among the main interventions. These could be achieved by facilitating platforms for public engagement and motivating staff and students to be engaged in societal issues and could be buttressed by rewarding them with promotions or other forms of encouragements such as monetary incentives. This will help universities to enhance their relationship with society, encourage collaboration between the staff and students of a university with community members, encourage discussion of relevant public issues, and enhance the knowledge transfer between the university and the community.

Relevant Evidence

One participant Faculty Dean explains the importance of the university's public engagement role and what steps the university should take in order to maintain effective public engagement policies. He states:

For our university to be able to build a good relationship with society and encourage collaboration between us (staff) and the community members in relation to our research and other social-related studies, I believe that our university needs to take practical steps that encourage both the staff and students to engage in public issues. For example, the university should create a unit that specifically focuses on public engagement, which is composed of both public engagement professionals and students. Also, the university should create a platform for public engagement that encourages discussion of public issues and provides guidance for those staff and students who wish to participate in public engagement activities. It should also motivate the wider university staff and students to engage in public issues through incentives. Such incentives can be through cash payments, job recruitment for students or job promotion for staff.

While emphasising understanding and awareness of the role of public engagement responsibility, a Head of Department participant states that:

Our staff and students need to understand why they should engage in societal issues and feel that it's part of their identity as university staff and students for them to effectively engage in societal concerns.

He also emphasises the importance of institutionalising public engagement activities and their benefits by stating:

When the university engages in an institutionalised manner in social issues, it continually learns from society and the community benefits in an effective manner from the knowledge and expertise of the university.

6.2.2 PC2 Reward system that targets employees' performance

Another possible intervention involves creating a reward system that targets employees' performance. This system will assess employees' performance by creating some objective criteria that resembles the ideal work performance. It will measure employees' performance against such objective criteria and those employees who perform well will be rewarded with work promotion or an increase in their salary. This should increase employee productivity and enhance their work performance. It will encourage employees to enhance their skills and work competitiveness, resulting in the retention of hard-working and qualified staff.

Relevant evidence

After complaining about the employees' lack of productivity, performance reports, skills, as well as the lack of good relationship between employees, among other factors, an Administrator participant recommended the establishment of a rewards system that encourages an ideal employees' work performance. She states that:

We need to encourage better employee performance by creating employee performance-driven incentives. For example, we should create objective criteria for our department employees that resemble what we look for as an ideal work performance. The ideal work performance, I believe, should include meeting the job targets, continually

expanding their skills to enhance their work performance, continually self-assessing their own work environment, making recommendations to the management on how to improve their work environment, and lastly, having a good relationship with co-workers. If we create these objective criteria and reward employees who meet these objective criteria with salary increases or job promotions, I believe that we will have a more productive and competitive work environment and encourage employees to develop their skills.

6.2.3 PC3 Monitoring system that regularly evaluates the progress of university projects

Another identified intervention involves creating a monitoring system that regularly evaluates the progress of university projects via regular meetings between the university chancellor and faculty deans, wherein they evaluate their individual faculty visions and progress on vision implementation. In these work progress monitoring meetings, the faculties' efficient use of their resources will be examined and the need for additional resources considered. These meetings will also assess the cooperation between the different faculties and the issues that affect such cooperation.

The work progress monitoring meetings need to start at a faculty level, where the different departments in each faculty meet to discuss their individual visions, the issues they face, and the proposals they have. Their faculty dean needs to address such concerns at the university's work progress monitoring meetings. This will guide the university towards the achievement of its goals and ensure effective intervention at the right time to address any issues the university faces in its pursuit of achieving its goals. It will also facilitate

cooperation between faculties and different university departments and create coordinated decision-making processes.

Relevant evidence

A Faculty-Dean participant has emphasised the role of management in monitoring the university's progress, ensuring cooperation between the different functions of the institution and showing commitment to the achievement of the university's goals. He stated:

... since he was appointed as our university chancellor, we started noticing different attitudes towards the development of the university, especially regarding academic departments. He started asking what used to be uncomfortable questions in the university, such as what each faculty vision is, how far did they work to achieve such a vision, what has been the output of each faculty in terms of research and study outcomes, and what development steps faculties have been taken, if any.

He added:

Two years since his appointment, I can tell you that we have witnessed more productivity in the university and started witnessing more cooperation between faculties and different university departments to achieve the university's overall vision of improvements.

Furthermore, an Administrator participant explains the important role that communication between the university staff and its top management plays in creating integrated decision-making processes that increase the chances of institutional success. He states:

The Chancellor's monthly meeting with the different faculty deans has connected the university management with the university staff. Because the university board meeting discusses the faculties' issues and assesses their efficient use of their resources and if they need more resources, we were able to communicate our urgent issues in a quick manner to the management and we had continual access to our needed resources, and were able to make recommendations to the board. For example, we had an empty theatre hall that was being used only once or twice a year. In our monthly faculty meeting, our department addressed this issue with the dean, among other issues, to communicate it to the university board. Based on our department's recommendation, after one meeting with the university board, it was agreed to better utilise this hall for IELTS preparation courses; this was the first IELTS training in the whole city, so we were able to contribute to the university decision making.

6.2.4 PC4 Constant verbal encouragement of staff and students

Constant verbal encouragement of both staff and students such as providing them with feedback on their performance, both in private and in front of their colleagues, can increase employees' work loyalty and productivity.

Relevant evidence

A University Vice-President participant explains his experience, as a manager, of encouraging his employees by providing them with both positive comments and feedback, and what benefits he found resulted from such encouragements. He states, *"From personal experience, I found that individual encouragement by the direct manager, even if productivity is low, will increase employee*

productivity within a few months”. He continues, “I found that with constant personal encouragement for employees, two primary factors were gained: the employees’ work loyalty and the productivity of such employees, which has been greatly reflected in the success of the faculty”. Also, he adds:

I praise employees’ work achievement either in private or in front of other employees, because I notice it increases their good performance. I also constantly provide them with feedback and positively comment on their daily work, because it keeps them motivated.

A lecturer participant explains how students’ performance can be increased through verbal encouragements. He states: *“As humans, we like to be praised. Therefore, I provide my students with verbal comments praising their good work and how it could be improved, as I notice it improves their work performance. They prefer it to written feedback.”*

6.2.5 PC5 Delegate work and decision making to qualified employees

Delegating work and decision making to qualified employees was also identified as a pertinent intervention. This involves providing employees with articulated guidelines of their role requirements and their institutions’ expectations; giving them the authority to act and make decisions independently within their role boundaries and trusting them to do their work effectively with the knowledge that, when they are not sure, they can seek advice. This will enhance employees’ self-confidence and spirit of innovation. It will also enhance employees’ skills and increase their productivity.

Relevant evidence

An administrator participant emphasises the importance of decision-making and work delegation, and how the lack of this can affect employees' confidence and work productivity. He states that:

One of the problems we face in our department is the individualisation of decision making, where almost every decision my colleagues and I take – small or big – has to be firstly approved by our manager. Therefore, when our manager is not at work, we don't feel confident enough to make decisions and we have to delay such decisions until he comes to work.

He adds:

If our managers provide us with certain guidelines about the requirements of our work and what work performance is expected from us, then if they allow and trust us to make the decisions within the boundaries of these guidelines, we will be able to finish the daily tasks more quickly. We have both the academic qualifications and the experience to execute more complex tasks, not just the daily unimportant tasks. If we are not sure about a certain task we will wait for our managers' advice and approval. In this manner, we can be more productive and confident in performing our daily tasks.

A Faculty-Dean participant explains the benefits of work delegation. He states: “*When I delegate some responsibilities to my employees and believe in their skills and judgment to finish the work, I find that employees both enjoy it and become more innovative in their work planning and performance.*”

6.2.6 PC6 Create a teamwork-supporting environment

Creating a teamwork-supporting environment through establishing and committing to a common goal, encouraging employees to work collaboratively to achieve such goals, facilitating out-of-work social activities for team members and building team-based motivation and reward structures were among the main interventions. This will encourage internal communication between employees, enhance their relationship and encourage unity in the workplace. It will also encourage employees' creativity, improve their work efficiency and productivity and allow them flexibility.

Relevant evidence

A Head of Department participant explains the different steps taken by his department to enhance the relationship between the managers and employees'. He states:

We go on a monthly basis, with our employees for social gatherings to the beach so we can build better relations with our employees and between the employees themselves. We also sometimes carry out some of our work outside the university in hotels or coffee shops in order to break down the barriers between our employees and us. We notice that these activities create excellent relationships. In fact, some of our employees have been meetings for work-related matters outside their working hours. Because these activities undermine the strict working formalities and conditions, we have noticed that our employees are more creative and come up with new ideas when we meet outside the university.

An Assistant Professor participant explains how the lack of teamwork in their department has affected the department's overall performance. He states:

Although the department goal of gaining academic accreditation is known to everyone, we academics have not been working together to achieve that goal. Everyone is working on their own interests of publishing their own paper or attending an out-of-country conference. This has affected our overall departmental research productivity and quality. We need to work together on research if we want to enhance our department accreditation.

Other participants explain that working in teams “*complements employees’ skills*” (Vice-President), “*saves team members’ time and effort*” (Administrator), and “*enhances employees’ knowledge*” (Lecturer).

A Head of Department participant emphasised the importance of setting a team-driven goal and commitment in the success of the team. He states:

Our department’s staff cooperation has been our main driver in competing and winning the title of best quality department within our university.” He adds, “The whole department had one goal, and one commitment, therefore we were very motivated and, thankfully, we were rewarded with the best quality department award.

6.2.7 PC7 Establish an objective skills assessment procedure

Establishing a practical procedure that objectively assesses staff’s skills against the necessary competencies of their roles is another main intervention. Those staff who do not meet these essential competencies will be required to attend university-arranged training courses that support their skills. Staff job

promotions, salary increases, and job security should depend on staff attending the training courses and benefiting from its development content. This will act as an incentive for employees to seek continuing skills development and enable the institution to build a skilled workforce.

Further, this will enhance employees' ability to self-assess their skills, increase their self-confidence and work loyalty, and enhance their relationship with the management.

Relevant evidence

A Professor participant, after complaining about how some employees lack the basic skills to carry out their work, or that their knowledge and performance have not developed, which has affected the department's overall image and performance, recommended compulsory training courses that they must attend and benefit from. He states:

For some employees, training should be compulsory. The university should have general qualification standards and each department should have specific qualification standards for its employees. These standards should provide, in detail, the minimum competencies for each employment role. Each faculty and department should then assess its employees against these competency standards, and those employees who do not meet those minimum standards should be required to attend training courses to develop their skills. The university should arrange for these training courses. If those staff fail to attend these training courses or fail to benefit from its content, I believe that they should no longer be part of the university staff or their job promotion should be suspended until they show signs of developments. In this

way, employees will be incentivised to develop their skills and the university will have a skilled workforce.

6.2.8. PC8 Establish training and development platforms for university staff

Establishing training and development platforms for those university staff who wish to develop and widen their competencies and linking this to the pay and promotions systems will encourage all the university staff to take part in development opportunities. This will enhance employees' self-assessment of their skills and increase their self-confidence and work loyalty, as well as enhance their relationship with the management.

Relevant evidence

An Administrator participant explains that, in their department: *“Staff can apply for any course they think will support their work skills”*. He adds: *“By leaving to us the choice of training programs, we prioritise what skills we think are essential to our career development, which helps us effectively carry out work, because no one knows our skills deficiencies better than us.”*

From a management perspective, a Head of Department participant explains the benefits he noticed from allowing employees to determine their own training priorities. He states:

We found that by leaving the choice of training to the employees, they started to self-assess their skills; employees are more confident now to carry out difficult tasks, and most importantly, we noticed that this program has enhanced the relationship between us and our employees.

A Faculty-Dean participant explains how the university can utilise financial incentives to encourage employees to develop their skills. He states:

I believe that we can encourage employees to develop their work-needed skills, if there is a salary increase for those employees who acquire new qualifications or attend specific training courses. In this way, employees will continually assess their skills and qualifications and seek further development in order to achieve the salary increase.

An Administrator participant explains how failure to ensure the continuous development of employees' skills can act as a barrier to the university's development. He states: "*Unfortunately, some employees spend up to nine years in the same position without any promotion or being able to sign up for courses to develop their skills, which leads to an indirect resistance to the university's proposed development.*". He adds:

I believe this can be overcome if the university uses career promotions to encourage employees to increase their performance or to develop their skills, because employees need to see that they can grow in their workplace. In this way, the university will gain employees' loyalty and have a skilled workforce.

6.2.9 PC9 Attract talent from around the world

Ensuring a university's recruitment process is able to attract talent from around the world by proactively searching for qualified professionals and encouraging them to join the institution, will increase organisational competitiveness, enhance knowledge production and increase workplace diversity capable of facilitating different ways of teaching and learning.

Recruitment policies need to ensure that prospective employees see the institution as offering career development opportunities, a supportive work culture and competitive remuneration.

Relevant evidence

A Faculty Dean participant emphasised the role of talent recruitment in the success of institutions by explaining that his university is pro-actively searching for talented employees as part of their strategic plans. He states:

We planned the aims of our strategic vision, which include excellency in graduate skills, excellency in faculty members and research outcomes, and a financially sustainable university... and we are currently mobilising our resources to achieve such a long-term plan.

He further explains that:

Among the different steps we took in order to achieve the university's strategic aim, we started to look for and recruit qualified academics, researchers and experienced professionals either from within or outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Another Faculty-Dean participant explains the reason why his university is recruiting talented professionals from around the world and what incentives they utilised to encourage their recruitment. He states: “*One of our university strategies is to recruit qualified academics and researchers from different*

countries in order to create a diverse workplace and to enhance the knowledge production by learning from different experiences.” He adds:

We tried to create a comfortable environment for them, both financially - where they are given high salaries to encourage their recruitment - and also by providing them with different development programs to ensure that their skills are continually developed and they are able to grow in their respective careers. We tried to build a supportive work culture that enhances job satisfaction and work performance. For example, employees are encouraged and rewarded for coming up with new ideas. We try to arrange for frequent social events to enhance our employees’ relationships. We try to make a flexible working environment for our employees, depending on their respected roles. We do this because we find that it increases employees’ satisfaction, work performance and our departmental competitiveness.

A Faculty Deputy participant explains how the recruitment of foreign academics has been beneficial to the university students:

In our department, students tend to learn from foreign lecturers better than national ones because, unlike national lecturers’ tendency of emphasising the memorising of information, foreign lecturers tend to emphasise critical thinking and knowledge understanding.

6.2.10 PC10 Effective policies that align university interests with those of the private sector

Another main intervention involves ensuring that the university's mission and goals include effective policies that align its interests with those of the private sector by building effective communication channels and involving the private sector in the university's strategic plans. This will increase its chances of procuring private funding, creating research applicability and improving students' chances of employment.

Relevant evidence

A Vice President participant emphasised the importance of partnering with private businesses and how such partnerships have solved unemployment issues faced by his university graduates. He states:

One positive step taken by my university is their partnership agreement with different Saudi-based private businesses such as banks and private hospitals – to employ and train students for a year. This partnership has solved the 'work experience' employment barrier, where businesses require relevant work experience for their employment vacancies, but freshly graduated students do not generally have such experience.

A Faculty-Dean participant explains how cooperation with private business should be utilised in a strategic manner and recommends what the university should do to ensure the sustainability of such a partnership and the effectiveness of its outcomes. He says:

I don't think our cooperation with the private sector is as strategic as it should be because our interests are not always aligned. For us to build a strategic relationship with the

private sector, we need to incorporate the interests of the private sector in the university's mission and goals. The private sector needs to participate in our strategic planning process so that their interests are included in the university strategies. Also, for our research to be of practical benefit to the private sector and for us to acquire funding from the private sector, we need to build communication channels with them so that we are continually informed of their research interests and graduate needs.

6.2.11 PC11 Establish feedback channels

Another critical intervention rests on establishing feedback channels throughout the institution by creating a wide-ranging feedback process that provides continuous self-reflective and formative assessments for the institution, the staff and the students. Encouraging participation through giving performance-linked prizes will enhance staff productivity, boost institutional success through regular assessment of staff performance, provide a third-party perspective on the completed work and increase employees' and students' satisfaction via the knowledge that their voices are being heard.

Relevant evidence

A Faculty Dean participant explains how the provision of staff performance feedback can be beneficial to their work performance. He states: *“One of the steps we took to improve our staff productivity and work quality was through providing them with periodic performance feedback”*. A Head of Department participant also outlined how they assess their staff performance and how often they carry out such assessment. He states: *“Our administrative staff are examined every three months, based on the number of tasks they complete and*

the quality and duration of the tasks completed". He continues by saying: "One of our academic performance assessments is through students' feedback at the end of every course, which assesses lecturer teaching techniques, the module teaching content and the overall performance of the lecturers".

An Assistant Professor participant states, while explaining the benefits that academics have gained from student feedback:

I started to understand where my weaknesses were in relation to my module preparation and teaching, which included, according to my recent students' feedback, my lack of use of PowerPoint and not interacting enough with students in the lectures. I relied on such feedback to prepare this year's lectures, and I started to notice better student attendance than last year.

Likewise, a Head of Department participant explains the method through which they encourage their students to provide them with feedback about their university experience. He says: "Students are bored with these feedback forms all around the university, so we tried to encourage their participation with prizes, and we noticed better and more feedback responses."

Also, a Vice President participant clarifies how in their university, both students and staff, are encouraged and institutions are required to self-assess their performances. He states:

We also want to encourage self-assessment by creating reflective feedback throughout the university, whereby every staff member and student is asked to reflect upon their performance, so we can encourage this self-critique habit within them in order for them to continuously monitor their own performance and development. We also do this on an

institutional level, whereby every department is asked to reflect upon their annual performance and is required to provide detailed plans of how they will improve their performance in the following year.

6.2.12 PC12 Equip the institution with relevant technology

Equipping the institution with study-supporting, up-to-date and effective technologies will ensure that staff are able to utilise available technologies and build partnerships with technology companies to provide what is required and train the staff and students. Such an approach should increase work performance and improve efficiency by increasing the speed of work execution while allowing both students and staff study or work flexibility. It also provides a communication platforms for students and staff to share ideas and plan their work.

Relevant evidence

A Faculty Dean participant explains their university's need for different technological services and products and the importance of building partnerships with technological companies. He states:

Because we continually need up-to-date effective technological services or equipment, we partnered with technology companies like Oracle and Cisco. They provide us with the technology we require and the continuous maintenance of their services, and they train our staff and students on their utilisation.

Another Faculty Dean also emphasise the importance of staff technological training. He says:

Before we purchase advanced IT products, we send our IT staff to attend training courses in developed countries such as the United States or Japan, to develop their skills and ensure they could effectively utilise such products.

Lastly, a Head of Department participant espoused the important role of technology in the CI of his university by stating: “*Our recent reliance on technology has not only increased our work performance but also improved its efficiency.*”

In a similar vein to these staff declarations, a student participant explains how students benefit from technological services. He states: “*I don’t actually understand a lot from many lecturers during the lectures, but rather I upload the lecture video tapes when I have free time and start taking notes from the recorded lecture.*”

A lecturer participant additionally declares that: “*This helps students to interact with each other, and with their lecturers, thereby improving their understanding of the module.*” Equally, a student participant states:

There is a discussion section on the blackboard where I and other students ask each other questions that we don’t understand or ask the module conveyor for clarification; we also use this blackboard section to share relevant course materials, such as articles or student-made notes.

6.2.13 PC13 Active promotion of an institution’s programmes and services

Actively promoting the programmes and services that one’s institution can offer through establishing a public communication office with qualified

marketing and communication officers, will create a wide portfolio of customers and increase a university's chances of attracting external funding and enhancing their public image and competitiveness.

Relevant evidence

An Administrator participant points out why the university needs to market its services and programs in a professional manner and how this should be done. He states:

The public relations unit role should go beyond just communicating the university vision and messages through the university websites or social media to actively promoting its programs and services. I believe that the university should be treated in similar ways to private businesses. This unit should be composed of mostly marketing professionals, who know how to promote these programs and services in the most effective way. In this way, the university can build a good image and be more competitive. Therefore, it can reach more beneficiaries of its programs and services which, in turn, would increase its chances of reruns, both financially and experience-wise.

6.2.14 PC14 Paths for work promotion

Establishing clear paths for work promotion and career advancement are among the critical interventions. Paths for employees who seek career advancement and incentives for good performers need to be in place. Such paths must ensure that work promotions are based on qualifications in order to address employees' needs for self-development. This results in a qualified

workforce and enhances feelings of fairness and trust in the institution which leads to increased loyalty.

Relevant evidence

An Administrator participant highlights how the lack of development opportunities for employees in regard to both skills and position, can act as a barrier to improvements:

Unfortunately, some employees spend up to nine years in the same position without any promotion or being able to sign up for courses to develop their skills, which leads to an indirect resistance to the university's proposed development, as they want to avoid any development-based challenges and simply enjoy their routine work. I believe this can be overcome if the university uses career promotions to encourage employees to increase their performance or develop their skills, because employees need to see that they can grow in their workplace. In this way, the university will gain their employees' loyalty and have a skilled workforce.

Another Administrator participant demonstrates frustration and a feeling of unfairness from the lack of equality and fairness in work promotion:

All of the employees who were promoted were promoted because of their relationship with the officials, or because it was to their mutual benefit. The promotions were unfair. They were not based on qualifications or the employees' effectiveness on the job.

6.2.15 PC15 Strategic thinking and long-term planning

Thinking strategically and planning for long-term goals establishes a clear direction for the institution and creates a shared sense of commitment. It also facilitates the development of short- and medium-term targets to achieve long-term goals. This will guide university performance and act as a self-assessment tool to push the university towards achieving its objectives. It also decreases the chances of hitting unexpected obstacles.

Relevant evidence

A Faculty Dean participant emphasises his university's long-term plan and what steps they have taken to achieve their goals. He declared the following:

We are currently one of the best - if not the best - university in Saudi Arabia, and we are aiming to be among the top 100 universities worldwide. ... We planned the aims of our strategic vision, which include excellency in graduate skills, excellency in faculty members and research outcomes, and a financially sustainable university... and we are currently mobilising our resources to achieve such a long-term plan. ... In order to achieve our long-term objectives, we built short and mid-term objectives; for example, so we can achieve our goal of excellency in graduate skills, we created a mid-term aim of only recruiting students with excellent qualifications, so we have started gradually raising the academic entry requirement for our students. So, the university vision has been acting as our point of reference in our daily activities.

Likewise, a Faculty Dean participant states that a lack of strategic thinking in the university's planning can cause unexpected obstacles to the university achieving its goals. He says:

We faced a number of obstacles that affected our work performance, including financial, skills and resistance from some employees. We should have expected such barriers initially when we set our transformation plans. If we had expected these issues and included their solutions in our plans, we would have been better equipped to deal with them. For example, we did not expect the current government cuts to the universities' budgets and many of our planned projects had to be either temporarily suspended or completely cancelled. Our plans were relying on generous government funds, and if we had expected these cuts, we would have prioritised our planned projects, and we wouldn't have been forced to do such suspensions and cancellations.

Similarly, a Faculty Deputy participant explains how an effective university vision can direct its performance. He says: “*We utilise the university's vision to assess our faculty performance to ensure that we are working towards the achievement of the university's goals.*” Equally, a Faculty Dean participant explains how the university's vision has been utilised to assess its performance, continually monitor its progress, provide a common goal and encourage cooperation between the varying university departments. He mentioned:

...since he was appointed as our university chancellor, we have started noticing different attitudes towards the development of the university, especially regarding

academic departments. He started asking what used to be uncomfortable questions in the university, such as what each faculty vision is, how far did they work to achieve such a vision, what has been the output of each faculty in terms of research and study outcomes, and what development steps faculties have taken, if any. ... Two years since his appointment, I can tell you that we have witnessed more productivity in the university and started witnessing more cooperation between faculties and different university departments to achieve the university's overall vision of improvements. ... The vision provided us with a clear direction, and all the university departments share the same commitment of realising the university's goals.

6.2.16 PC16 Annual performance reports

Establishing an annual report on employees and departments performance that provides detailed feedback on performance in terms of their achievements and failures will increase institutional transparency and accountability and allow the institution to understand its strengths and weaknesses.

Relevant evidence

An Administrator participant, after having complained about the lack of performance reports in her department, explains its importance. She states:

*The performance report is very important, not just for the staff but for the department as well; how else would we know about well or badly performing departments and/or staff?
The absence of these performance reports is the reasons*

behind the lack of productivity, because without transparent reporting, low performing staff and departments will not be held accountable for their low performance.

Table 19: The main interventions developed from participant contributions

No	Intervention	Participant source of evidence
PC1.	Create university shared values and an understanding of societal engagement	One Faculty Dean; Head of Department;
PC2.	Reward system that targets employees' performance	Administrator
PC3.	Monitoring system that regularly evaluates the progress of university projects	Faculty Dean; Administrator;
PC4.	Constant verbal encouragement of staff and students	University Vice-President; Lecturer
PC5.	Delegate work and decision-making to qualified employees	Administrator; Faculty Dean;
PC6.	Create a teamwork-supporting environment	Head of Department; Assistant Professor; Administrator; Lecturer; Vice President;
PC7.	Establish an objective skills assessment procedure	Professor
PC8.	Establish training and development platforms for university staff	Administrator; Head of Department; Faculty Dean
PC9.	Attract talent from around the world	Faculty Dean; Faculty Dean; Faculty Deputy Dean;
PC10.	Effective policies that align university interests with those of the private sector	Vice President; Faculty Dean;
PC11.	Establish feedback channels	Faculty Dean; Head of Department; Assistant Professor; Vice President

PC12.	Equip the institution with relevant technology	Faculty Dean; Faculty Dean; Head of Department; Lecturer; Student
PC13.	Active promotion of an institution's programmes and services	Administrator
PC14.	Paths for work promotion	Administrator; Administrator
PC15.	Strategic thinking and long-term planning	Faculty Dean
PC16.	Annual performance reports	Administrator

6.3 Intervention from the literature

The researcher has surveyed the literature for organisational culture interventions that could help to facilitate continuous improvement (CI) in Saudi Arabian HEIs. The researcher considered the outcome of the survey assessment, which examined the extent to which the themes' ideal position matches current practices in Saudi Arabian universities (Section 5.7) as he was searching for the relevant interventions. He searched for interventions that could close the gap between the themes' current practices in Saudi Arabian HEIs and their ideal position, in order that Saudi Arabian universities build an organisational culture that supports CI. The research has found 13 relevant interventions, which are provided in Table 20.

Table 20: Literature interventions

No.	Intervention	Reference
LI1	Develop effective leaders. Send senior managers to strategic planning training programmes on a regular basis. Facilitate knowledge and skills-building workshops on a series of leadership development topics. This will enhance the institution's leadership competencies and align its leaders' skills with the institution's strategic goals. It will also build the institution's specific leadership capabilities and increase their managers' understanding of ethical and their leadership roles and their employees' needs.	Day (2001), Collins and Holton (2004), Yukl (2006), Rothwell (2002). Chaimongkonroj and Steane, (2015), Ardichvili, et al, (2016)
LI2	Equip staff with their job's essential skills. Provide initial training for under-qualified or untrained staff. Provide subject-specific training focussing, for example, on information and communication technology (ICT) or wider training programmes designed to inform all staff about changes to the curriculum or job objectives. This will enhance employees' work quality and outcomes.	Orr et al. (2013)
LI3	Diversify the institution's sources of income. Establish funding channels through techniques such as externally funded contract research, consultancy and links with private businesses. This will reduce financial barriers to university projects and increase the institution's sustainability and competitiveness.	Skrbinjek and Lesjak, (2014), Nagy, Kováts and Németh (2014) Hewitt-Dundas (2012)
LI4	Encourage staff to participate in the organisation's decision-making process. Ask them to develop initiatives for change, support them and believe in their competence to implement these initiatives. This will increase employees' motivation and create organisational value for them. It will also enhance employees' work engagement and performance and allow the institution to gain employee loyalty.	Bakker and Demerouti (2008), Naruse et al. (2015)

No.	Intervention	Reference
LI5	Implement name-blind job applications in the recruitment procedures in your institution through. This will reduce the potential unconscious bias of applicants from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and increase qualification-based employment. It will also build a qualified workforce and increase the trust and fairness in the recruitment process.	Watt (2015)
LI6	Establish a systematic process that identifies the specific mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for high performance in a specific job. Measure such job requirements in employees to find the right match for the right job. Also this process to develop and train employees in areas where there is a gap between the desired level of capability and current employee capability. This will allow the organisation to recruit and promote the right candidate based on their competencies. It will enhance employee performance by training them in the right areas, increase employees' productivity and engagement, develop situational leadership skills and result in a highly skilled and motivated workforce.	Anisha (2012)
LI7	Give individuals or teams responsibility for a whole task, from the preparatory planning to the resultant outcome. This will motivate them and enhance their sense of autonomy and freedom, which will result in improvements in work quality and productivity.	Hackman and Oldham (1980) and Algashaam (2015)
LI8	Establish ad hoc teams that cut across departments and hierarchical levels and coordinate to provide integrated decision making. In these teams, employees report to both their team leader and their functional boss. This will create an inclusive and efficient decision-making mechanism and allow effective coordination between different organisational departments.	Gombolay et al., 2015; Woolley, Aggarwal and Malone, 2015; Pakarinen and Virtanen, 2017)
LI9	Establish collaboration channels with external advisory groups that provide ideas and guidance for the institution in its various regulatory and structural concerns and offer assistance in its development initiatives. The advisory groups will provide the university with expert advice and inform them of worldwide best practices.	Kezar (2009)

No.	Intervention	Reference
LI10	Provide direct payment rewards to staff based on their work achievement, thereby increasing employees' work motivation and satisfaction, which will result in better work performance.	Seldin (1990), Glewwe et al. (2008).
LI11	Establish an independent team that monitors the recruitment procedure and provides an annual report on its quality and fairness. This will create a more transparent recruitment process and assist in creating equal employment opportunities and, where relevant, increase accountability.	Tackey et al. (2006)
LI12	Compensate based on skills employees have, not their assigned job. This will motivate employees to broaden their skills.	Beer, M. and Walton, E. R. 1990; Mitra, Gupta and Shaw, 2011 and Sailer, 2017
LI13	Develop coaching relationships. Establish formal mentoring programmes and encourage the formation of informal mentoring relationships among managers and high-potential employees. This will grow employees professionally and develop high-potential managers. It will also enhance employees' self-esteem, empower them and enhance their relationship with management.	Kotter (2001), Yukl (2006), Cappelli et al. (2015)

6.4 Developing the interventions

The interventions shown above, from both the main data and the literature, have been proposed to act as enablers for the effective implementation of continuous improvement. The two intervention types share commonalities and serve similar purposes. For example, both main data and literature interventions propose the facilitation of financial incentives to encourage better employee performance and work productivity. In addition, both intervention channels suggest that the training of employees and the delegation of decision making to them is an effective way to empower them and gain their loyalty. For the purpose of this research, the interventions from

both the literature and the main data that share commonalities and serve similar purposes have been combined. Twelve proposed interventions were developed to facilitate a culture of CI in Saudi Arabian HEIs. The outcomes of these interventions should close the gap between the themes' current practices and their ideal positions. These multi-purpose-serving interventions act as interacting channels for CI culture in Saudi Arabian universities.

The following tables demonstrate the stages through which the proposed interventions have been developed. Table 21 provides the ideal position, the relevant intervention from the literature (LI) that contributes to the achievement of the ideal position, the relevant intervention from the main data (PC) that contributes to the achievement of the ideal position and the proposed interventions (PI), which integrate similar interventions from the literature and main data that serve similar purposes into one potential intervention. Table 22 showcases the list of the proposed interventions, their desired effects and the themes they target. Each proposed intervention has been contributing to the achievement of the ideal positions of at least two themes, as shown in Table 22. Table 23 demonstrates the relationship between the proposed interventions. Nine of the proposed interventions possess supporting evidence from both the literature and main data and four are independently supported by either the literature or the main data.

Table 21: Ideal position, relevant intervention from literature (LI) and main data (PC), proposed interventions (PI)

NO	Theme's ideal position	LI	PC	PI
1	External engagement: The university is engaging more widely with society to ensure its long-term sustainability. It contributes to the social good beyond legal compliance by integrating societal interests in its decision-making processes. Such contributions	LI1 LI9	PC1 PC1 5 PC1 1	Facilitate training channels for institution leaders that equip them with the specific leadership qualities required for their specific roles so that they can manage their work effectively. Create public engagement-supporting policies by

NO	Theme's ideal position	LI	PC	PI
	include encouraging education to sustain human development, the provision of services, teaching and research, facilitating scholarships and general contributions to the well-being of local communities. Clearly, its contribution internalises awareness of the positive and critical value of its accountability to the community at large that is mandatory rather than optional.			developing partnerships with public-supporting institutions and encouraging staff and students to engage in public issues. Establish a clear direction for your institution and develop short- and medium-term targets to achieve long-term goals. Establish feedback channels and encourage participation.
2	Institutional management: The university leaders are facilitating an environment that encourages success by managing the different activities and programmes that encourage the achievement of the university's primary goals. Such leaders have built a friendly relationship with their employees through respect, motivation and empowerment, ultimately gaining their loyalty. They have facilitated participatory decision-making and encouraged their employees to work in teams to ensure work-execution efficiency.	LI1 LI10	PC4 PC5 PC6 PC1 4	Facilitate training channels for institution leaders that equip them with the specific leadership qualities required for their specific roles in order that they can manage their work effectively. Delegate decision making and work execution. Provide encouragement and rewards and ensure that they target performance and qualifications. Establish a common goal and a shared commitment for employees and encourage them to work collaboratively.
3	Skills enhancement: The university regularly takes measures to enhance and update the skills of its staff and students to ensure they are equipped with the relevant skills to carry out their tasks. It uses practical	LI12 LI6 LI12 LI13	PC7 PC8 PC1 2	Systematically study the skill needs of the institution and employees, provide a wide range of supporting resources and training opportunities and encourage participation. Provide encouragement and rewards and ensure that they

NO	Theme's ideal position	LI	PC	PI
	<p>procedures to assess training needed, which may include measuring the individual's work against job objectives or analysing job requirements. Employees who do not meet these requirements become candidates for training. Once training needs have been identified in a particular department, that department initiates the suitable training technique, which may include 'on-the-job-training', the aim of which is the transfer of knowledge from experienced individuals. This is achieved by assigning professional trainers or a specialised training agency to conduct the required training within that department. It may also include 'off-the-job training' in which employees train on the actual equipment in a realistic job setting but in a training school or a specific training department.</p>			<p>target performance and qualifications.</p>
4	<p>Institutional strategies: The university has effective plans and functions to achieve its strategic aims. Its strategy is aligned with its structure and management systems and its employees are informed of and motivated towards the achievement of such strategic goals. The strategic goals are clear and can be realistically achieved. The university-initiated core objectives are clearly recognised and its leaders are clear on where changes need</p>	<p>LI1 LI4 LI8</p>	<p>PC1 5 PC3 PC5 PC1 6.</p>	<p>Facilitate training channels for your institution leaders that equip them with the specific leadership qualities required for their specific roles so that they can effectively manage their work. Establish a clear direction for your institution and develop short- and medium-term targets to achieve the long-term goals. Establish ad hoc teams that cut across departments and hierarchical levels and</p>

NO	Theme's ideal position	LI	PC	PI
	to be made. The strategy takes account of the barriers that may arise in the process of fulfilling the university's strategy and efforts to overcome these barriers are planned strategically.			coordinate to provide integrated decision-making processes and encourage staff to participate in them to empower them to develop their own initiatives. Monitor employee and institution performance on a regular basis.
5	Development and growth: The university systematically and continuously takes measures to develop its internal capacity to maximise efficiency in its mission to sustain itself in the competitive higher education sector. It forms select committees to regularly examine the university's current position and generate ideas and plans for its improvement. It ensures collaboration between different university stakeholders, creates external support links that facilitate the generation of innovations and ideas and the adoption of good practices. Continually, it promotes those departments acknowledged as being strong and works towards improving other weaker departments. It moderates and integrates new technologies into daily university functions to improve their working efficiency. It develops strategies, diversifies and works towards increasing its funding to support the university's strategic initiatives and programme	LI1 LI3 LI8	PC3 PC8 PC1 3 PC1 0 PC2 PC1 2 PC1 0 PC1 6	Facilitate training channels for your institution leaders that equip them with the specific leadership qualities required for their specific roles so that they can effectively manage their work. Establish a clear direction for your institution and develop short- and medium-term targets to achieve long-term goals Create external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels. Establish ad hoc teams that cut across departments and hierarchical levels and coordinate to provide integrated decision-making processes and encourage staff to participate in them to empower them to develop their own initiatives. Monitor employee and institution performance on a regular basis. Systemically study the skill needs of your institution and employees, provide a wide range of supporting resources and training opportunities and encourage participation.

NO	Theme's ideal position	LI	PC	PI
	needs. It expends reasonable efforts on staff development and makes available the innovation necessary to create up-to-date resources.			
6	<p>Obstacles to success: The university leaders study, strategically plan and patiently adopt reasonable measures, on a priority basis, to overcome any barriers that arise in fulfilling their institutional strategy. Prior to making any fundamental changes that are essential for university-sought successes, the university ensures that its members are informed of the planned changes, trained and efficiently equipped with the essential skills for those changes. It also establishes goals and reward and recognition systems to ensure its members are not negatively affected by and believe in the proposed changes. It creates mechanisms that support a common organisational culture, where similarities between the university members over-shadow differences and provide a feeling of unity between them. Such mechanisms include the establishment of codes of behaviour and ethical standards. The university diversifies its financial income to ensure funding does not become a barrier. It takes measures to ensure the effective</p>	<p>LI1 LI2 LI3 LI4 LI5</p>	<p>PC1 PC3 PC6 PC9 PC1 2 PC1 1 PC1 5</p>	<p>Establish a clear direction for your institution and develop short- and medium-term targets to achieve long-term goals. Create external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels. Establish ad hoc teams that cut across departments and hierarchical levels and coordinate to provide integrated decision-making processes and encourage staff to participate in them to empower them to develop their own initiatives. Establish a recruitment system that is name blind and provides incentives for qualified professionals to join your institution. Systemically study the skill needs of your institution and employees, provide a wide range of supporting resources and training opportunities and encourage participation. Monitor employee and institution performance on a regular basis.</p>

NO	Theme's ideal position	LI	PC	PI
	management of human resources by the recruitment of qualified employees, the appropriate positioning of employees, clearly stating employee roles, what is expected of them, what the outcome of their job will be and ensuring that employees' tasks are realistically achievable.			
7	<p>Ethical Issues: The university understands its major role in the teaching and learning of morals and values and that its reputation and credibility are grounded on the effective utilisation and representation of this role. It complies with ethical policies and regulations to maintain its ethical legitimacy through the creation of appropriate and transparent reporting channels. It adopts institutional codes of ethics that identify ethical principles, which include the importance of employees' mutual respect, tolerance of diversity and emphasis on the well-being of students and others who are vulnerable. It encourages its students and employees to engage in ethics initiatives in the university and the community at large. The university leaders understand their ethical leadership role and act as role models.</p>	LI1 LI9	PC1 PC6 PC1 1	<p>Facilitate training channels for your institution leaders that equip them with the specific leadership qualities required for their specific roles so that they can effectively manage their work.</p> <p>Create external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels.</p> <p>Create public engagement supporting policies by developing partnerships with public-supporting institutions and encouraging staff and students to engage in public issues.</p> <p>Establish a common goal and shared commitments for employees and encourage them to work collaboratively.</p> <p>Monitor employee and institution performance on a regular basis.</p> <p>Establish a recruitment system that is name blind and provides incentives for qualified professionals to join your institution.</p>
8	<p>University infrastructure: The university creates coherent systems of effective</p>	LI4 LI7 LI10	PC1 4 PC2	Establish ad hoc teams that cut across departments and hierarchical levels and

NO	Theme's ideal position	LI	PC	PI
	human resource-management practices that support students' and employees' autonomy, encourage their critical thinking and creativity and allow them to participate in decision-making processes. This enhances employees' productivity through incentives, training, monitoring and accountability. It provides them with the essential equipment, facilities and other resources that allow them effectively to execute their work, to be creative and innovative and to increase their work-spirit and loyalty.		PC5 PC8 PC1 2 PC1 4 PC7 PC1 6	coordinate to provide integrated decision making and encourage staff to participate in them to empowers them to develop their own initiatives. Delegate decision-making and work execution. Provide encouragement and rewards and ensure that they target performance and qualifications. Create external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels. Systemically study the skill needs of your institution and employees, provide a wide range of supporting resources and training opportunities and encourage participation. Monitor employee and institution performance on a regular basis.

6.5 Proposed interventions

The twelve proposed interventions relate to the facilitation of leadership training, the creation of policies that support public engagement, the establishment of a clear direction for the institution, the delegation of decision making, the use of encouragement and rewards, the provision of training opportunities and resources, the establishment of ad hoc interdepartmental teams, the establishment of feedback channels, the monitoring of employee performance, the development of common goals and shared commitments, the creation of external knowledge, finance and

resource-supporting channels, and establishment of a name-blind recruitment system.

6.5.1 Facilitation of leadership training

Facilitating training channels for institution leaders equips them with the specific leadership qualities required for their roles that allow them to effectively manage their work. It enhances the intuition's leadership competencies and aligns leaders' skills with the intuition's strategic goals, builds the institution's specific leadership abilities and increase managers' understanding of their ethical and leadership roles, and of their employees' needs (Day, 2001; Rothwell, 2002; Collins and Holton, 2004; Yukl, 2006; Chaimongkonrojna and Steane, 2015; Ardichvili, Natt och Dag and Manderscheid, 2016). The facilitation of leadership training contributes towards the ideal positions relating to institutional management, institutional strategies, development and growth, external engagement, ethical issues and obstacles to success (Table 22).

6.5.2 Creating policies that support public engagement

Creating public engagement supporting policies by developing partnerships with public-supporting institutions and encouraging staff and students to engage in public issues. This helps the university to enhance its relationship with society, encourages collaboration between the university staff, students and community members, and encourages the discussion of relevant public issues (McDonald and Dominguez, 2015; Osman et al., 2016; Hogan et al., 2017). This process enhances the transfer of knowledge and expertise between both the university and the community, thereby contributing

towards the ideal position for external engagement and addressing ethical issues.

6.5.3 Establishing a clear direction for the institution

Establishing a clear direction for the institution and developing short- and medium-term targets to achieve the long-term goals provides guidance for the performance and acts as the self-assessment tool of the university's performance towards the achievement of its objectives (Hladchenko, 2015; Al-Sarmi and Al-Hemyari, 2014). This decreases the chances of unexpected obstacles and contributes towards the ideal position for external engagement, development, growth and obstacles to success.

6.5.4 Delegation of decision making

Delegating decision making and work execution enhances employees' self-confidence and spirit of innovation. It motivates employees and enhances their sense of autonomy and freedom, which results in improvements in work quality and productivity (Alcudia, Alcudia and Alcudia, 2015; Husni, 2018). Delegation contributes towards the ideal position in institutional management and university infrastructure.

6.5.5 Encouragement and rewards

Providing **encouragement and rewards** that target performance and qualifications increases employees' productivity and enhances their work performance. Encouraging employees to develop their skills and work competitiveness encourages the retention of hard-working, qualified

employees. This increases employees' work loyalty, productivity and work satisfaction and motivates them to broaden their skill-set (Glińska-Noweś and Szostek, 2018; Aji, et al., 2017). Encouragement and rewards result in an ideal position for institutional management, skills enhancement and university infrastructure.

6.5.6 Provision of training opportunities and resources

A systemic study of the skill needs of an institution's leaders and employees provides a wide range of **supporting resources and training opportunities** and encourages participation. It enhances employees' performance by training them in the right areas, resulting in an increase in employees' productivity, engagement and motivation. Such opportunities also facilitate the development of situational leadership skills (Anisha, 2012; Orr et al., 2013). Employees' self-assessment of their skills is enhanced, which increases their self-confidence, work loyalty, efficiency and performance. This facilitates communication platforms for students and staff to share ideas and plan their work in the process, creating an ideal position for the themes: skills enhancement, development and growth, obstacle to success and university infrastructure.

6.5.7 Establishing ad hoc interdepartmental teams

Establishing coordinated ad hoc teams that cut across departments and hierarchical levels and provide integrated decision-making, encourages staff to participate in the institution's decision-making processes and empowers them to develop their own initiatives. It creates an inclusive and efficient decision-making mechanism and allows for effective coordination between different organisational departments (Gombolay et al., 2015;

Woolley, Aggarwal and Malone, 2015; Pakarinen and Virtanen, 2017). It motivates employees and enhances their sense of autonomy and freedom, which results in improvements in work quality and productivity (Hackman and Oldham, 1980 cited in Tripp, Riemenschneider and Thatcher, 2016 and Algashaam, 2015) and enhances employees' work engagement, performance and loyalty (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Naruse et al., 2015). Coordinated ad hoc interdepartmental teams further the ideal position for the themes: institutional strategies, university infrastructure and obstacles to success.

6.5.8 Establishing feedback channels

Establishing feedback channels and encouraging participation enhances staff productivity through periodic performance feedback and this, in turn, enhances institutional success through regular performance assessment and by providing a third-party perspective on the completed work. Feedback channels also increase employees, students and other stakeholders' satisfaction through knowing that their voices are being heard, hence furthering the ideal position for the engagement and institutional strategies themes (Dugguh and Dennis, 2014; Saks and Gruman, 2014).

6.5.9 Monitoring employee performance

Monitoring employee and institution performance on a regular basis guides the university towards the achievement of its goals and ensures effective intervention at the right time that may affect goal achievement. Institutional transparency and accountability are also enhanced, allowing institutions to understand their strengths and weaknesses. This facilitates cooperation between the faculties and different university departments and creates coordinated decision-making processes. When monitored, the

recruitment procedure creates a more transparent recruitment process and assists in creating equal employment opportunities and increased accountability (Fenwick, Explorations and Hagge, 2015; Tackey et al., 2006). Monitoring performance furthers institutional strategies, development and growth, as well as addressing ethical issues and obstacles to success (Salmi, 2015).

6.5.10 Establishment of common goals and shared commitment

Establishing a common goal and shared commitment for employees encourages them to work collaboratively (Dalton and Crosby, 2011). Encouraging internal communication between employees enhances their relationships and leads to unity in the workplace. It also jumpstarts employees' creativity, improves their work efficiency and productivity and allows them flexibility. Common goals and shared commitments strengthen the ideal positions for institutional management and ethical issues.

6.5.11 Creating external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels

Creating external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels increases the chances of private funding, research applicability and students' likelihood of employment. This reduces the financial barriers to university projects and increases the institutions' sustainability and competitiveness (Skrbinjek and Lesjak, 2014; Nagy, Kováts and Németh, 2014; Hewitt-Dundas, 2012). The university gets access to expert advice, is informed about worldwide best practices, enhances its public image and institutional competitiveness and creates a wide portfolio of customers. External knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels further the

themes development and growth, university infrastructure, ethical issues and mitigate obstacle to success.

6.5.12 Establishing a name-blind recruitment system

Establishing a recruitment system that is name-blind and providing incentives for qualified professionals to join the institution reduces the potential for unconscious bias against applicants from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and increases qualification-based employment opportunities, which builds a qualified workforce and increases trust and fairness in the recruitment process (Watt, 2015). It enhances an institution’s knowledge and production, increases diversity in the workplace and facilitate diverse ways of teaching and learning. It addresses the ideal position relating to the themes: obstacle to success and ethical issues.

Table 22 summarises the proposed interventions, their desired outcomes and the themes whose ideal positions the interventions seek to achieve. Each of the proposed interventions should contribute to the achievement of the ideal position of at least two themes.

Table 22: Summary of proposed interventions (PI), desired effects and targeted themes

No	List of proposed interventions	Desired effect	Targeted theme (Contribute to its ideal position)
1	Facilitate training channels for institution leaders, that equip them with the specific leadership qualities required for their specific roles so that they can effectively manage their work	Enhance the intuition’s leadership competencies and align its leaders’ skills with the intuition’s strategic goals. Build the institution’s specific leadership abilities and increase managers’ understanding of their ethical and leadership roles and their employees’ needs (Day, 2001; Rothwell, 2002; Collins and Holton, 2004; Yukl, 2006; Chaimongkonrojna and Steane,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External engagement • Institutional management • Institutional strategies • Development and growth • Obstacle to success • Ethical issues

No	List of proposed interventions	Desired effect	Targeted theme (Contribute to its ideal position)
		2015; Ardichvili, Natt och Dag and Manderscheid, 2016)	
2	Create public engagement supporting policies, by developing partnerships with public-supporting institutions and encouraging staff and students to engage in public issues	Enhance the university's relationship with society and the transfer of knowledge and expertise, Encourage collaboration between university staff and students and members of the community, and encourage discussion of relevant public issues (McDonald and Dominguez, 2015; Osman et al., 2016; Hogan et al., 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External engagement • Ethical issues
3	Establish a clear direction for the institution, develop short- and medium-term targets to achieve long-term goals	Provide guidance for performance towards the achievement of institutional objectives. Decrease the chances of unexpected obstacles. (Hladchenko, 2015; Al-Sarmi and Al-Hemyari, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External engagement • Development and growth • Obstacle to success
4	Delegate decision making and work execution	Enhance employees' self-confidence, motivation and spirit of innovation. Motivate employees and enhance their sense of autonomy and freedom, which will result in improvements in work quality and productivity (Alcudia, Alcudia and Alcudia, 2015; Husni, 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional management • University infrastructure
5	Provide encouragement and rewards based on performance and qualifications	Increase employees' productivity and enhance their performance, loyalty and work satisfaction and motivate them to broaden their skills (Glińska-Noweś and Szostek, 2018; Aji, et al., 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional management • Skills enhancement • University infrastructure
6	Systematically study the skills needs of institution leaders and employees, provide a wide range of supporting resources and training opportunities and	Enhance employees' performance by training them in the right areas. Increase employees' productivity and engagement, which will result in a highly skilled and motivated workforce. Develop situational leadership skills (Anisha, 2012; Orr et al., 2013). Enhance employees' self-assessment of their	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills enhancement • Development and growth • Obstacle to success • University infrastructure

No	List of proposed interventions	Desired effect	Targeted theme (Contribute to its ideal position)
	encourage participation	skills. This will increase employees' self-confidence, work loyalty and enhance their relationship with the management. In addition, it will increase work performance and improve efficiency, by increasing the base (speed) of work execution, thereby allowing students and staff study or /work flexibility. This will facilitate communication platforms for students and staff to share ideas and plan their work.	
7	Establish interdepartmental ad hoc teams that cut across departments and hierarchical levels and coordinate to provide integrated decision-making and encourage staff to participate in them to empower them to develop their own initiatives	Create an inclusive and efficient decision-making mechanism that allows for effective coordination between different organisational departments. It motivates employees and enhances their sense of autonomy and freedom, which will result in improvements in work quality and productivity. Create an organisation value for employees, enhance employees' work engagement and performance and allow the institution to gain its employees' loyalty (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Naruse et al., 2015; Gombolay et al., 2015; Woolley, Aggarwal and Malone, 2015; Pakarinen and Virtanen, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional strategies • University infrastructure • Obstacle to success
8	Establish feedback channels and encourage participation	Enhance staff productivity through periodic performance feedback and employees' and students' satisfaction by knowing that their voices are being heard. Enhance institutional success through the regular assessment of performance. Provide a third-party perspective on the completed work (Dugguh and Dennis, 2014; Saks and Gruman, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External engagement • Institutional strategies
9	Monitor employee and institution performance on a regular basis	Guide the university towards the achievement of its goals and ensure effective interventions occur at the right time to address any issues the university faces in its pursuit of achieving its goals. Facilitate cooperation between faculties and different university departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional strategies • Development and growth • Obstacle to success • Ethical issues • University infrastructure

No	List of proposed interventions	Desired effect	Targeted theme (Contribute to its ideal position)
		and create coordinated decision-making processes. Monitor the recruitment procedure to create a more transparent version and assist in creating equal employment opportunities and, where relevant, increase accountability. This increases accountability, institutional transparency and allows institutions to know their strengths and weaknesses (Fenwick, Explorations and Hagge, 2015; Tackey et al., 2006; Salmi, 2015)	
10	Establish a common goal, shared commitment and encourage collaborative working	Encourage internal communication between employees to enhance their relationships and encourage unity in the workplace. Encourage employees' creativity, improve their work efficiency and productivity and allow them flexibility (Dalton and Crosby, 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional management • Ethical issues
11	Create external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels	Increases the chances of procuring private funding and demonstrating research applicability and students' likelihood of employment. Reduces the financial barriers to university projects and increase the institutions' sustainability and competitiveness. The university will have access to expert advice and be informed about worldwide best practices. Enhance its public image and institutional competitiveness and create a wide portfolio of customers (Skrbinjek and Lesjak, 2014; Nagy, Kováts and Németh, 2014; Hewitt-Dundas, 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and growth • Obstacle to success • Ethical issues • University infrastructure
12	Establish a name blind recruitment system and provide incentives for qualified professionals to join the institution	Reduces the potential unconscious bias against some applicants from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, increases qualification-based employment, builds a qualified workforce and increase trust and fairness in the process (Watt, 2015) Enhances its knowledge and production,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obstacle to success • Ethical issues

No	List of proposed interventions	Desired effect	Targeted theme (Contribute to its ideal position)
		increases diversity in the work place and facilitate different ways of teaching and learning.	

6.6 The relationship between the proposed interventions

Table 23 describes the relationship between the proposed interventions. It shows that most are supported by both the literature and the main data.

Table 23: Relationship between the proposed interventions and the targeted themes

NO	List of proposed interventions	Intervention From literature	Intervention from data
1	Facilitate training channels for your institution leaders that equip them with the specific leadership qualities required for their specific roles so that they can effectively manage their work	√	√
2	Create public engagement-supporting policies, by developing partnerships with public-supporting institutions and encouraging staff and students to engage in public issues		√
3	Establish a clear direction for your institution and develop short- and medium-term targets to achieve long-term goals		√
4	Delegate decision making and work execution	√	√

5	Provide encouragement and rewards and ensure that they target performance and qualifications	√	√
6	Systemically study the skill needs of your institution's leaders and employees, provide a wide range of supporting resources and training opportunities and encourage participation	√	√
7	Establish ad hoc teams that cut across departments and hierarchical levels and coordinate to provide integrated decision-making and encourage staff to participate in the institution's decision-making processes to empower them to develop their own initiatives	√	
8	Establish feedback channels and encourage participation		√
9	Monitor employee and institution performance on a regular basis	√	√
10	Establish a common goal and shared commitment for employees and encourage them to work collaboratively	√	√
11	Create external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels	√	√
12	Establish a recruitment system that is name blind and provides incentives for qualified professionals to join your institution	√	√

6.7 Expert validation

In order to evaluate and validate the developed framework, the researcher heard the judgments of three industry experts. Schuwirth and van der Vleuten (2011) claim that the best way to consider validity is to see it as a subjective, qualitative judgment, normally taken by someone with expertise in the area being tested. Therefore, the researcher met with three experts in areas relating to CI to seek their valuable feedback in relation the validity and applicability of the developed framework. Table 24 highlights the participants expertise and related experience in CI.

Table 24: Participant's expertise and related experience in CI

Expert	Position	Years of experience	Country
A	Executive in the Ministry of Education	22	Saudi Arabia
B	Dean of quality and development	16	Kuwait
C	University chancellor's consultant	15	United Kingdom

These experts' views on this proposed framework are integral to validating its reliability and ensuring its applicability to KSA's HEIs. Therefore, the author has individually met with the above experts and showed them the proposed framework and its expected impact on enabling CI within KSA's HEIs. The experts were excited with the framework and expected it to make a real impact on these institutions' organisational culture and, accordingly, to enable CI in such HEIs. The experts also made some suggestions for steps to be incorporated within the current framework that will increase its reliability and widen its applicability to include other Arab states. These expert's views on the proposed framework are summarised as follows:

Expert A

“Your work touches heavily on many issues that we face in our universities, some of which have not even been acknowledged, and your proposed framework –although it is idealistic to a certain extent – it still can address many of these issues.” He added, *“in fact, in the last three years, we have been utilising various aspects of your framework within our HEIs development initiatives.”*

Expert B

“This proposed framework will contribute to the body of literature relating to the management of HEIs, not only in the Saudi HEIs, but throughout the GCC and the Arab countries who share, to large extent, similar cultures.”

Expert C

“Your framework provides a comprehensive view to the understanding the application of CI, and it proposes a revolutionary transformation to the way HEIs are currently operating. Therefore, its application in the current environment will be met with challenges”. He added, “Various aspects of this framework can also be beneficial in non-HEI organisations”. He further suggested, “The framework’s clarity would benefit from the use of more indicative diagrams”

Having considered the experts views on the proposed framework, it is also important to highlight their suggested amendments towards making it more effective. Indeed, both experts A and C have suggested that HEIs should instigate continuous and periodical reflections following each targeted milestone before reaching the institutions’ desired goal. This recommendation was made in order to ensure that such targets build on each other’s success and failures before achieving the final outcome of the framework. Expert B, who was impressed with the framework and encouraged its implementation in KSA’s HEIs, suggested the implementation of this proposed framework on private HEIs within the KSA before expanding to the other public HEIs. This is because private HEIs are less restricted when it comes to implementing new initiatives and they are also of a smaller size to public HEIs. Both of these suggestions were incorporated into the proposed framework, as illustrated in the following table (Table 25).

Table 25: Expert's suggested amendments

Expert/s	Suggested amendments
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A and C	There is a need for continuous and periodical reflections following each targeted milestone before reaching the institutions' desired goal
B	The implementation of this proposed framework should target private HEIs first, before expanding to the other public HEIs

During the validation process involving these selected experts (who are from different countries with various HEI structures), the author has made some important observations. Although the experts emphasised the importance of this proposed framework in developing HEIs in general, they also stressed the need to contextualise the framework to suit each country's needs. This was mostly seen in the experts' continuous reference to their HEIs dominant practice of OC that, in several occasions, differs from the KSA's HEI practices. Therefore, it is clear that such a proposed framework could be applicable to most countries' HEIs, provided each country's OC, national culture and other influencing factors are taken into consideration. This contextualisation will enable each country to apply the framework's key elements and prioritise them in a way that will enhance CI within their HEIs.

6.8 The proposed framework

This study proposes a framework that would enable the needed improvements and overcome the challenges facing the HEIs' CI efforts. This approach will address the factors that are an amalgamation of a number of OC aspects that have shaped the current Saudi HEIs' OC and facilitate an OC that supports CI. Interventions captured on the framework were developed from this study's emergent themes, which are shown in Table 17 and were discussed in Chapter Five. Table 23 shows the 12 proposed interventions and Table 25 shows experts' comments regarding the relevancy and implementation of the interventions. The proposed interventions are consistent

with Schein's (1992) conceptualisation of organisational culture as having three aspects: underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artefacts.

Figure 13 illustrates how the proposed interventions' framework is consistent with Schein's (1992) conceptualisation of organisational culture. The figure divides the proposed interventions into three categories, each of which is linked with one Schein's (1992) organisational culture conceptualising aspects. It also highlights linkages among Schein's three levels of culture, illustrating that CI results from an OC where there is alignment among shared assumptions, espoused values and artefacts as shown in the figure below.

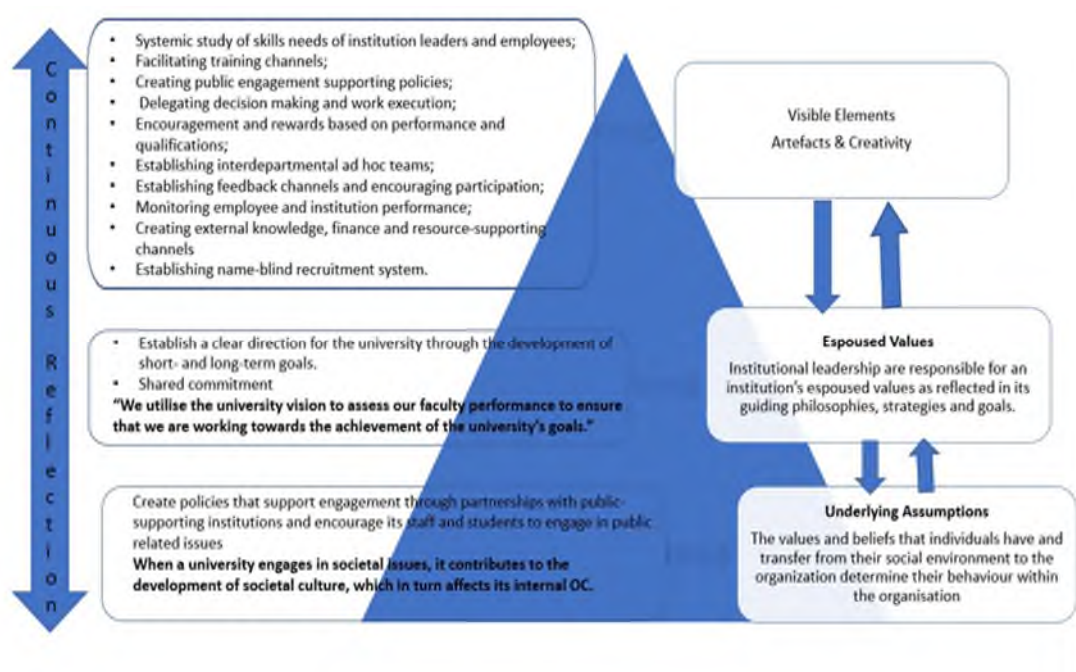


Figure 12: The influence of organisational culture on continuous improvement (Source: own creation)

6. 9 Conclusion

Based on data derived from the study's participants, this chapter identified inferred interventions that could facilitate CI in Saudi Arabian HEIs.

These findings were fused with interventions derived from relevant literature to come up with interventions that are considered capable of closing the gap between the ideal conditions for CI and current practices in Saudi Arabian universities. The identified interventions were labelled as enablers for the effective implementation of CI. This was followed by a demonstration, in tabular format, of the stages undertaken to develop a proposal of interventions, outline their desired effects, and demonstrate the CI themes they would address. This culminated in a preliminary framework that highlights the relationships among the proposed interventions. The preliminary framework was then evaluated and validated through soliciting expert opinions, which were incorporated to come up with the framework presented in Figure 13. The framework was reduced to a diagram consistent with the suggestion of one of the experts that the *“framework’s clarity would benefit from the use of more indicative diagrams.”*. The next chapter discusses the presented findings and the proposed framework of organisational cultural factors that have been acting either as enablers or inhibitors to the success of CI efforts in Saudi HEIs.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

7.1 Introduction

This study set out to establish how organisational culture can be leveraged to support continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia's HEIs. In this regard, the study's objectives were to: identify organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement through conducting an extensive literature review; identifying organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement within HEI in Saudi Arabia; clarifying how enablers can be encouraged and inhibitors removed in the organisational culture in Saudi Arabia's HEIs; developing a framework of interventions that will help to leverage the organisation cultures of Saudi Arabia HEIs to facilitate continuous improvement; evaluating and validating the proposed intervention framework of the organisational culture via experts' judgments. This chapter discusses this study's framework of proposed interventions which was presented in (Table 22) in the previous chapter. The discussion is structured as follows: underlying assumptions, espoused values, visible elements, which influences OC and impacts CI efforts. This chapter concludes by evaluating the strengths and limitations of the framework.

7.2 Proposed framework discussion

In order to address the above-mentioned factors that are an amalgamation of a number of OC aspects that have shaped the current OC of Saudi HEIs' and facilitate an OC that supports CI, this section discusses the proposed framework for enabling the needed improvements and overcoming the challenges facing the HEI's CI efforts and expert's suggestions on the

relevancy and implementation of the interventions. The discussion is framed by Schein's (1992) conceptualisation of organisational culture, which has three aspects: underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artefacts.

7.2.1 Underlying assumptions

Basic underlying assumptions are beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings that, although not directly observable, are taken for granted and can be observed in a culture (Almaiman, McLaughlin, and Al-Ashaab, 2017 citing Lawson and Shen 1998). In this study, underlying assumptions were recognised about the role of society in shaping the OC of universities. According to Babnik (2011), organisational culture is directly determined by implicit societal culture. Vajpayee and Chakraborty (2017) argue that societal culture is an integral part of organisational culture. This is confirmed by, among others, Aldrich and Marsden (1988), Hofstede (1991), Tayeb (1994) and Zakaria (1997), who have argued that organisations do not exist in a vacuum but within specific cultures. Societal culture denotes the relation of states with employers, workers and the norms and values of organisations and of workers in organisations. This ultimately influences collective relations between employers and workers and their place of work, collective relations between employers and trade unions and, to a certain extent, the state, in the regulation of their relationship.

The impact of societal cultures varies in the degree to which there is a dominant set of values and beliefs that influences organisational culture (Brodbeck et al., 2004). The values and beliefs that individuals have and transfer from their social environment to the organisational one determines their behaviour within the organisation (Fitzsimmons and Stamper, 2014; Kopelman et al., 1990). Further, societal culture has been found to influence the implementation and continuation of improvement processes (Pakdil and

Leonard, 2017). Therefore, this study's framework of OC factors influencing CI proposes that HEIs create policies to support engagement through partnerships with public-supporting institutions and should encourage its staff and students to engage in public-related issues as a way of influencing societal culture. For example, one participant explained how engagement in public-related issues can enhance a university's relationship with wider society. He stated:

For our university to be able to build a good relationship with society and encourage collaboration between us [staff] and the community members in relation to our research and other social related studies, I believe that our university needs to take practical steps that encourage both the staff and students to engage in public issues. For example, the university should create a unit that specifically focuses on public engagement, which is composed of both public engagement professionals and students. Also, the university should create a platform for public engagement that encourages discussion of public issues and provides guidance for those staff and students who wish to participate in public engagement activities. It should also motivate the wider university staff and students to engage in public issues through incentives. Such incentives can be through cash payments, job recruitment for students or job promotion for staff.

Therefore, when the university engages in societal issues, it contributes to the development of societal culture which, in turn, affects its internal OC. The extent to which a university's engagement in public issues can meaningfully influence societal culture – to the point of instilling shared assumptions that

work in favour of continuous improvement – is debatable, at least in the short to medium term.

In the case of the KSA, where religion plays a dominant role across all sectors of people's lives, whatever change results from a university's influence is likely to be acceptable or implementable only if consistent with overarching religious assumptions, especially in state owned universities. Private universities may be in a better position to implement changes because the leadership has more power over decision-making, as explained by one of the experts.

7.2.2 Espoused values as seen through leadership

The study recognises the role of the institutions' leaders in the facilitation of an OC that encourages CI as they are responsible for an institution's espoused values as reflected in its guiding philosophies, strategies and goals. It proposes that institutional leaders should possess the key competencies related to their fields so they may effectively execute their functions in the workplace. It has been found that, when the management of an institution are trained on a regular basis on strategic planning and specific leadership and management areas, this enhances the institution's leadership competencies and aligns its leaders' skills with the institution's strategic goals (Day, 2001; Collins and Holton, 2004; Santos, Caetano, and Tavares, 2015; Griffith, Baur, and Buckley, 2018). It also builds an institution's specific leadership abilities and increase managers' understanding of their ethical and leadership roles, as well as their employees' needs (Bedi, Alpaslan, and Green, 2016; Yukl, 2006; Rothwell, 2002).

The study proposes the establishment of a clear direction for the university through the development of short- and long-term goals. These goals will act as

a tool to guide the university's development and growth, assess its performance, and help it to predict the obstacles it may face. According to Denison (1984, cited in Yildiz, 2014) the organisation's short-term goals and performances affect its long-term survival. The importance of pacing goals was emphasized by one of the experts who highlighted the need for continuous and periodical reflections following each targeted milestone. Along the same vein, Kotter and Heskett (1992 cited in Meng, 2014) argue that the organisational culture reflects its strategic objective, which is achieved through conducting behavioural and operational improvements. The commitment, according to the participants, is operationalised through the creation of short-term and long-term goals that provide a gauging tool for the performance of HEIs and decrease the chance of facing unexpected obstacles. For example, one participant explained that the lack of effective long-term strategy has resulted in unexpected obstacles that have affected many of their university projects. He stated:

We faced a number of obstacles that affected our work performance, including financial, skills and resistance from some employees. We should have expected such barriers initially when we set our transformation plans. If we had expected these issues and included their solutions in our plans, we would have been better equipped to deal with them. For example, we did not expect the current government cuts to the universities' budgets and many of our planned projects had to be either temporarily suspended or completely cancelled. Our plans were relying on generous government funds, and if we had expected these cuts, we would have prioritised our planned projects, and we wouldn't have been forced to do such suspensions and cancellations.

Another participant explained how an effective university vision can direct its performance. He said: “*We utilise the university’s vision to assess our faculty performance to ensure that we are working towards the achievement of the university’s goals.*” Viewing leadership as responsible for the vision, espoused values of an organisation and ensuring that these are reflected in its guiding philosophies, strategies and goals is one of the suggestions made in the proposed framework of OC’s influence on CI, but it has its limitations.

The main limitation is that it is based on an assumption that the leaders have control over those aspects, a situation which, from some of the findings, is evidently not the case. In addition, the relationship between leadership and organisational values is not unidirectional in as much as leadership shapes the organisation’s values, its leadership practices are conversely shaped by the organisation’s values. Further, leadership in public universities seems to have limited influence over matters of vision, strategy and goals, as is indicated by a participant indicating that government funding was reduced at a time when they did not expect it so that “*planned projects had to be either temporarily suspended or completely cancelled. Our plans were relying on generous government funds.*” In government funded HEIs it may, therefore, be difficult to implement the proposed framework as is, a view that is confirmed by one of the experts.

7.2.3 Visible elements (artefacts)

The artefacts feature of Schein’s levels of organisational culture encapsulates the visible organisational structure and processes that are observed and appear to convey multiple meanings. In the context of implementing CI, the visible elements are part of the context that either aids or deters the process. Sheldon et al. (2008) have termed this the implementation climate. Those observed in the study are: facilitating training channels for

institution leaders; creating public engagement supporting policies; delegating decision making and work execution; providing encouragement and rewards based on performance and qualifications; the systemic study of the skills needed by an institution's leaders and employees; establishing interdepartmental ad hoc teams; establishing feedback channels and encouraging participation; monitoring employee and institution performance on a regular basis; creating external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels and establishing a name-blind recruitment system.

7.2.3.1 Delegating decision making and work execution

The study proposes that leaders should delegate decision-making and work execution to employees. According to the participants, this delegation would create an OC of innovations, self-confidence and productivity.

According to one participant: *“When I delegate some responsibilities to my employees and believe in their skills and judgment to finish the work, I find that employees both enjoy it and become more innovative in their work planning and performance.”*

This is also supported by a number of studies indicating that, when staff are encouraged to participate in the organisation's decision-making and are being supported by the management, it increases employees' self-confidence and motivation, (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008), work engagement, performance and loyalty (Naruse et al., 2015) and encourages innovation (Alcudia, Alcudia and Alcudia, 2015; Husni, 2018) thereby creating organisational value.

Delegating decision-making and work presupposes that those being delegated to have the necessary skills and competences and to share the same vision. In this regard, it becomes effective when implemented in tandem with shared goals and the provision of necessary training.

7.2.3.2 Facilitate needs-based training channels

Another main proposal of the study is that HEIs should systemically study the training needs of their employees and provide a wide range of supporting resources and training opportunities and encourage participation. This includes facilitating training channels for institution leaders. The continuous development of skills would create an OC focused on the continuous assessment of skills and competencies at the human and institutional levels, which would aid its CI efforts. For example, one participant explained the benefits of facilitating training channels for employees:

We found that, by leaving the choice of training to the employees, they started to self-assess their skills; employees are more confident now to carry out difficult tasks and, most importantly, we noticed that this program has enhanced the relationship between us and our employees.

Other studies have found that training plays a significant role in enhancing an individuals' productivity and in communicating organisational objectives to employees (Ekaterini and Constantinou-Vasilios, 2009). Rohan and Madhumita (2012) also explain that training employees in teamwork, problem-solving, effective decision-making and interpersonal relations benefits organisations in different ways, including in their level of growth and performance. This may be because training plays a critical role in the making and changing of an organisations' culture (Valle, 1999 cited in Ali and Patnaik, 2014; Gil and Mataveli, 2016) and help employees to accept new structures and values (Jreisat, 1997, p. 181). The effective training and development of employees has been associated with shaping organisational culture (Gourova and Toteva, 2014; Pevkur, 2007).

7.2.3.3 Establish a common goal, shared commitment and encouraging collaborative work

Having recognised that a skilled workforce will not be able to contribute effectively to CI if they do not share a common objective, this study proposes that HEIs should establish a common goal and shared commitment among employees and encourage them to work collaboratively to achieve such goals. This shared commitment will enhance the relationships between employees, encourage workplace unity, encourage employees' creativity and improve their work efficiency and productivity. One participant specified:

Our department's staff cooperation has been our main driver in competing and winning the title of best quality department within our university. ... The whole department had one goal, and one commitment, therefore we were very motivated and, thankfully, we were rewarded with the best quality department award.

In contrast, another participant explained the adverse impact for institutions when their employees do not share a common goal. He stated:

Although the department goal of gaining academic accreditation is known to everyone, we academics have not been working together to achieve that goal. Everyone is working on their own interests of publishing their own paper or attending an out-of-country conference. This has affected our overall departmental research productivity and quality. We need to work together on research if we want to enhance our department accreditation.

These findings indicate that teamwork must work both within and across departments if it is to be effective in changing the OC.

7.2.3.4 Establishment of coordinated multi-department ad hoc teams

Internal cooperation between the different functions of a university was found critical to creating a common goal-based OC. In this regard, the study proposes the establishment of coordinated ad hoc teams that cut across departments and hierarchical levels to provide integrated decision-making, as well as encourage staff to participate in the institution's decision-making process. This will help HEIs in their strategy planning and implementation and build a cultural infrastructure that discourages bureaucracy and encourages a coordinated decision-making process. A number of studies have found that demonstrate how the establishment of ad hoc teams creates an inclusive and efficient decision-making mechanism and allows for effective coordination to occur between different organisational departments (Gombolay et al., 2015; Woolley, Aggarwal and Malone, 2015; Pakarinen and Virtanen, 2017). Additionally, it motivates employees and enhances their sense of autonomy, resulting in improvements in work quality and productivity (Hackman and Oldham, 1980 and Algashaam, 2015). It will also enhance employees' work engagement and performance loyalty (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Naruse et al., 2015).

7.2.3.5 Providing encouragement and rewards based on performance and qualifications

Encouragement and rewards are proposed as important interventions that HEIs can use to enhance management-employee relationships, encourage employees to widen their skills and build a cultural infrastructure of

productivity and growth. The encouragement can take different forms, including financial payments, work promotions or even personal encouragement by a manager. Glewwe et al. (2008) found that offering direct payment rewards to staff based on their work achievement could increase employees' work motivation and satisfaction, as well as their overall work performance. Other studies have signalled that skills-based as opposed to job-based compensation will impact on employees' motivation and will encourage them to broaden their skills (Sailer, 2017; Mitra, Gupta and Shaw, 2011). One of the study participants explained that rewarding employees with salary increases and work promotions could increase employee productivity, encourage them to widen their skills and enhance their work performance. He explained:

We need to encourage better employee performance by creating employee performance-driven incentives. For example, we should create objective criteria for our department employees that resemble what we look for as an ideal work performance. The ideal work performance, I believe, should include meeting the job targets, continually expanding their skills to enhance their work performance, continually self-assessing their own work environment, making recommendations to the management on how to improve their work environment, and lastly, having a good relationship with co-workers. If we create these objective criteria and reward employees who meet these objective criteria with salary increases or job promotions, I believe that we will have a more productive and competitive work environment and encourage employees to develop their skills.

Using work promotion to encourage employees' productivity and to widen their skills is one of this study's main findings. According to one participant:

... some employees spend up to nine years in the same position without any promotion or being able to sign up for courses to develop their skills, which leads to an indirect resistance to the university's proposed development, as they want to avoid any development-based challenges and simply enjoy their routine work.

He adds:

I believe this can be overcome if the university uses career promotions to encourage employees to increase their performance or develop their skills, because employees need to see that they can grow in their workplace. In this way, the university will gain their employees' loyalty and have a skilled workforce.

Verbal encouragement by the management can increase employees' work loyalty and raise their productivity. One participant explained:

From personal experience, I found that individual encouragement by the direct manager, even if productivity is low, will increase employee productivity within a few months... I found that with constant personal encouragement for employees, two primary factors were gained: the employees' work loyalty and the productivity of such employees, which has been greatly reflected in the success of the faculty

Providing encouragement and rewards based on performance and qualifications presupposes the existence of performance monitoring and mechanisms for channelling performance feedback.

7.2.3.6 Monitor employee and institution performance on a regular basis

Monitoring performance by the top management guides the university towards the achievement of its goals and ensures effective intervention at the right time to address any issues the university faces in its pursuit of achieving its goals. Monitoring also facilitates cooperation between faculties and different university departments and creates coordinated decision-making processes. For example, one participant explained:

...since he was appointed as our university chancellor, we started noticing different attitudes towards the development of the university, especially regarding academic departments. He started asking what used to be uncomfortable questions in the university, such as what each faculty vision is, how far did they work to achieve such a vision, what has been the output of each faculty in terms of research and study outcomes, and what development steps faculties have taken, if any. Two years since his appointment, I can tell you that we have witnessed more productivity in the university and started witnessing more cooperation between faculties and different university departments to achieve the university's overall vision of improvements.

Additionally, this study recognises the importance of regularly monitoring employee and institution's performance in the success of its HEIs' strategy

with respect to its implementation, development and growth, and to overcoming any ethical violations that may exist inside HEIs. According to one participant:

*The performance report is very important, not just for the staff but for the department as well; how else would we know about well or badly performing departments and/or staff?
The absence of these performance reports is the reason behind the lack of productivity, because without transparent reporting, low-performing staff and departments will not be held accountable for their low performance.*

7.2.3.7 Establish feedback channels and encourage participation

Linked to monitoring is providing employees with feedback to facilitate improvement. The study proposes the establishment of feedback channels throughout an institution in order to provide it with continuous assessment of its strategies and performance. According to Bratton and Gold (2012) and Holton et al. (2007), feedback enables employees to see, without bias, how others perceive their performance and input in areas such as teamwork, leadership, interaction and interpersonal communication, management, contributions, accountability, work habits and vision. This is consistent with the study's finding that the facilitation of feedback channels creates an OC of productivity and employee satisfaction. One participant declared: *“One of the steps we took to improve our staff productivity and work quality was through providing them with periodic performance feedback”*. Another participant explained:

I started to understand where my weaknesses were in relation to my module preparation and teaching, which

included, according to my recent students' feedback, my lack of use of PowerPoint and not interacting enough with students in the lectures. ... I relied on such feedback to prepare this year's lectures, and I started to notice better student attendance than last year.

This shows that performance feedback is a tool that is used to deconstruct employees' weaknesses and strengths. In this study, feedback was found to encourage self-assessment among employees and students. For example, one participant stated:

We also want to encourage self-assessment by creating reflective feedback throughout the university, whereby every staff member and student is asked to reflect upon their performance, so we can encourage this self-critique habit within them in order for them to continuously monitor their own performance and development. We also do this on an institutional level, whereby every department is asked to reflect upon their annual performance and is required to provide detailed plans of how they will improve their performance in the following year.

7.2.3.8 Establish a name blind recruitment system

To support the creation of a fair and transparent recruitment process, this study proposes the creation of a recruitment system that is name blind and provides incentives for qualified professionals to join any institution. According to Watt (2015), name blinding recruitment procedures reduces the potential for unconscious bias regarding applicants from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and increases qualification-based employment. This helps

in building a qualified workforce and increases trust and fairness in the recruitment process. A merit-based recruitment process allows an organisation to recruit and promote the right candidates based on their competencies (Anisha, 2012). Effective recruitment can also enhance knowledge production in HEIs. For example, one participant explained that:

One of our university strategies is to recruit qualified academics and researchers from different countries in order to create a diverse workplace and to enhance knowledge production by learning from different experiences. ... We tried to create a comfortable environment for them, both financially - where they are given high salaries to encourage their recruitment - and also by providing them with different development programs to ensure that their skills are continually developed, and they are able to grow in their respective careers. We tried to build a supportive work culture that enhances job satisfaction and work performance. For example, employees are encouraged and rewarded for coming up with new ideas. We try to arrange for frequent social events to enhance our employees' relationships. We try to make a flexible working environment for our employees, depending on their respected roles. We do this because we find that it increases employees' satisfaction, work performance and our departmental competitiveness.

Tackey et al. (2006) argue that monitoring the recruitment procedure should create a more transparent recruitment process, assist in creating equal employment opportunities, and, where relevant, increase accountability.

7.2.3.9 Create external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels

Another intervention proposed by this study is the creation of external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels. According to the participants, the government's financial cuts to their university projects have affected many areas of their performance. One participant stated:

The recent cuts in the financial income of university staff led to a large number of qualified personnel leaving the university to look for better opportunities in the private sector, which has affected our university's work productivity”.

Another participant stated:

We faced a number of obstacles that affected our work performance, including financial, skills and resistance from some employees. Therefore, it is important that the university should diversify its financial income, so its daily operations are not affected by an unexpected financial struggle.

A number of studies have found that, when an institution diversifies its sources of income and establishes funding channels through techniques such as externally-funded contract research, consultancy and links with private businesses, such an institution will reduce financial barriers to university projects and increase the institution's sustainability and competitiveness (Skrbinjek and Lesjak, 2014; Nagy, Kováts and Németh, 2014; Hewitt-Dundas, 2012). Further, a university's partnerships with other institutions like private business, technological companies and consulting firms, allow it to develop and grow, avoid unexpected obstacles, learn from worldwide best

practices and create a culture of CI. One participant explained how his university has utilised partnering with a technology company, stating:

Because we continually need up-to-date effective technological services or equipment, we partnered with technology companies like Oracle and Cisco. They provide us with the technology we require and the continuous maintenance of their services, and they train our staff and students on their utilisation.

The importance of these technological products is captured by another participant, who stated: “*Our recent reliance on technology has not only increased our work performance but has also improved its efficiency.*” Also, the partnership with private business plays a significant role in the employability of the university students. According to one participant:

One positive step taken by my university is their partnership agreement with different Saudi-based private businesses such as banks and private hospitals – to employ and train students for a year. This partnership has solved the ‘work experience’ employment barrier, where businesses require relevant work experience for their employment vacancies, and freshly graduated students do not generally have such experience.

According to Kezar (2009), university partnerships with consultancy firms will provide an institution with expert advice and inform them of worldwide best practices. The importance of partnerships with other institutions is supported in the literature. According to Gumport and Snyderman (2002 cited in David, 2017), there is a need for institutions to transform their academic structures so that they may compete for change and stability. Universities compete globally through partnerships between universities and industries

(Tumuti et al., 2013). University–industry partnerships are considered a primary cooperative effort that enables them to utilise their resources effectively and efficiently to achieve their shared objectives of enhancing their global competitiveness, achieving technological innovation and acting as engines for economic growth (Ahmad and Junaid, 2008; Ankrah and Omar, 2015; Garousi, Eskandar, and Herkiloğlu, 2017).

7.3 Evaluation of the OC-CI framework

Temponi (2005) noted that adopting CI in HEIs required both the commitment of senior administrators and the revamping of institutional cultures to make them more supportive of the objectives for adopting CI, with culture being presented as the main obstacle to quality improvement. The proposed framework focuses on organisational culture-related interventions that can be adopted to ensure the successful acceptance of CI. The strengths of the proposed framework lie in it addressing factors that have long been identified in the literature as either impediments or enablers of CI (O'Mahony and Garavan, 2012; Sheldon et al., 2008). The inclusion of the element of continuous reflection in the framework ensures the continuous reassessment of intervention linkages within the three levels of culture. This ensures that, as continuous improvement-related goals are achieved at, for example, the artefacts level, these are realigned with the vision, espoused values and strategies level. Another strong feature of the framework is that, although derived from data relating to HEIs, as observed by one of the experts, it has various aspects that can also be beneficial in non-HEI organisations.

A shortcoming of the proposed framework is that, while it highlights or recommends what needs to be done, it does not adequately tackle the issue of the influence of exogenous factors, specifically, national or societal culture on organisational culture which, in turn, affects CI initiatives. This is particularly

critical given the extent to which, in the KSA context, religion permeates every aspect of life and is, in fact, an inseparable component of state institutions such as public HEIs. The suggestion from the findings that HEIs can, through their involvement in societal public activities, influence societal culture (at Schein's shared assumptions level) to the point where a "new" and different culture is created that is amenable to CI imperatives, seems far-fetched. What seems more practical, and therefore implementable, is addressing the level of espoused values and the visible components in the form of delegating decision making and work execution; facilitating training channels for institution leaders and staff; encouraging employees through verbal feedback and performance and qualification based rewards; establishing interdepartmental ad hoc teams; fostering feedback and participation through establishing feedback channels; monitoring employee and institution performance on a regular basis; creating external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels; creating public engagement-supporting policies; and establishing name-blind recruitment systems.

Although the framework offers up multiple interventions, it may not be possible for all of them to be implemented at the same time. As noted by one of the experts, implementation may need to be gradually accompanied by an evaluation at the completion of every stage. This is consistent with general recommendations regarding the gradual implementation of organisational improvement. Further, the multiple interventions included in the framework presuppose that certain conditions are in place, which is not always the case. For example, training-related interventions assume the availability of resources and the employee's willingness to be trained. Leadership related interventions, such as shared decision making, assumes that HEI leadership are willing to share their perceived power and authority, which may not be the case given the high power-distance culture in Saudi Arabia.

7.4 Summary

This chapter discussed aspects of OC that were identified by the study participants as necessary for creating an environment that is conducive of CI. The identified aspects of OC were discussed from the perspective of Schein's (1984) model of culture as three interlinked or related levels, namely, the underlying assumptions that are usually accepted without question and influence the articulated values that, in turn, influence the artefacts. At the level of underlying assumptions it was noted that HEIs need to create policies that support engagement through partnerships with public-supporting institutions and through staff and students engaging in societal issues in that way contributes to the development of societal culture which, in the long-term, would affect its internal OC. Given the long-term returns to be gained from such an intervention, the need for periodic reviews and reflections was noted. At the level of articulated values, the leadership's role of establishing a clear direction for the institution by ensuring the subsistence of a common goal, shared commitment, encouraging working collaboratively and delegating decision making was highlighted. It was suggested that, since the proposals represent a revolutionary transformation to the way HEIs are currently operating, it was likely to meet with challenges and should, therefore, first be implemented in private HEIs.

Most of the identified aspects of OC affecting CI fall under Schein's artefacts and creations level, namely: facilitating training channels for institution leaders; creating public engagement supporting policies; delegating decision-making and work execution; providing encouragement and rewards based on performance and qualifications; the systemic study of the skills needed by institution leaders and employees; establishing interdepartmental ad hoc teams; establishing feedback channels and encouraging participation; monitoring employee and institution performance on a regular basis; creating

external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels and establishing a name-blind recruitment systems.

The OC aspects affecting CI, as presented in the framework, were discussed and after arranging them according to Schein's levels the researcher developed a framework of interventions capable of ensuring the implementation of improvements that enable HEIs to overcome challenges to their CI efforts. The next chapter presents the study's conclusion and identifies research limitations and opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This Grounded Theory based study set out to establish how organisational culture can be leveraged to enhance CI in Saudi Arabian HEIs. This was necessitated by the fact that most Saudi HEIs are still to implement NCAAA standards of quality assurance for the purpose of acquiring full institutional accreditation (NCAAA, 2012). Such accreditation is necessary for attaining global competitiveness (Dickson, Kwantes and Magomaeva, 2014). The study collected data through obtaining employees and students' beliefs, ideas, and understanding of the CI process within HEIs in Saudi Arabia, which was achieved through the exploration of two specific questions, namely:

- i. Could you give an example of when continuous improvement has worked well?
- ii. Could you give an example of when continuous improvement did not work well or perhaps something went wrong?

The study had the following specific objectives:

- i. Identify organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement via the extensive review of relevant literature
- ii. Identify organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement within HEIs
- iii. Establish how enablers can be encouraged and inhibitors removed in the organisational cultures of Saudi Arabia's HEIs
- iv. Develop a framework of interventions that will help to leverage the organisational culture to facilitate continuous improvement

- v. Validate the intervention framework of the organisational culture via the judgements of experts.

Through analysing the interview data, synthesising and consolidating it into major, well-defined themes through focus group discussions and quantifying the occurrence of themes through a short questionnaire survey, the study's findings revealed that the three levels of culture, as conceived by Schein (1984), can either aid or deter the CI initiatives of HEIs.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows:

- i. A conclusive presentation of the key findings relating to each objective
- ii. The contribution of the study to the literature
- iii. The study's limitations
- iv. Suggestions for further research

8.2 Key findings

The overall key findings of the study are synthesised and presented under the sub-headings: organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement; how enablers can be encouraged, and inhibitors removed; and the proposed framework and its validation.

8.2.1 Organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement

This study identified 62 aspects associated with the performance of CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia. Through focus group discussions, these were synthesized, labelled and defined to come up with eight themes linked to CI, these are: external engagement with outside society, institutional management,

skills enhancement for students and staff, institutional strategies, development and growth strategies, obstacles to success, ethical issues and university infrastructure. An ideal position was identified for each of the themes and a minor survey conducted to compare current practices to the ideal position, which indicated that respondents considered the practices of the eight themes in their universities as not supporting an ideal and therefore enabling culture for CI.

Participants proposed 16 interventions considered relevant for the facilitation of CI which, when matched with interventions mentioned in the literature, were consolidated into twelve interventions namely: 1) the facilitation of leadership training; 2) creating policies that support public engagement; 3) establishing a clear direction for the institution; 4) delegating decision making; 5) establishing encouragement and rewards; 6) the provision of training opportunities and resources; 7) establishing ad hoc interdepartmental teams; 8) establishing feedback channels; 9) monitoring employee performance; 10) the establishment of common goals and shared commitments; 11) creating external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels; and 12) establishing a name-blind recruitment system

8.2.2 How enablers can be encouraged, and inhibitors removed - the framework

Given the identified enablers and inhibitors, the study developed and validated a framework that lists specific activities that can be adopted for the purpose of encouraging CI enablers while removing or mitigating inhibitors. The framework proposed that CI is better facilitated when context issues are taken into account through ensuring that OC and CI reinforce each other. It proposes that, consistent with Schein's conceptualisation of organisational culture, CI enablers can be encouraged through the alignment and cross-

reinforcement of shared organisational assumptions, shared visions and espoused values and the resultant organisational practices that are visible elements of its culture.

Underlying assumptions: In the area of underlying assumptions guiding organisational culture, the framework proposes that HEIs should create policies that support engagement through partnerships with public-supporting institutions and should encourage staff and students to engage in public-related issues as a way of influencing societal culture. It was noted that the strong influence of religion in all aspects of people's lives may make it difficult for a university's engagement in public issues to influence societal culture to the extent of instilling shared assumptions that work in favour of CI. Whatever change results from a university's influence is likely to be acceptable or implementable only if it is consistent with overarching religious assumptions, given that Islam has a significant effect on Saudi Arabian national culture, which also impacts organisational cultures (Rafiki and Wahab, 2014) especially in state owned universities. This view is consistent with Fralinger's (2007) suggestion that the culture of a HEIs is moulded by both internal and external stakeholders' beliefs and practices. Hence, the experts that assesses the framework suggested that it is better to implement changes first in non-state HEIs and that the changes be gradual and followed by evaluations. This approach is consistent with Willis et al.'s (2016) view that organisational change and development – which are an integral part of CI – are shaped by societal values and beliefs (Willis et al., 2016).

Espoused values: The study recognises the role of institutional leaders in the facilitation of an OC that encourages CI. Leaders are responsible for an institution's espoused values as reflected in its guiding philosophies, strategies and goals. Further, leaders are responsible for articulating the vision behind which employees are rallied. The relationship between leadership and organisational values was found not to be unidirectional in as much as leadership shapes an organisation's values and leadership. Further, leadership in public universities was found to have limited influence over vision, strategy and goals. This was highlighted by a participant who indicated that an unexpected reduction in government funding resulted in the suspension or complete cancellation of planned projects. Such a situation suggests that differences exist in what is considered important at a specific time, particularly between different stakeholders, for example, between the funder (the government) and the leadership of HEIs. It is in this vein that participants suggested that the proposed CI framework would be best implemented, initially, in private universities, where the leadership is assumed to have a larger say in the institutional vision, values and goals.

Visible elements: In the context of implementing CI, the visible elements were found to be part of the context that either aids or deters the process. Those observed in the study are: the systemic study of the skills needs of institution leaders and employees and the facilitation of training channels; creating public engagement-supporting policies; delegating decision making and work execution; providing encouragement and rewards based on performance and qualifications; establishing interdepartmental ad hoc teams; establishing feedback channels and encouraging participation; monitoring employee and institution performance on a regular basis; creating external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels; establishing name-blind recruitment systems.

8.2.3 Validation of the framework

Validation of the proposed interventions framework was gained via the judgement of experts from the HEIs in Saudi Arabia. Such validation revealed that, although the framework was developed specifically for HEIs in Saudi Arabia, it is also be applicable to other sectors. This generalisation possibility has arisen because the framework is based on OC dimensions that are found in other sectors that, like HEIs, offer services (teaching and research) to clients (students and society at large). This is consistent with the neo-liberal view that higher education must operate like any other customer-focused private sector entity, with a prominent focus generating a good on return on investment (Nash, 2019; Zajda and Rust, 2016).

The framework was also validated through noting the need for it to be implemented in phases that are followed by evaluations that allow for adjustments. This is particularly important in view of the fact that CI models originate from a culture foreign to that of Saudi Arabia. Partly related to this is that the validation process highlighted the need for CI to be first pioneered in Saudi Arabia's private HEIs, given that these institutions possess a leadership imbued with more autonomy in terms of directing their vision, values and strategic goals.

8.3 Contribution of the research

This study's contribution has implications at three levels: academic, policy and practice. At an academic level, it should be noted that the outcomes of this research have shed light on the confirmed problem of a lack of information about the relationship between CI and OC. Indeed, these findings fill a gap observed in the literature relating to studies that investigate this nexus within a national culture that is very different from that found in Western settings.

From this research, it become clear that CI, as part of the organisational culture, should be encouraged and promoted. Therefore, considering the particular characteristics of the Islamic culture & Saudi national culture, this study contributes by offering a clear route to encourage both students and staff to maintain continuous improvement in Saudi HEIs. The ultimate goal is to elevate the condition of the internationalisation of Saudi HEIs.

In the praxis, this research has punctually explained the focal interventions, i.e., recommended strategies, that will guide the continuous improvement within Saudi HEIs. Moreover, going beyond the specifically investigated study-problem, it should be noted that the implemented strategies proposed by this study can be applied in HEIs contexts outside that of Saudi Arabia, collaborating to alleviate or solve the same problem in other latitudes.

At the policy level, the major contribution of this research lies in highlighting the need to adopt policies that facilitate the development of an OC grounded in shared assumptions and well-articulated visions and values that nurture CI. At the practice level, its contribution lies in proposing a framework that guides the leveraging the enablers of an OC that allow for CI and the mitigation of the effects of OC disablers with regard to sustaining CI.

8.3.1 Academic contribution

CI is a management practice that has been popularised in the West. Its implementation assumes the subsistence of an enabling OC that is based on Western organisational practices. There is, however, a gap in the literature where CI has been implemented in a culture distinctly different from that assumed by CI frameworks. This study's academic contribution lies in having investigated the nexus of CI and OC within the Saudi Arabian HEI context. The contribution is novel in that it identified aspects of Saudi OC that can be exploited and leveraged as enablers of CI. Further, it has identified aspects of culture that are disablers and came up with mechanisms for mitigating their possible negative impact on CI.

Specifically, it has been observed that OC can positively influence CI in a HEI in situations where there is a reciprocal and mutually reinforcing relationship among the organisation's underlying assumptions; articulated vision, values and goals, and organisational practices (Branson, 2007). Noting the Western origins of CI models, methods and approaches, the proposed framework suggests that the success of CI within Saudi HEIs hinges on adjusting the models to suit the prevailing OCs and, by implication, the relevant aspects of national culture. It further highlights the need to change the OCs to make them more receptive to change and, therefore, to CI.

The framework suggests that, to be successful, CI in Saudi HEIs will need to take the form of a gradual process of change of the OC at the three levels: shared assumptions to make them more receptive to change and new ideas; a shared and clearly articulated vision, shared values and long-term goals derived from strategic planning; engaging in organisational practices that are informed by, are consistent with, and reinforce the first two levels. Thus, while it has been accepted that OC influences CI, this study's contribution is that in

a none Western culture, the relationship between the two is bidirectional. In as much as OC creates a climate conducive of CI, CI itself also influences the OC and may even change it. This is illustrated by the possible effects of university students and staff's involvement in public and societal issues. Although this seems consistent with Halvorson (2013), who avers that CI is more than an operational variable, it is also an essential cultural factor that adds the dimension that CI can also change an organisation's culture even as it depends on some of its aspects.

8.3.2 Policy contribution

At the policy level, the study's contribution resides in the suggestion that, for CI to succeed in HEIs in Saudi Arabia, these institutions should not remain as mere products of the national culture. Instead, they should produce policies that enable them to be drivers of cultural change through engaging with in the community. The university's role goes beyond knowledge production, dissemination or use (Audretsch, 2014; Guerrero, 2016; Ramaley, 2014), and their engagement with wider society is also expected to reflect their core values (Singh, 2007). This, as suggested by participants, could include policies on the formal involvement of HEI personnel (both students and staff) in public and societal issues. This involvement would be part of an institution's long-term strategic goal of changing the shared assumptions people bring to organisations, which as illustrated in the study and influence of an organisation's culture in terms of attitudes towards CI. Changing shared assumptions in the case of Saudi HEIs means finding ways of infusing CI as a shared value from the societal level. This would engrain change and, therefore, sustained continuous improvement as part of the shared assumptions, vision, values and goals.

8.3.3 Practice contribution

Saudi HEIs are working on benchmarking themselves against global best practices through CI. Although institutions have been known to pursue total quality management, attempts have not been sustained as interventions have tended to be short lived. This study has practical implications in this regard. It has contributed to practice by surfacing the role of both national and organisational culture in enabling or disabling CI. In doing so, the study has developed a substantive theory of how HEIs in Saudi Arabia can go about ensuring that their visible practices – ranging from recruitment, training and development, remuneration, performance monitoring and promotion practices – all align to create a climate conducive for CI. The theory is grounded in the experiences of staff from different universities, who participated in the study. The substantive theory's incorporation of monitoring, evaluation and corrective action, addresses the need for the sustainability of improvement initiatives. However, the practical implications of the study go beyond HEIs because the developed substantive theory can be applied or tested in other sectors.

8.4 Limitations

The first limitation of this study is, in fact, a result of its methodology and methods. The GT based study depended on interviewees' opinions to come up with a grounded explanation of how organisational culture could be leveraged to enhance CI in Saudi Arabian HEIs. It was, therefore, exploratory and, as is typical of such studies, the results are not conclusive but only provide a subjective understanding of the OC–CI interface. The exploratory approach precluded an in depth follow up of emerging issues.

Although an attempt was made to introduce minor quantising in the study this, again, was more for exploratory purposes than for a detailed analysis of emerging issues. The study's dependence on largely qualitative findings means their interpretation was judgemental.

8.5 Opportunities / directions for further research

This study has raised opportunities for further research in three areas that are going to be explained below.

First, the findings provide a basis for further studies as they resulted in a substantive theory on a topic, which had not yet been studied within the Saudi Arabian context.

Secondly, the findings indicate a mutually reinforcing relationship between various aspects of OC and CI, the findings seem to suggest that, while OC is a factor in an organisation's readiness for CI, the CI process itself also changes an organisation's culture. There is need for future studies to employ a quantitative approach to validate this indicated relationship in order to establish which of the two impacts has the greatest influence on the other, making clear which of the two domain has the strongest influence on the other can help direct Institutions focus their resources on its improvements.

Third, given the three levels of OC, as per Schein's (1984) model of culture, and the study's finding that, in Saudi HEIs these levels seem to be mutually reinforcing, and given the inordinate influence of Islam on organisational cultures, there is need for future studies to establish which level of OC (shared assumptions, espoused values, vision and goals, and visible artefacts) have the strongest influence on CI in Saudi Arabia and Muslim counties in general. Such studies may employ social network analysis (Hollstein, 2014) to map out the

direction of CI practices in Saudi HEIs and strengthen the relationship between both culture and CI.

Forth, it is recommend that more focused studies are taken on the OC of Saudi based private universities and their current CI practices. The Saudi government, as part of its vision 2030, is aiming for more privatisation of HEIs, therefore, a need for such specialised studies will be of benefit to the government, private universities and other interested parties.

lastly collecting more qualitative and quantitative data from a larger sample with the intention of checking the applicability of the study's proposed framework could assist in moving the current framework which, consistent with the Grounded Theory approach, is substantive theory to a more formal theory of leveraging organisational culture to enhance CI in HEIs in Saudi Arabia and beyond. This would be consistent with Glaser and Strauss' (2017) recommendation that a theory derived from Grounded Theory based research is best tested through rigorously combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Ethics Form

Part 6: Declarations and Signatures

Researcher Declaration

- The completed form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- I undertake to abide by Cranfield University's [Ethics Policy](#) in undertaking this project.
- I understand that ethical approval for projects, and that the seeking and obtaining of all other necessary approvals and permissions prior to starting the project is my responsibility.
- I understand that I must not begin the research until I have received approval from the Cranfield University Research Ethics System (CURES).
- I understand that any significant changes that I would like to make to this project after receiving approval from CURES, will require a new application to be submitted.

Researcher Signature

Signed: This form was signed by Mr Mohammed Alotaibi (m.s.alotaibi@cranfield.ac.uk) on 27/04/2016 10:50

Supervisor Declaration

- I confirm that I have read and fully support this application and will be acting as the supervisor of the lead researcher (student) for this project.
- I have checked that the application has been completed correctly and is of good quality.
- In my opinion, the proposal is viable.
- I understand that the lead researcher I am supervising must not begin the research until they have received approval from the Cranfield University Research Ethics System (CURES).

Lead Supervisor Signature

Signed: This form was signed by Dr Patrick McLaughlin (p.mclaughlin@cranfield.ac.uk) on 29/04/2016 07:38

Appendix B: questionnaire of the Survey

Dear Participant

This study was conducted to gauge factors that affect the continuous improvement implementation in Saudi Higher education institutions. The interviews outcomes indicated that the following factors are influencing the implementation of continuous improvement in HEIs. Using the brief description of the ideal situation of each factor, Please rate the following factors.

The rating scale is from 1 to 10, where the number 1 indicate that the current situation does not likely match the ideal position and the number 10 indicate that that the current situation is likely match the ideal position

To maintain the confidentiality , please don't mention your name & the organization you work in. Appreciate your participation

تحية طيبة

عزيزي المشارك

اجريت هذه الدراسة لكشف العوامل الثقافية التي تؤثر على تطبيق التحسين المستمر في الجامعات السعودية وأشارت نتائج المقابلات أن العوامل التالية تؤثر على عملية التحسين المستمر في الجامعات السعودية . والهدف من هذا الاستبيان هو قياس مدى تأثير كل عامل في كل جهة (جامعة) ومقارنتها بالممارسة الفعلية.

الرجاء وضع تقييمك لكل عامل مقارنة الممارسة الفعلية في الجامعة التي تعمل بها مع التطبيق المثالي لكل عامل . وللمساعدة في تقييم هذه العوامل تم وضع شرح موجز عن التطبيق المثالي لهذه العوامل

قد تم وضع مقياس للتقييم من "1" الى "10" حيث الرقم "1" يشير عدم وجود تطابق بين الواقع الحالي مع التطبيق المثالي بينما الرقم "١٠" يشير الى وجود تطابق بين الواقع الحالي مع التطبيق المثالي

الرجاء عدم ذكر الاسم والجهة التي تعمل بها
شاكرا لكم مشاركتكم

* 1. Gender الجنس

- Male ذكر
 Female انثى

* 2. Occupation - الوظيفة

- Vice President وكيل جامعة
 Faculty Dean عميد كلية
 Deputy of college وكيل الكلية
 professor استاذ
 Associate Professor استاذ مشارك
- Assistant Professor استاذ مساعد
 lecturer محاضر
 Administrator اداري
 Student طالبة/طالب

* 3. External Engagement

The University is engaging with the wider society to ensure its long-term sustainability. It contributes to the social good beyond legal compliance through integrating the societal interests in tis decision making process. Such contribution includes, encouraging education to sustainable human development, service provision, teaching and research, the facilitations scholarships, and the overall contributions to the well- being of local communities. Its contribution clearly internalizes awareness of the positive and critical value of the accountability to the larger community and that its mandatory rather than a choice.

المشاركات الخارجية

تعمل الجامعة مع المجتمع الخارجي لضمان استدامتها على المدى الطويل. وتساهم في تطوير المجتمع بما يتجاوز الالتزام القانوني من خلال دمج المصالح المجتمعية في عملية صنع القرار الجامعي. وتشمل هذه المساهمة تشجيع التعليم على التنمية البشرية المستدامة ، وتقديم الخدمات ، والتقدير والبحث ، وفتح الفرص الدراسية ، والمساهمات العامة في رفاهية المجتمعات المحلية. ومن الواضح أن إسهامات الجامعة منيعة من الوعي الداخلي للعاملين في المحيط الجامعي بالقيم الإيجابية ذات الأهمية في المسائلة أمام المجتمع الخارجي وأن هذه المساهمة يجب أن تكون ملزمة وليست خياراً

4.Neither agree or disagree

3.Somewhat agree

5.Somewhat disagree

1.Strongly Agree 2.Agree 3.Somewhat agree 4.Neither agree or disagree 5.Somewhat disagree 6.Disagree 7.Strongly Disagree

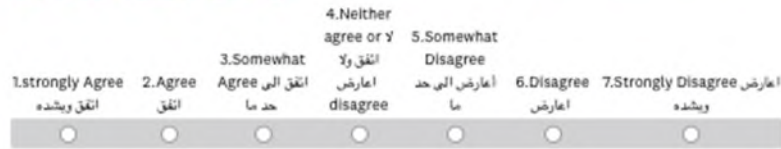
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

* 4. Institutional Management

The university' leaders are facilitating a success encouraging environment, through managing the different activities and programs that encourages the achievement of the University's primary goals. Such leaders have built a friendly relationship with their employees through respecting, motivating, empowering and ultimately gaining their loyalty. They have facilitated a participatory decision-making and encourage working in teams among their employees, to ensure work-execution efficiency.

الإدارة المؤسسية

يُسَهِّل قادة الجامعة البيئة المشجعة للنجاح من خلال إدارة الأنشطة والبرامج التحفيزية المختلفة لتحقيق الأهداف الأساسية للجامعة. ويبنى قادة الجامعة علاقة ودية مع موظفيهم من خلال احترامهم، تحفيزهم، تمكينهم ومن ثم نبيل ولائهم لتحقيق أهداف الجامعة. ويسهل قادة الجامعة عملية صنع القرار التشاركية وتشجيع العمل الجماعي بين موظفيها، لضمان كفاءة تنفيذ العمل.

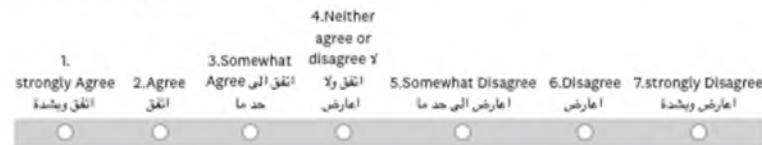


* 5. Skills enhancement

The university regularly take measures to enhance and updates the skills of its staff and students to ensure they are equipped with the relevant skills to carry out their tasks. It uses practical procedures to assess the needed training, which may include: measuring the individual work against the job objectives or analysing the job requirements and employees who do not meet such requirements become candidates for training. Once the training needs have been identified in a particular department, then such department initiates the suitable training technique, which may include 'on-the-job-training' which aims to transfer knowledge by experienced individuals, through the assignment of professional trainers or a specialised training agency to conduct the needed training inside the concerned department. It may also include 'off the job training' in which employees train on the actual equipment and in a realistic job setting but in a training school or a specific training department.

تعزيز المهارات

تتخذ الجامعة بانتظام إجراءات لتحسين وتحديث مهارات موظفيها وطلابها لضمان تزويدهم بالمهارات ذات الصلة للقيام بمهامهم. وتستخدم الجامعة إجراءات عملية لقياس احتياج التدريب اللازم، والتي قد تشمل: قياس العمل الفردي مقابل أهداف الوظيفة أو تحليل متطلبات الوظيفة، والموظفين الذين لا يستوفون هذه المتطلبات يصبحون مرشحين للتدريب. ويحدد التعرف على احتياجات التدريب اللازمة في قسم ما، يبدأ هذا القسم بمبادرة التدريب المناسب، والتي قد تشمل التدريب أثناء العمل الذي يهدف إلى نقل المعرفة من قبل الأفراد ذوي الخبرة من خلال تعيين مدربين محترفين أو وكالة تدريب متخصصة لتدريب الأشخاص المعنيين داخل القسم. وقد يشمل أيضاً التدريب المهني الذي يتدرّب فيه الموظفون على المعدات الفعلية وفي إعداد وظيفي واقعي، ولكن في معهد تدريب خارجي أو قسم تدريب محدد.

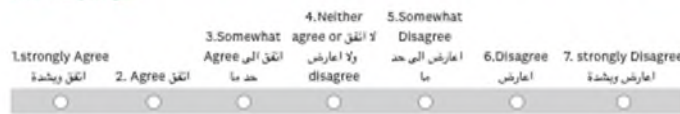


* 6. Institutional strategies

The University strategically aims and effectively plans and functions to achieve its strategic aims. Its strategy is aligned with its structure and management systems, and its employees are informed of and motivated towards the achievement of such strategic goals. The strategy goals are clear and can be realistically achieved. The university initiatives core objectives are clearly recognised and its leaders are being clear about where change needs to happen. The strategy takes into account the barriers that may come up in the progress of fulfilling the university strategy, and efforts to overcome such barriers are also strategically planned.

الاستراتيجيات المؤسسة

تُعد الجامعة أهدافها بشكل إستراتيجي وتخطط وتعمل بشكل فعال لتحقيق أهدافها الاستراتيجية، والتي تتماشى مع هيكلتها وأنظمتها الإدارية، ويتم توعية موظفي الجامعة وتشجيعهم نحو تحقيق هذه الأهداف الاستراتيجية. وتكون أهداف الاستراتيجية واضحة ويمكن تحقيقها بشكل واقعي، حيث تكون الأهداف الرئيسية لبيانات الجامعة واضحة من خلال وضوح المكان الذي يجب أن يحدث فيه التغيير من قِبَل صنّاع هذه المبادرات. وتراعي استراتيجية الجامعة الحواجز التي قد تنشأ في طريق تحقيق أهدافها، كما أنها تتضمن خطط للتغلب على العقبات المحتملة.

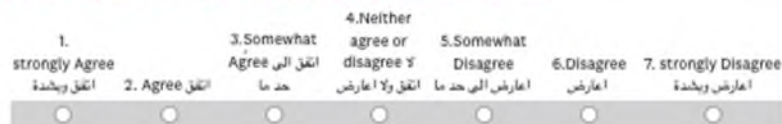


* 7. Development and Growth

The University systemically and on a continual basis take measures to develop its internal capacity to be the most effective it can be in its mission work to sustain itself in the competitive higher education sector. It forms selected committees to regularly examine the university current position and generates ideas and plans for improvement. It ensures the collaboration within different university stakeholders. It creates external links of supports via the establishment of networks with external advisory groups to facilitate the generation of innovations and ideas and adopts good practices. It continually emphasises its acknowledged strong departments and work towards improving the other not yet strong departments. It moderates and integrates new technologies into the daily university functioning to improve their working efficiency. It strategises, diversifies and works towards increasing its funding to support the university's strategic initiatives and program needs. It expends reasonable efforts on staff development and make available innovation necessary up to date resources.

التنمية والنمو

تتخذ الجامعة بشكل منهجي وعلى أساس مستمر العديد من الاجراءات لتطوير قدراتها الداخلية لتكون اكثر فاعلية في مهامها المختلفة من اجل ضمان استدامتها في قطاع التعليم العالي التنافسي، وذلك عن طريق تشكيل لجان منتقاة لفحص الوضع الحالي للجامعة من اجل ايجاد أفكار وخطط للتصسين، كما ويتم ضمان التعاون بين مختلف الجهات المعنية بالجامعة، وذلك عن طريق انشاء روابط خارجية لدعم غير إنشاء شبكات مع مجموعات استشارية خارجية لتسهيل توليد الابتكارات والأفكار واعتماد الممارسات الجيدة. وتستمر الجامعة بدعمها الخاص للكليات ذات الجودة العالية مع العمل على تحسين الكليات الاخرى للرفع من جودتها. كما ويتم تطوير ودمج التقنيات الجديدة في العمل اليومي للجامعة لتصسين كفاءة عملها. كما يتم عمل استراتيجيات متنوعة تعمل على زيادة مصادر دخل الجامعة المالية لدعم المبادرات والبرامج الاستراتيجية التابعة لها. وتبذل الجامعة ايضاً جهوداً واضحة لتطوير الموظفين وإتاحة الموارد الحديثة الضرورية للإبتكار.



* 8. obstacle to Success

The university leaders expect, study, strategically plan and patiently adopts reasonable measures on a priority basis to overcome the barriers that arises in the progress of fulfilling their institutional strategy. Prior to taking any fundamental changes that are essential for the university sought success's, the university ensures that its members are informed of the planned changes, trained and effectively equipped with the planned changes' essittial skills. it also,establishes goals and reward and recognition systems to ensure that its members are not negatively affected by and believe in the proposed changes. It creates mechanisms that supports a common organizational culture, where similarities between the university members out shadows differences which provides the feeling of unity between the university members. Such mechanisms include, the establishment of codes of behavior and ethical standards. The university diversify its financial income and to ensure that funding does not become barrier. The university takes measures to ensure effective management of human resources through the recruitment of qualified employees, the appropriate positioning of employees, and clearly stating employee roles, what is expected of them and what the outcome of their job is, and ensuring that employees tasks are realistically achieved.

عقبات للنجاح

يعمل قادة الجامعة على توقعات وخطط مدروسة بشكل استراتيجي لاعتماد تدابير معقولة ومرتبطة من حيث الأولوية للتغلب على العوائق التي قد تواجه التقدم في تحقيق استراتيجية المؤسسة. وقبل اتخاذ أي تغييرات جوهرية ضرورية لتحقيق النجاح للجامعة ، تضمن الجامعة أن يتم إبلاغ أعضائها بالتغييرات المخطط لها . وأن يكونوا مدربين ومجهزين بشكل فعال لمواكبة تلك التغييرات. وتضع الجامعة أهدافاً وسبلاً للاعتراف بجهود موظفيها وتكريمهم والتأكد من عدم تأثير التغييرات عليهم سلبياً لضمان ايمانهم بها. كما وتخلق الجامعة آليات من أجل دعم ثقافة عمل تنظيمية مشتركة ، بحيث يتم التركيز على أوجه التشابه بين أعضاء الجامعة من أجل توفير شعور بالوحدة بين أعضاء الجامعة. وتشمل هذه الآليات ، تأسيس قواعد للسلوك والمعايير الأخلاقية الخاصة بالجامعة. كما وتتوقع الجامعة دخلها المالي من أجل ضمان ألا يصبح التمويل حاجزاً. وتتخذ الجامعة إجراءات لضمان الإدارة الفعالة للموارد البشرية من خلال توظيف الأشخاص المؤهلين ، ووضعهم بمواقع تناسب مؤهلاتهم ، وتحديد أدوارهم الوظيفية بوضوح من خلال ايضاح ادوارهم و نتائج عملهم المتوقعة . وضمان أن مهامهم الوظيفية قابلة للتحقيق واقعياً

		3.Somewhat Agree الى حد ما	4.Nelther agree or disagree لا اتفق ولا اعارض	5.Somewhat Disagree اعارض الى حد ما	6. Disagree اعارض	7. Strongly Disagree اعارض وبشدة
1 strongly Agree اتفق وبشدة	2. Agree اتفق					

* 9. Ethical Issues

The university understands its major role in the teaching and learning of morals and values and that its reputation and credibility is grounded on the effective utilization and representation of such role. It complies with the ethical policies and regulations to maintain its ethical legitimacy through the creation of appropriate transparent reporting channels. It adopts institutional codes of ethics which identifies ethical principles, which include the importance of employees mutual respect and tolerance for diversity and emphasis in the well-being of students and others who are vulnerable. It encourages its students and employees to become engaged in ethics initiatives in the university and the larger community. The University leaders understands their Ethical leadership role through acting as role models.

قضايا أخلاقية

تعني الجامعة دورها الرئيسي في تعليم وتعلم الأخلاق والقيم ، وإن سمعتها ومصداقيتها تركز على الاستخدام الفعال والتمثيل لهذا الدور. كما وانها تلتزم بالسياسات واللوائح الأخلاقية للحفاظ على شريعتها الأخلاقية من خلال إنشاء قنوات واضحة للشفافية والإبلاغ. كما تتبنى الجامعة لوائح مؤسسية تحدد المبادئ الأخلاقية والتي تشمل الاحترام المتبادل وتلقم الاختلاف بين الموظفين وأهمية ضمان رفاهية الطلاب وغيرهم من فئات ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة. كما تشجع الجامعة طلابها وموظفيها على المشاركة في المبادرات الأخلاقية في الجامعة والمجتمع الخارجي. كما يدرك قادة الجامعة دورهم القيادي الأخلاقي من خلال العمل كنماذج يُحتذى بها في الجامعة

1. strongly Agree	2. Agree	3. Somewhat Agree	4. Neither agree or disagree	5. Somewhat Disagree	6. Disagree	7. strongly Disagree
اتفق وبشدة	اتفق	اتفق الى حد ما	اتفق ولا اعارض	اعارض الى حد ما	اعارض	اعارض وبشدة
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

* 10. University Infrastructure

The university creates coherent system of effective human resource management practices that supports students' /employees' autonomy, encourages their critical thinking and creativity and allowing them to participate in decision-making process. It enhances employees' productivity through incentives, training, monitoring and accountability. It provides them with the essential equipment and facilities and other resources that allow them not only effectively execute their work but also be creative, innovative and increases their work-spirit and loyalty.

البنية الأساسية للجامعة

تتبنى الجامعة نظامًا متماسكًا لممارسات فعالة لإدارة الموارد البشرية تدعم استقلالية الطلاب / الموظفين ، وتشجعهم على التفكير النقدي والإبداع وتتيح لهم المشاركة في عملية صنع القرار. وتعزز أيضا إنتاجية الموظفين من خلال الحوافز والتدريب والرصد والمساءلة. كما يتم تزويدهم بالمعدات والمرافق الأساسية والموارد الأخرى التي لا تسمح لهم بتنفيذ أعمالهم بفعالية فحسب ، بل أيضا أن تكون حلقة للإبداع والابتكار وتزيد من روح العمل والولاء.

1. strongly Agree	2. Agree	3. Somewhat Agree	4. Neither agree or disagree	5. Somewhat Disagree	6. Disagree	7. strongly Disagree
اتفق وبشدة	اتفق	اتفق الى حد ما	اتفق ولا اعارض	اعارض الى حد ما	اعارض	اعارض وبشدة
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Done

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