

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

Southampton Education School

**Higher Education Reform: A Study of Quality Assurance and Reform Policy of
Higher Education in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq**

by

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Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

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**HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM: A STUDY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND REFORM POLICY
OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE KURDISTAN REGION - IRAQ**

Selar Othman Ali

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Kurdistan Region Government (MoHESR_KRG) has initiated a reform policy in 2009. The reform has been initiated in order to bring high standards of quality of higher education to the Kurdistan higher education. The reform process has covered all the higher education institutions in the region, whether they are public or private institutions. Generally, the reform process has focused on reforming areas of management and academia but, only the academic area is considered in this study. The academic areas which are covered in this study are teaching quality assurance and curricula development, academicians' further development, postgraduate and research, assessment and accreditation, and social justice and safety.

The sample selected for this study consists of two public and two private universities and one higher education institution. They have been selected directly based on their students' and lecturers' capacity, and academic programs. The sample included 1131 students of whom 801 have responded and 282 lecturers of whom 201 have responded to the questionnaires. Yet, eight junior and senior managers and policy makers have been directly chosen and interviewed. The results of the study show that i) students have negative attitude towards teaching quality assurance program; ii) lecturers have neutral attitude towards the program; iii) policy makers, senior and junior managers have positive attitude about the program; iv) the type of university, whether being in a public university or a private one, has an impact on students' attitude; and v) gender has no role in students' attitude towards the quality assurance program. This study is significant for policy makers, decision makers, and academic leaders in higher education institutions in the Kurdistan region because i) it studies the reform policy based on data collected from lecturers, students, junior and senior managers, and policy makers in higher education institutions in the region; ii) it is based on academic interpretation of the reform policy supported by literature on policy studies and reform process; and iii) it can be considered as an academic

assessment of parts of the reform policy to be considered for progress purposes while conducting other assessment studies in the future.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Selar Othman Ali declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Higher Education Reform: A Study of Quality Assurance and Reform Policy of Higher Education in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signed:

Date:8th June 2017.....

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Definitions and Abbreviations

ABET:	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
CAD:	Continuous Academic Development
CHEA:	Council for Higher Education Accreditation
ENQA:	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
HCDP:	Human Capacity Development Program
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICHE:	International Conference on Higher Education
IQR:	Iraqi Dinar
KRG:	Kurdistan Region Government
KR-I:	Kurdistan Region-Iraq
MD:	Medical Doctors
MoHESR-I:	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research-Iraq
MoHESR-KRG:	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research-Kurdistan Region Government
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
PC1	First Public University
PC2	Second Public University
PT1	First Private University
PT2	Second Private University
PhD:	Doctor of Philosophy
QAA:	Quality Assurance Agency
RD&D:	Research, Development, and Demonstration

SHEIK:	Society of Higher Education in Kurdistan
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UK:	United Kingdom
UN:	United Nations
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA:	United States of America
USDE:	United States Department of Education
WASC:	Western Association of Schools and Colleges
WASET:	World Academy of Science, Engineering, and Technology.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study focuses on analysing quality assurance and policy reform in higher education in the Kurdistan region-Iraq (KR-I). The reform policy is a process initiated by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research-Kurdistan Region Government (MoHESR-KRG) in 2009 in KR-I. The reform was to bring quality standards to the higher education sector following massification in 2003 and economic development in the region. The study is based on surveying a directly selected sample of undergraduate students and lecturers in the study areas of language, law, engineering, and sciences. In addition, a direct selection and snow-balling approach was adopted to select policy makers, senior and junior managers for interview. The selected institutions are two public and two private higher education institutions, and one higher education organization in Erbil city in KR-I. The research instruments used for data collection are questionnaires and interviews. The preliminary findings suggest that students have negative attitude towards the quality assurance program established by the MoHESR-KRG while lecturers have neutral attitude. This study aims to find out further detailed findings about students', lecturers', junior and senior managers', and policy makers' perceptions.

1.1. Introduction

Quality has been discussed widely in the literature by many scholars (Mhlanga, 2013; Gibbs, 2010; Lomas, 2002; Harvey, 2002; Cheng and Tam, 1997; Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck, 1995; Reeves and Bednar, 1994; Harvey and Green, 1993). It became an important issue at the beginning of the twentieth century (Guri-Rosenblit et al, 2007; Misaro et al, 2013) due to the huge expansion and massification of higher education. Some scholars view quality as a form of accountability (Williams and Loder, 1990; Misaro et al, 2013), a way to produce a higher level of services for customers (Marchese, 1997), or to link it to institution reputation (Gibbs, 2013), or to cost-effectiveness (Williams and Loder, 1990). Due to the massification impact and the need to have quality programs, higher education institutions began to seek quality assurance programs as a result of the impact by the public, market, technology, and business (Peterson, 1999); to achieve transparency and accountability (Materu, 2007); or to achieve national or international quality assurance. Moreover, the aspects that are assessed in the quality assurance program are decided by the interested institutions, but usually include the areas of teaching, research (Green, 1994), and learning (Gibbs, 2013). Therefore, quality assurance program can be simply defined as an assessment process that aims to produce better or higher level of outcomes. There are two main types of quality assurance; internal quality assurance that is initiated by the institution itself

(Harvey, 2002) and aims at improving the quality of outcome over phases of changes in the institution (Kahsay, 2012); and external quality assurance that is initiated by agencies outside the institution, has accountability objectives, and aims at assessing quality in terms of fitness for purpose and value for money (Kristensen, 1997). However, there are debates on which type is the most fruitful. Some scholars argue that the internal quality assurance is more productive (Harvey, 2002; Wilger, 1997; Kristensen, 1997; Mishra, 2006) because it can provide the base for external quality assurance. Another important issue that comes into light is accreditation. Accreditation is another significant process to accredit and license higher education institutions or programs nationally or internationally (Eaton, 2012b; QAA, About us, Glossary, n. d.). After carrying out any accreditation process, the institution or the program is given a decision, unconditional approval; conditional approval; probationary accreditation; or rejection (Sywelem and Witte, 2009; BAC, 2011). The difference between quality assurance and accreditation is that the former prepares and paves the way for institutions or programs to be accredited and does not license or give accreditation, while the accreditation process has the final decision on whether the institution or the program is accredited or not.

Looking for better quality in higher education involves a process of reform to transfer from an undesirable phase to one that is more productive and acceptable. Many countries have established reform process in higher education in order to achieve a better quality and change the system such as the Japanese reform of higher education in 1983 (Horie, 2002), the South Korean (Cho and Palmer, 2012), the Taiwanese (Mok, 2000) and the Dutch (de Boer et al, 2007). It is important to plan a successful reform process, because a weak plan might lead to inequality and discrimination among students and staff members (Cho and Palmer, 2012; Maringe, 2010; Horie, 2002) and loss of the institution's reputation (Taylor, 2010). Besides, each reform process requires the initiation of a policy to organize solutions to a problem. Public policy studies are reflected widely in the works of many scholars such as Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), Matland (1995), Lasswell (1949 and 1951), deLeon (2006), and deLeon and Vogenbeck (2007). Policy, as Lasswell argues, appeared to organise the process of solving social problems in society. Later it became a significant process adapted in other areas and organizations. Policy process has several components and each has its characteristics and structure. Such components are policy actors, policy instruments, and the policy process cycle. Moreover, there are approaches to implementing the policy process that are top-down, bottom-up, and a synthesized approach of both.

Policy actors are the keys to initiate, plan, implement, and evaluate the policy. The literature (Spicker, 1995; Rhodes, 1997; Bache, 2000; Miller and Demir, 2007) classifies policy actors mainly

on street-level or policy making level. Accordingly, they classify policy actors into groups of policy community, issue network, and policy network. Each has its distinguished features. However, Jann and Wegrich (2007) introduce another classification, 'iron-triangles', adapted in this study to classify the policy actors in the Kurdish reform policy.

Policy instruments are also common in the literature. They are the tools that support the implementation of the policy to solve the problem and achieve the objectives. Policy instruments are classified into different groups. They either can be economic (Sorrell et al, 2003; Rogge and Reichardt, 2013, Lascoumes and Gales, 2007); political and cultural (Sorrell et al, 2003); regulation and information (Rogge and Reichardt, 2013; Lascoumes and Gales, 2007; Sorrell et al, 2003); or a broader classification of nodality, authority, treasure, and organization (Howlett, 2000; Howlett and Rayner, 2007). There could be further classification of the policy instruments, but it is interesting to find out in this study on what basis these instruments are categorized and who creates them? Policy instruments can be more complicated, termed an instrument mix, referring to the use of more than one policy instrument in the same policy process (Rogge and Reichardt, 2013; de Heide, 2011; Howlett and Rayner, 2007; Sorrell et al, 2003). The reason behind resorting to the use of more than one instrument is the complexity and multi objectives of the policy itself. Moreover, there is relationship between the instruments in the policy instruments mix (Sorrell et al, 2003; Rogge and Reichardt, 2013).

The policy process cycle has significant and different phases, as introduced by different scholars. In this study, the policy process cycle is divided into four main phases, agenda setting; policy formulation and decision making; implementation; and evaluation and monitoring. However, the policy process was first classified into seven phases: intelligence; promotion; prescription; invocation; application; termination; and appraisal (Lasswell, 1956). There are other scholars who classify the policy process into different phases (Burke et al, 2012; USAID, 2010; Jann and Wegrich, 2007; Fischer et al, 2007; Sidney, 2007; Spicker, 2006; Fullan, 1993; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Each phase has its message, objectives, and characteristics but all they are interrelated. However, initiating a policy can take three different approaches: top-down, which is initiated and controlled by policy makers (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984); bottom-up, which starts with the street-level actors (Elmore, 1997/ 80); and a synthesized approach between the two (Premfors, 1984).

Hence, the reform policy of higher education in the Kurdistan region has been introduced by the MoHESR-KRG to bring standards of quality into the sector. Such reform is planned to make radical changes to the higher education system in the region in order to provide society and markets with

their needs. It was a response to the demand of economic development and development in the private sector in the region. The reform came to cover all the areas in the higher education sector including management, research, curricula, students' admission, and postgraduate studies in both public and private universities in the region. However, this study focuses only on the academic aspects, which consist of: quality assurance program; lecturers' continuous development program; research and investment in higher education; accreditation in higher education; and safety and social justice. In order to establish the effectiveness of these areas, it is necessary to find out students' and lecturers' perception of each area. Moreover, it is important to find out policy makers', and senior and junior managers' perception about the policy process in order to be able to analyse it later. The significance of this study is that it can be regarded as an academic reference based on analysis of fieldwork data and direct contact with a large sample of people affected by the reform policy. Furthermore, the analysis and findings are supported by rich literature. Therefore, it can be regarded as a reference for further studies. However, this study is limited to covering the academic and research areas of the reform policy, although there are other administrative areas to be studied and investigated.

1.2. Research Questions

This study intends to answer the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How do policy-makers, and senior and junior managers in higher education institutions perceive the reform policy initiated by the MoHESR-KRG?
- **RQ2:** How do students and lecturers in higher education institutions perceive the quality assurance program introduced by the MoHESR-KRG?
- **RQ3:** Is there a difference between students' attitude in private universities and students' attitude in public universities? i.e. what is the relationship between students' attitude and type of the university? Does gender have a role in making students' attitude?

1.3. The Outline of the Research

This research is divided and planned according to the following chapters:

The second chapter is mainly a historical narration of higher education in the KR-I. It starts with an overview of living in the Kurdistan region and then presents its higher education system. It focuses on the reform policy of higher education which is the core of this study. The reform policy is divided into two sections. The first is the administration and infrastructure section introducing all the changes concerned with: students' admission; new public universities, and university independency; Kurdistan Board of medical specialties; technology and communication; and

international academic cooperation. The second section, which is the focus of this study, introduces the reform focusing on quality assurance and accreditation in the higher education sector as planned by the MoHESR-KRG. It includes aspects concerned with teaching quality assurance and curricula development; academicians' further development; postgraduate and research and scholarship programs; assessment and accreditation; and social justice and safety.

Chapter 3 focuses on public policy studies. This further introduces policy actors, policy instruments, policy process cycle, top-down and bottom-up approaches to study public policy, factors affecting policy implementation, and how to study success and failure of policy implementation. This chapter is regarded as a theoretical framework for the second part of the next chapter.

The fourth chapter consists of two parts. The first focuses on the second part of this study which is quality assurance and accreditation in higher education. It starts by defining quality then clarifies the impact of massification on quality in higher education. Moreover, the chapter presents the demands behind establishing quality assurance programs in higher education institutions and what it covers. Definitions and types of quality assurance in higher education are also introduced in this chapter. Furthermore, it continues to present definitions, types, and criteria of accreditation according to American, British, and European systems besides, decisions made after accrediting an institution. The second is a contextual framework of the Kurdish higher education reform policy. All the components of the Kurdish reform policy (policy actors, policy instruments, and policy process cycle) are introduced and explained according to the literature.

Chapter 5 presents the research methodology. This study involves the use of mixed research methods. Therefore, inquiries of both qualitative and quantitative research, along with mixed research methods are introduced. It is significant to introduce the reliability and validity of both quantitative and qualitative research and how these are reflected in this study. This chapter introduces the sample and sampling approaches of the interview and questionnaire, and data collection strategies, namely interview and questionnaire. The sample of questionnaires consists of undergraduate students and lecturers in four public and private higher education institutions in the Kurdistan region. In contrast, the sample of the interviews includes junior and senior managers as well as policy makers in the higher education sector. In addition, the chapter illustrates the data analysis techniques used for each data collection strategy. The researcher used quantitative approach to analyse the questionnaires' data and, more specifically, descriptive statistical analysis and measures of statistical significance. There is a simple descriptive statistical analysis of students' questionnaire to find out the most frequent variable of students' perception

about the quality assurance program. To analyse the data of the interview, the researcher used deductive and inductive approaches to analyse expert interviews. The chapter ends by presenting the ethical issues of this study.

The sixth chapters focus on analysing all the data of the questionnaires and interviews. This chapter is divided to two parts. The first is an analysis of all the data. The second is interpretation and discussion of the findings. Chapter 7 of this study presents recommendations, implications, and conclusions.

1.4. The Researcher

It is important to clarify the researcher's involvement in the Kurdish higher education sector and how this could have a bearing on to the fieldwork for data collection. The researcher has work experiences in three of the selected higher education institutions of the study. She held managerial positions in the three institutions and taught in one of them. This last institution-in which the researcher taught-has not been included in the research sample. Neither students nor lecturers there were approached by the researcher, since the selected sample of students were all on undergraduate levels offering bachelor degrees after four (or five) years of study, and this institution offers only a diploma after two years of study. Therefore, there was no danger of imposing my own-self while conducting the fieldwork. While visiting each institution, I introduced myself only as a researcher. However, my experiences in higher education provided enhanced opportunities to contact some of the interviewees.

1.5. Dissemination of the Research

While conducting this research, the researcher has presented a paper concerned with quality assurance and reform process in Kurdistan higher education at a conference, as follows:

- ❖ "Quality Assurance and Effectiveness in Kurdistan Higher Education: The Reform Process" is a paper presented on 28th June 2012 in the ICHE 2012: International Conference on Higher Education in France, Paris 27-28 June 2012. The conference was organized by WASET, World Academy of Science, Engineering, and Technology. The paper can be accessed at: <https://waset.org/journals/waset/v66/v66-123.pdf>

Chapter 2: Higher Education in the Kurdistan Region

2.1. Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview to highlight some significant aspects about the Kurdistan region such as population, languages, culture, religion, politics influences and development. Next is a presentation of the recent reform policy of higher education that has been initiated by the MoHESR-KRG in November 2009. The latter is the main topic of this study.

2.2. An Overview of Living in the Kurdistan Region

An overview on the Kurdistan region is necessary to understand the circumstances that impact on higher education. As Kurdistan and Kurds' history are ancient and complicated, the focus here will be on the Kurds in the KR-I. Though there is no fixed formal population figure for Kurds, they are considered as the largest ethnic group in the world without a state (Yildiz, 2004). The population of the Kurdistan region stood at 5.3 million in 2011 and is expected to increase to 6.3 by 2016 (Ministry of Planning-KRG, 2012). The language is Kurdish with two main dialects: Kurmanji and Surani. There are other three dialects spoken by smaller minorities in the region: Kirmanshah is spoken in the south-east; Gurani in the south; and Zaza is spoken in the north-west (McDowall, 2004 and Yildiz, 2004). The majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims, making up around three-quarters of the total population (McDowall, 2004). There are people of other religious denominations in the region such as: Christians, Jews, and Yazidis (Yildiz, 2004). Few refer to another, the Kakaye, yet, they all live together peacefully. Despite more than one religion, there has never been religious conflict in the region. John Agresto, who was a senior advisor to the MoHESR-I, comments on the Kurdish community in an interview by Iannone (2006) as:

“There was no looting or arson in Kurdistan. Sunni Shi’a and Christian get along with few problems...A different race of people with a different (Indo-European) language. But race and language don’t make for character. A different history? Yes. One that rewarded spunk and independence of spirit. A different horizon-one that prizes personal independence and prizes the independence of your people. This latter is important... As others will sacrifice all for Allah (though not for their neighbor, especially if that neighbor is different), the Kurds will sacrifice all for Kurdistan. This makes all the difference in the world. They work together and form a fairly cohesive community.” (Iannone, 2006, p. 45)

As far as the region is formally a part of Iraq, Hofstede (1991) describes Iraqi culture as collectivistic, normative, restraint, and masculine. By collectivistic, the author means that such society is interested in keeping strong relationships between each other as a family. Collectivist members stay loyal to each other and do things as a group. A normative society refers to being normative in thinking and following traditions. However, a restraint society is where people focus most of their time on work and have less time for leisure. Moreover, they try to keep cultural values and norms. In a masculine society, people try to be the best through competition and success, and they devote their life to work. It is important to add that the voice and control of male are dominant in a masculine society. Indeed, Kurdish society is a reflection of Hofstede's description, to an extent. Kurdish society as a collectivist has changed in the last few years due to changes in people's living conditions and being occupied with more than one work opportunity to secure living cost. And this makes them more a restraint society. Furthermore, small families that consisted of a husband and wife and a child or children used to live with the husband's parents in one house and this strengthened social relationship among society members. But this has also changed in the last few years, since in most cases when the son married he was no longer living with his parents in the same house. Generally, Kurdish people in the rural areas and villages are normative and keep up traditions even if they are wrong, and this leads to learning based on traditions even if such traditions are against law. Though there are many women occupying significant positions in the government such members of parliament, ministers, general directors, consultants, and presidents of universities, Kurdish society is still considered a masculine society where men lead and control.

Shedding light on the economy, the region has the advantage of some natural resources and this contributes 17 per cent of the Iraqi national budget per year. The natural resources are minerals (copper, zinc, lead, chrome, iron, nickel, manganese, gypsum, limestone, gravel, sand, cement mud, dolomite), vegetables (wheat, rice, barley, sunflower, maize,...etc), fish, animals (goat, sheep, cows), and natural and artificial forestry. However, most of the public resources are spent by the public sector and the government makes little private investment, as there is no tax system apart from on building rights, vehicle registration and public utilities (Heshmati, 2008). The majority of the public resources is devoted to government employees' salaries. The ratio of manpower employment was 57.3 per cent in the public sector and 40.57 per cent in the private sector in 2011 (Ministry of Planning-KRG, 2012). Moreover, the female unemployment ratio is higher than male unemployment ratio at 15.86% for females and 4.6% for males in 2012. Another source of economic income is tourism. Erbil city, the capital of the region, was nominated as 'The Arab Tourism Capital' in 2014 (The Review, 2014). There are tourism projects such as the Korek

Mountain Ski Resort and Golf Course and Resort, which secure considerable revenue for the region. Besides, the government puts 50 per cent of its investment into housing projects, then industry (IKG, 2013). Oil exportation is another great economic resource. The region recently developed its exports of oil and exported 400.000 barrels per day in 2014. The export capacity of oil is expected to rise to a million by the end of 2015 and two million by 2020. In addition, there is a plan to export gas to Turkey by 2016 (The Review, 2014). In total, the annual revenue for the Ministry of Natural Resources in the KRG was \$29.6 million in 2007 and rose to \$2.9 billion in 2013 (The Review, 2014). It is important to refer to the reasons behind economic development in the region, which have been attributed to greater stability and safer conditions than other parts of Iraq. Such conditions have encouraged over two thousand foreign companies and 15 thousand local companies to trade in the region in 2013 (IKG, 2013).

Kurdistan became a self-governing region following the March Manifesto on 11th of March 1970. Kurds suffered Saddam Hussein's repression, persecution, and tyranny for many years. They were the victims of genocide, chemical weapons, Anfal campaigns, and displacement. The only havens Kurds found were in Iran and Turkey. These later countries accepted Kurdish migrants and provided them with food and refuge. Thus, many Kurds returned to Kurdistan while others sought to emigrate to Canada, the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), and other European countries. After Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the Kurdish uprising on 5th March 1991, the region came under the protection of the United Nations (UN), who proclaimed Kurdistan a no fly-zone for the Iraqi regime and had political autonomy. The region has been regarded as a safe sanctuary since 1991 and thus encouraged investment by international organizations.

Kurdistan made a step forward towards autonomy: "Shifts in international norms, active international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the presence of highly politicized and influential Diaspora networks have semilegitimized the idea of Kurdish statehood." (Natali, 2004, p. 111). Natali sheds light on what autonomy brought to Kurdistan, such as flourishing educational and cultural aspects. Kurds started to publish school textbooks, magazines, newspapers, and tutorial handbooks in Kurdish language. They further began to participate in international conferences on educational, higher education, economics, political, and such like

As far as safety and peace are concerned, Agresto (2007) indicates that "the Kurds live in more than relative safety and peace. I don't believe one American, soldier or civilian, has been killed or even hurt in Kurdistan Iraq since the war began- or maybe ever" (Agresto, 2007, p. 126). There was no looting, violence, or killing in Kurdistan, as Agresto (2007) emphasizes. The Kurds already

have their autonomy and started to rebuild the infrastructure post-1991. At the same time, they witnessed a civil conflict in the mid-1990s. This affected the Kurdistan economy as the KRG could not pay employees' salaries for several months. From 2003 onwards, the region turned to federalism. Thus, the Kurds started to reconstruct their region and the economy of the KRG started to flourish by the passage of time, in contrast to central and southern Iraq. Moreover, it became more powerful after 2003 and played an invaluable role in bringing down Saddam Hussein's regime. The KRG and the Kurds have a role in running the Iraqi central government, with representative members in the Iraqi parliament. Moreover, the Kurds' immigration to Europe had fruitful consequences, especially after 2003 when many returned to participate in rebuilding the region, sharing their European knowledge and experiences. Many Kurdish immigrant professors and academics returned to start careers in the higher education sector.

2.3. Higher Education in the KR-I

The University of Sulaymaniyah in Sulaymaniyah city was the oldest and first university established in KR-I in 1968. Later, at the time of Saddam's regime, it moved to Erbil city and was named the University of Salahaddin. The University of Sulaymaniyah reopened in Sulaymaniyah in 1992. UN sanctions on Iraq kept the higher education sector in the region isolated and outdated, as in the other parts of Iraq. From 1990 to 2003, the number of public universities was just three, besides two public foundations of technical education (known nowadays as Polytechnic Universities). The higher education sector in KRG, like its counterpart in the centre and south of Iraq, suffered the consequences of war and neglect since 1990 which brought down its quality and standards. The 'Oil for Food Program' has allocated about \$192 million for United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to implement its activities in KR-I post-1990 and approximately (\$58) million has been spent (Heshmati and Chawsheen, 2008). Generally, the situation in KR-I was somewhat better than in the central and southern Iraq because there were many non-governmental organizations located in the region and this provided work opportunities for Kurdish people. Moreover, the availability and use of satellites and internet services helped the Kurds to connect to the world.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research was first established in Sulaymaniyah city, then moved to Erbil city after the formation of the united Kurdish government in 2006. Following the liberation of Iraq in 2003, Kurdish higher education witnessed great expansion and progress, the number of enrolled students in higher education institutions increased to 76 per cent of high school graduates (Heshmati and Chawsheen, 2008). It is worth mentioning that pupils are enrolled in primary schools at the age of 6 then move to secondary school at the age of 12.

The secondary stage lasts for four years, and then students move to preparatory school at the age of 16. Students can apply to higher education institutions after graduation from preparatory school (high school), which is usually at the age of 18. In 2014, the number of public universities was 14 and the number of private universities was 10. In Kurdistan public and private higher education institutions, the total number of enrolled students in 2011/2012 was over 107 thousands, of which about 53 thousand were female and about 54 thousand were male. This number increased to 121 thousand almost evenly divided between males and females in 2013-2014¹ (Figure 1). The data shows that the number of female students in public institutions is higher than the number of male students, and vice versa in private institutions. The reason is that female students usually accept to register in the programmes they are offered in public universities after graduating from high school because, mostly, they do not have their own incomes to fund their study and apply to private universities. But, it is the other way round for male students. They can work during the day or afternoon in order to fund their study in private universities. In addition, safety conditions and social development in the region can be regarded as factors for enrolling more female students in Kurdistan higher education. However, having almost equal number of male and female students in Kurdistan higher education leads to the questions whether there is a relationship between students' attitude and gender, and whether there is a difference between students' attitude and the type of the university.

In a cooperation project between one of the large public Kurdish universities in the region and a British university in the UK, members of both universities issued an academic paper showing some of the shortcomings in Kurdish higher education system (Quantrell and Khidir, 2011). These shortcomings are:

- 1- Lack of electronic communication network in the higher education sector. Academics and administrative staff are still using personal e-mails on Yahoo, Gmail, Hotmail,...etc. for communication. While almost all the universities and technical institutions have their own websites, they are not yet efficient and are poorly designed and do not stand up to the huge workload from academics and other staff.
- 2- Taught curricula on university level do not match the needs of the region's market. These curricula are out-dated and in a poor condition, or are badly copied. Some of these curricula need to be discarded while others need to be developed and updated. Changing and updating the curricula to match the market needs is a professional task that requires

¹ Directorate of Planning and Statistics, MoHESR-KRG, 2014.

experts and highly experienced academics to undertake this mission at every single university. The Kurdish higher education sector still lacks such experts and professional academics to develop the curricula.

- 3- Free education and higher education leads to a massive number of students enrolling in higher education every year. This encourages poor quality educational system and programs to be offered by the sector, because the academics are overloaded with teaching, sometimes with morning and evening classes in the same department. This leaves them with no time for other academic activities. Again, the regulations play a role

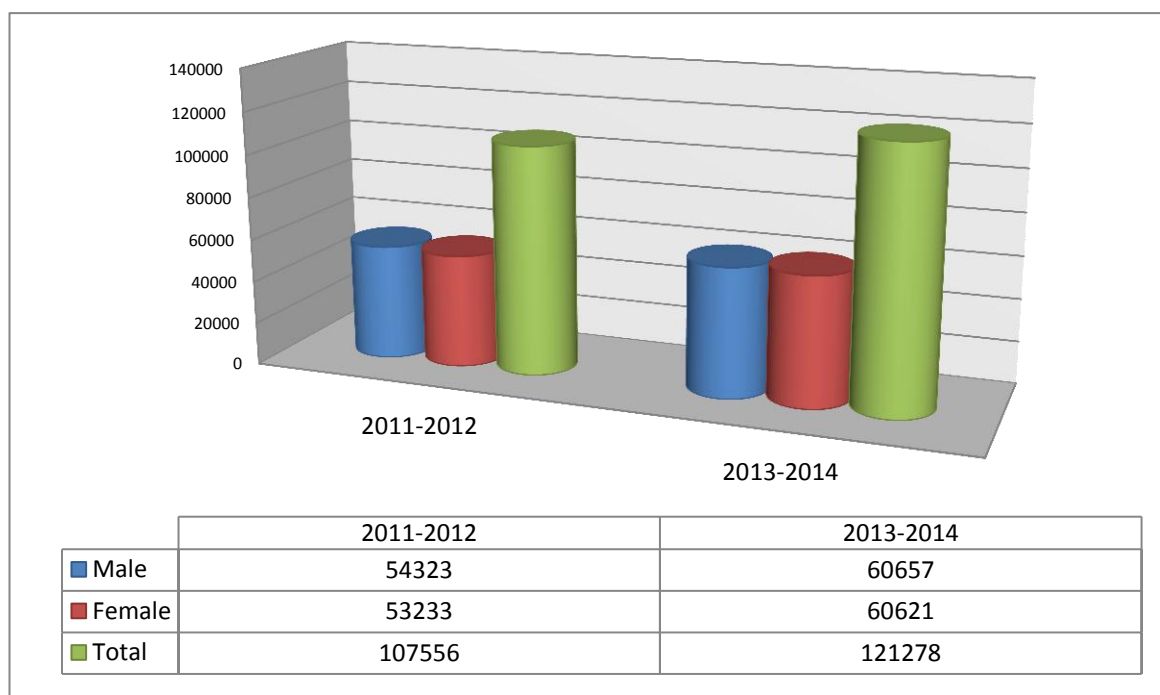


Figure 1: Number of enrolled students in Kurdistan higher education according to gender (2011/2012-2013/2014)

in curricula content because lecturers are allowed to change only 20 per cent of their curricula. If they wish to update more, a request has to be submitted and approved by the university.

- 4- The higher education sector has a scarcity of leaders in decision making and management. Most senior and junior managers lack experience in management and run their work according to how it has been done before, or depending on the documents available, which may identify their authority and responsibilities, yet be out-dated.

The higher education sector in the region witnessed more expansion and radical changes at the end of 2009. This expansion was the outcome of several factors such as continuous increase in numbers of high school graduates, and the need for new specializations and departments, the

reconstruction and rehabilitation of villages as a result of the continuous growth in population, and the settling of many foreigners and Kurdish migrants from Syria, Turkey, and Iran, along with Arab migrants from central and southern Iraq due to instability and unsafe living conditions. It is worth mentioning that the KRG paid great attention to the reconstruction of the higher education sector in the cities and villages that had so many victims of chemical weapons, Anfal campaigns, and genocide committed by Saddam's regime. Therefore, the expansion aimed at enrolling a greater number of students in higher education institutions, providing work opportunities, and making inaccessible higher education accessible. This was especially important at a time when for the middle and low class it was an economic struggle to aspire to higher education due to the great distances they had to travel to attend major universities or technical institutes in the chief cities. Therefore, the number of public universities increased to be 14 and the number of private universities to 10. This growth of first-year students' enrolment in Kurdistan public higher education during the last five years is shown in Table 1².

Higher education sector is witnessing great expansion. Kurdistan's free higher education programs encourage massive enrolment of students every year. Moreover, such a huge number of enrolled students definitely promotes the need for extra buildings, equipment, learning resources, teaching staff, information technology, and administrative employees. All these needs are surely funded and paid for by the KRG. If we look at the final column, entitled Total in Table 1, we can see this remarkable growth in students' numbers between the years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 due to the establishment of four new universities (Garmian, Halabja, Zakho, and Raparen). The decision to establish these four new universities was a result of demand for higher education in some of the new flourishing and expanded areas in the Kurdistan region (MoHESR-KRG 2011). Undoubtedly, establishing these universities implies more staffing, funding, learning and teaching resources, buildings, and furnishing. At the same time, it has the advantage of offering free access

² Directorate of Planning and Statistics, MoHESR-KRG, 2014.

Table 1: Number of first-year students enrolled in Kurdistan higher education from 2007-2011

Year	University of Salahaddin	University of Sulaymaniyah	University of Duhok	University of Koya	Hawler Medical University	University of Soran	Hawler Polytechnic University	Sulaymaniyah Polytechnic University	University of Garmian	University of Halabja	University of Zakho	University of Raparen	Total
2011-2012	5442	4658	3036	860	416	624	7419	5871	718	224	645	434	30347
2010-2011	5575	4031	3460	782	360	472	7902	7742	1021	229	612	529	32715
2009-2010	4769	5544	3359	1011	303	597	5976	5332	-	-	-	-	26891
2008-2009	5400	6377	2815	1167	304	-	4894	4293	-	-	-	-	25250
2007-2008	5877	5764	3085	1264	297	-	4770	3547	-	-	-	-	24604

to higher education programs to a larger number of students, yet the quality of these free programs is a matter of concern.

The graduate massification of the higher education sectors urged the MoHESR-KRG in the sixth Cabinet of KRG, which started on 28th October 2009, to plan a reform process. The reform policy aimed to implement international standards of quality of higher education in the Kurdish higher education sector and raise its quality to meet the needs of the society and markets in the region. The policy is a comprehensive one and is presented in detail in the MoHESR-KRG report (2011). In order to keep the focus of the study, the researcher has divided the reform policy document into two main sections. The first is referred to as the administration and infrastructure section, and introduces all the changes concerned with: students' admission; new public universities, and university independency; Kurdistan Board of medical specialties; technology and communication; and international academic cooperation. The second section introduces the reform focusing on quality assurance and accreditation in the higher education sector as planned by the MoHESR-KRG. It includes aspects concerned with: teaching quality assurance and curricula development; academicians' further development; postgraduate and research and scholarship programs; assessment and accreditation; and social justice and safety.

2.4. Context of the Reform Policy in Kurdistan Higher Education Sector

2.4.1. Administration and Infrastructure Sections in the Reform Policy

Students' Admission to Higher Education Institutions

There have been two main changes to the system of admission to higher education. The first change was the launch of the "Zankoline project" (MoHESR, 2011, p. 54) which is an electronic system for admission to higher education institutions to replace the outdated and burdensome method of hardcopy applications. The old system required high school graduates to fill in an application form and required students to travel from all part of the region in order to submit a hardcopy to the Central Students' Board. This led to a massive crowd of prospective students in front of the Board every year. The change was undertaken for various reasons such as adapting to the use of technology in higher education, as well as saving money and time. However, there were some obstacles, mainly concerned with the applicants' lack of skills in accessing and using the Internet. It caused a tremendous load on the system when it first launched. As a result, the Board accepted hardcopies of application forms in addition to the electronic application form and, the MoHESR-KRG provided training on how to fill in the online application form, providing free Internet access at the ministry.

The second change in admission was the introduction of a "parallel education system" (MoHESR, 2011, p. 56) that was not available before the reform process. The latter is not an alternative to the free higher education system which is still available. The parallel system requires applicants to pay tuition fees in order to study in higher education institutions in the region. The objectives of this program are to help universities to have their own income, to be independent financially, and to offer higher education programmes to a wider community of learners. It is rather a plan to decrease the massive financial load on the KRG and urge universities to secure an alternative income. This programme states that 70 per cent of tuition fees are allocated to the department offering a degree program, 20 per cent to projects undertaken by higher education institutions, and 10 per cent to the MoHESR-KRG. The programme has terms and conditions concerned with the applicants' eligibility and offers discounts to top students and government employees.

Establishing New Public Universities

The KRG has allocated about 123.5 billion Iraqi Dinar (IQD) to establish four new public universities in the region in 2010: the University of Raparin in Rania city, the University of Halabja in Halabja city, the University of Garmian in Kalar city, and the University of Zakho in Zakho city. The purpose of establishing these universities is to ease access to higher education in areas that witnessed growth in the number of students yet lacked higher educational opportunities. Moreover, it provided hundreds of work opportunities in such areas. Thus, it was a step towards civilization and educating society. This project has a future impact on the people settling in such areas especially in terms of creating social networks and an urban life style. Eventually, more funds of around 72.750 million IQD were allocated in 2011 for partial reconstruction of the universities of Salahaddin, Duhok, Sulaymaniyah, and Soran, and the technical institutes of Dokan, Darbandikhan, Sulaymaniyah, Halabja, and Chamchamal.

Independency and Structure of Higher Education Institutions

The Kurdistan Parliament in the KRG adopted Law No. 10 in 2008, based on the same Iraqi law of higher education No. 40 on 04/04/1988. The reform process aimed to change this Law and therefore enacted new legislation especially for higher education in the Kurdistan region. The purpose was to secure autonomy of universities in the region and allow flexibility in making changes in the sector to be consistent with the rapidly growing economy in the region. Therefore, a draft of the legislation was sent to the Council of Ministers in the KRG for approval in 2011.

The reform policy further included establishing a board of trustee in each university to minimize bureaucracy and hierarchy, and to secure autonomy. The policy suggested establishing a review

board responsible for accountability and acknowledgment. These changes allow the board of trustee to run the university and make its own decisions. Despite the plans for gaining autonomy, so far presidents of universities do not have the authority to make decisions on various administrative and financial issues relating to universities such as employing new staff, transference of staff to another ministry, and grants to allow senior administrative staff to travel abroad.

Another section in the reform policy indicates reorganizing the administrative structure of universities. The reform integrates the duplicated departments in each university. For example, there are three English language departments in three different colleges at the University of Salahaddin. All the departments offer almost identical core courses but different minor courses. They all offer the same degrees. Each of these departments has its academic and administrative staff, campuses, heads, allowances, and privileges. The same structure applies to the colleges. The reform is to form faculties to include similar-discipline schools. Therefore, each university will consist of approximately five to seven faculties. The idea of this integration is to save money, decrease the necessary human resources, and devote campuses and offices to useful projects.

Furthermore, the policy indicates reforming the former two foundations of technical education in the region. Both used to offer only diplomas after two years of study in the technical institutes and bachelor degrees after four years of study in the technical colleges. The aim is to add value and quality to technical education and to attract the private and public sector to the significant role of technical education. The reform is to expand the two technical education institutes to three polytechnic universities to make them eligible to offer bachelor degrees and postgraduate degrees and thus attract more students.

Kurdistan Board for Medical Specialties

The Kurdistan Board was established in 2009 to provide academic training and programs in medicine based on high quality. The Board was found to provide more opportunities for candidates to study for postgraduate programs in the region instead of applying to the Iraqi medical board in Baghdad. In 2010, a coordination process started between the Ministry of Health and the MoHESR in the KRG to regulate mechanism and clinical training for medical doctors (MDs). Both ministries set up a board of trustees consisting of members from both ministries to support the Ministry of Health. The reform was to change the process of clinical training for graduates of medical colleges. After an undergraduate degree in medicine, MDs have two years' rotation training guided by two supervisors. After passing an exam at the end of the rotation training, MDs work for at least one year in rural areas then move to work in health centres and

hospitals in city centres after assessment. At this stage, MDs will be eligible to be trained either within the Kurdistan Board between four to seven years, depending of the area of study, or act as a resident registrar in hospitals for two years under the guidance of a tutor and two supervisors. At the end of the latter alternative, MDs can either apply for a two years diploma program to become a specialist or continue working as resident registrar for another year to become a practitioner.

The Board is run by a senior committee consisting of four main specialties, under which are many clinical programs. The latter program is run by a junior clinical committee and a supervisor. Both clinical committees and supervisors are responsible for postgraduate admissions. Furthermore, there are 17 accredited academic organizations in the region and Kirkuk city offers clinical programs. Each organization has about a total of 150 managers, supervisors, and lecturers. Each lecturer and postgraduate in the Board should undertake 50 hours of activities per year and submit a portfolio including all kinds of activities evidence during the year for assessment and if they wish to be considered for promotion. In addition, each postgraduate is required to spend a year abroad during their period of study to obtain updated knowledge and experience.

Technology and Communication

Prior to the reform, customers and visitors had to make regular visits to the ministry in order to find out the status of their requests or application. This approach of communication was costly in terms of money and time, and caused chaos sometimes. The MoHESR-KRG adopted the use of electronic mails and developed its website as a channel of information and news. The Ministry also organized training courses on software programmes for staff members. In addition, the Ministry constructed a modern reception hall and provided individual information desks to represent directorates receiving the heaviest workload in terms of queries, so as to minimize the chaos in the different offices in the Ministry. In this new system, customers and visitors can obtain an answer to their queries from these information desks.

The reform focused on changing the system of equalizing and confirming the reliability of foreign certificates. The old system required foreign certificate holders to submit original copies of the required documents in person. The committee responsible for this matter consisted of seven members. The reform set up an electronic system for online submission of the required documents, and expanded the previous committee to five committees. Each specialised in a specific area of the academic programme. In addition to UNESCO, the Ministry adopted international sources such as The Times Higher Education for finding out up to date lists of

accredited international universities to consider while establishing the equivalence of foreign certificates.

International Academic Cooperation

One of the main objectives of the reform process is internationalization, and introducing Kurdish academicians to international universities. For this purpose, the Ministry launched its international conference in December 2010 and attracted a thousand participants from over a hundred countries and universities from the USA, UK, France, Germany, Malaysia, Ireland, South Korea, Holland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Jordan, Iran, and Iraq. The conference organized 36 workshops and seminars, signing 27 memoranda of understanding with different universities, and further collaborations mainly focused on scholarships and training courses for Kurdish students.

2.4.2. Quality Assurance Section in the Reform Policy

Teaching Quality Assurance and Curricula Development

Many authors argue that reforms affect mostly policies and university structures, while academic and scientific aspects of higher education remain unchanged (Brennan and Shah, 2000; Kogan and Hanney, 1999). In contrast to this, one of the focuses of the Kurdish higher education reform is to develop academic programmes, research, and international academic collaboration in order to raise the quality of academic programmes (MoHESR-KRG, 2011). This emphasis is a prompt by the poor quality and out-dated resources still used in universities and technical institutions in the region. The objective of the quality system is to reinforce trust and confidence in teaching, academic programs, and training in the Kurdistan higher education sector. The quality assurance system focused on teaching quality assurance, academics' development, research and international academic cooperation, and a new system of assessment and accreditation. The aspects of each of these sections are presented in detail as stated in the report of the MoHESR-KRG (2011).

Teaching Quality Assurance Program

Teaching quality assurance programmes highlight the significance of implementing international standards of higher education and keeping it away from political investigation. Mainly, the programme assesses inputs and outputs of the higher education system. The reform policy states that implementing these standards needs a follow-up process and an evaluation of curricula as well as students' and teachers' performance. Therefore, the Ministry decided that there had to be several course coordinators in each department whose numbers depend on the needs of each

department. One of the course coordinators acts as the head of the quality assurance committee in the department, and is a member of the quality assurance committee of the whole college/institute. This has a head, who is also a member of the quality assurance committee of the entire university. In turn, the head of this committee is a member of the quality assurance committee of the MoHESR-KRG. It is necessary to observe that all these heads of quality assurance committees should not be totally occupied with other managerial responsibilities, in order that they can devote most of their effort and time to the development of the quality assurance programme.

The responsibility of the heads of committees is to submit an annual report to the college/institute in September to be checked and reviewed by the quality assurance committee of the college/institute. Then, the finalized report can be sent to the quality assurance committee of the university. The course coordinator has the following responsibilities:

- Obtain students' feedback at the end of each course
- Organize course handbooks
- Organize schedule of lecturers' sessions
- Act as a link between students and administration staff.

Lecturers are responsible for the following:

1. Prepare content of teaching sessions and give outline to students
2. Present sessions in Power Point style
3. Introduce samples of questions with answers in course handbook. Style of questions should consist of two essay questions and three sets of multiple choice questions to guide expectations
4. Prepare the content of the course handbook, which should include the following:
 - a. Plan of the course
 - b. Schedule of classes
 - c. Aims of the course
 - d. A briefing about the course
 - e. Methods of exams
 - f. Statement of students' rights
 - g. Given to students at the beginning of the academic year
 - h. Annually updated.

Furthermore, the academic portfolio should be evaluated by an external assessor who reviews it then passes his/her feedback to the department. The external assessor should have the following characteristics and experiences:

- ❖ To hold assistant professorship or professorship qualifications
- ❖ From a different university from that in which the assessment is taking place
- ❖ Not be a member who had planned the course
- ❖ Preferably from an international university

Moving away from the roles and responsibilities of academic staff, the reform then shed lights on students' roles and rights, which are as follows:

- a) Students have the right to receive the course handbook
- b) Give feedback on the course and examination process
- c) Ask for a copy of the examination paper
- d) Responsible for agreeing to abide by regulations (policy) of the university at the time of registration and to follow such regulations after registration
- e) Have the rights to 15% permitted absence and 10% unpermitted absence for each course
- f) When the absence ratio exceeds these percentages, the student is not allowed to access that course and the first round of the final examination, but will be allowed to join the supplementary (second round) examination.

In 2010-2011, the MoHESR-KRG started a review process that showed that academics' participation in the teaching quality assurance program was 95 per cent, a very high ratio, in the first year of the reform. The Ministry attributed the other 5 per cent to those who either had temporary contracts, or were on maternity leaves, or scholarship candidates who mostly had sabbatical leave in the middle of the academic year. In order to develop the system of quality assurance and accreditation of higher education institutions in the region, the MHESR-KRG organized several workshops and seminars in most universities in the region. In addition, the Ministry planned to develop the reform process and thus started communications with international organizations such as the British Council, UNESCO, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)³, and the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET)⁴. The

³ WASC, a world-renown accrediting association, is one of six regional accrediting agencies in the United States recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education. It works closely with the Office of Overseas Schools under the U.S. Department of State. WASC represents 4,500 public, private institutions and works with 16 different associations in joint-accreditation processes." (MHESR-KRG, 2011, p. 27).

⁴ ABET, incorporated as the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc., is a non-governmental organization that accredits post-secondary education programs in "applied science, computing, engineering, and engineering technology". The accreditation of these programs occurs mainly in the United States but also internationally. As of October 2011, around 3,100 programs are accredited, distributed over more than 660 universities and colleges in 23 countries. ABET is the recognized U.S. accreditor of college and university programs in applied science, computing, engineering, and technology.

WASC started the process of international accreditation for the Universities of Duhok and Sulaymaniyah, while the ABET did the same for the Colleges of Engineering in the Universities of Salahaddin, Duhok, Sulaymaniyah, and Koya.

Curricula Development

Reforming curricula was necessary for several reasons. The Ministry took into consideration the economic development in the Kurdish labour market, which had witnessed obvious progress in the last few years. Due to safe and stable environment in the region, many none government organizations (NGOs) and foreign consulates continue their work in the region. Such organizations usually hire staff with good qualifications, knowledge, an international language, specifically English, and experience. At the same time, the English language was not actually offered in every department. The reform of curricula stresses several objectives:

- i. English language must be offered as a course in every department.
- ii. Develop critical thinking strategies, self-learning, knowledge building, and debates in class.
- iii. Encourage students to conduct individual and group research to develop approaches of investigation, research methodologies, and analysis.
- iv. In the first year of undergraduates' program, 70 per cent of education should focus on developing students' skills while the 30 per cent should focus on the students' area of study.

Furthermore, the reform emphasizes that opportunities should be given to students to access informational technology especially computers and internet, to have the chance to search and learn. It is not expected that students will graduate with complete knowledge about their program, but with its key issues and principles to enable them undertake research in future.

The Further Development of Academics

This section of the reform focuses on enhancing and enriching the academics' experiences to provide a better quality of knowledge and teaching. This step is necessary after the isolation they suffered due to the sanction during Saddam's regime of the region and the UN sanctions on Iraq.

ABET also provides leadership internationally through workshops, consultancies, memoranda of understanding, and mutual recognition agreements, such as the Washington Accord. ABET has been recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) since 1997." (Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ABET>).

Academics' development requires creating and assessing an academic portfolio, continuous development, research development, promotion, and the introduction of a new academic title.

Every member of staff, academic and administrative, has a portfolio archived at the college/institution. This contains documents concerned with administration events, promotion, rewards, ethics issues, and various other activities. It does not show any academic and scientific development, and assessment, or contribution to any academic performance. The need to create this academic portfolio is in maintaining an academic record for each lecturer in order to take into consideration at the time of assessment and promotion. Moreover, the academic portfolio is kept by the lecturer and submitted by end of April each year to the head of quality assurance in his/her department for assessment. The portfolio contains the following items:

1. Students' feedback on the course.
2. All activities during the year.
3. Copy of the course handbook
4. Copy of final exams' questions.

The assessment committee consists of five internal assessors in each college/institution plus one external. The committee reviews and makes recommendations regarding each portfolio and sends it back to the lecturer. It is necessary to mention that each hour spent assessing a portfolio is awarded one credit of academic activities for the members of the committee not to exceed four credits in total. The assessment focuses mainly on the lecturer's positive and negative performance and academic activities. When the assessment is complete at college/institution level, it is sent to the faculty to make decisions by June of the same year, then the faculty can announce "the Teacher-of-the-Year" (MoHESR-KRG, 2011, p. 38) at each college/institution. Moreover, those who win the title at faculty level are eligible to be nominated for "Teacher-of-the-Year" at university level. This decision is made by the council of the university. Any lecturer who receives an unfavourable assessment has the right to appeal against the current assessment and the department can suggest the same assessment process under a fresh committee.

Within the academic portfolio, all academic activities should be included as mentioned. The program covering these activities is referred to as "continuous academic development (CAD)" (MoHESR-KRG, 2011, p. 42), a cycle of development, sharing knowledge and experiences. The CAD program indicates that each lecturer should have 50 hours of academic activities to include:

- Attending or presenting seminars
- Attending meetings which focus on academic issues
- Publishing articles or research papers

- Attending conferences, with or without a paper
- Attending workshops.

The review by the MoHESR-KRG indicates that lecturers in the large old universities in the region are less interested in CAD program and they have less than 50 hours, unlike lecturers in the recently established universities. The review attributes this low interest of lecturers in older universities to high number of teaching hours and a greater number of students than in the new universities; besides, they already have more academic experience. On the other hand, while most lecturers in newer universities received their postgraduate degrees some years ago, they have less academic experience, therefore; they are more enthusiastic about academic activities and thus are able to meet requirements of the CAD programme. As a result, the Ministry declared that meeting CAD requirements is essential for academic and managerial promotion.

The Ministry now encourage and supports academics to travel abroad and attend international conferences. In 2010, only 687 participated in academic activities in international universities, but the number increased to 693 in 2011. The reform introduced a 12 month sabbatical to offer academics the opportunity to update their knowledge, collaborate internationally, publish research papers, and cooperate with external examiners. The sequence of academic promotion in the higher education organization in the region is similar to its counterpart in southern and central Iraq. This is a cumulative process and starts at assistant lecturer level, rising to professor as follows:

- 1) Assistant lecturer must have master's degree or its equivalent. The duration of study should not be less than one year, passing the viva successfully.
- 2) Lecturer must have either a doctoral degree or its equivalent while the duration of study should not be less than three years and passing the viva successfully, or three years' experience as an assistant lecturer and to have published three original research papers.
- 3) Assistant professor must have four years' teaching experiences and to have published four research papers, one of which should be original.
- 4) Associate professor, which is optional, must have four years' teaching experiences and to have published three research articles, one of which should be original.
- 5) Professor must either have two years' teaching experiences as associate professor and to have published three research articles, of which two should be original, or six years' teaching experience as assistant professor and to have published six research papers of which four should be original (MoHESR-KRG, 2011)

The reform process introduced a new academic title, associate professor, between assistant professor and professor. The purpose behind this title is to ease academic promotion for those who are not successfully promoted to professors yet have the opportunity to move forwards to professorship. There is no doubt that the major factor taken into consideration for this promotion is the research record, or how much original, published, and unpublished research should be conducted. In order to add quality to the process of academic promotion, the Ministry identified further three requirements for getting academic promotion:

- Originality and creativity in terms of field of interest and research
- Developing curricula and creativity in teaching methods
- Participation in managerial activities to achieve academic aims inside and/or outside higher education institutions.

Postgraduate Programs and Research

The reform process suggested some changes in Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs offered in Kurdistan universities. The old system of the PhD program did not create opportunities for creativity or originality; rather, the students could merely paraphrase the ideas and contents of available references, mostly without criticality or argumentation. PhD students were enrolled in general theoretical courses of their major field during the first year. These courses were mostly similar to a review of master's program content, while following years were devoted research. The new PhD system was introduced to encourage students to be innovative while conducting original research in two different settings. These refer to the student's home university and a different university abroad. In the first year of study, the student should learn about research methodologies and ethics, to compile a literature review. At the end of the year, the student should travel abroad and work with an external supervisor. Between the first and the end of the second year, the student should undertake a six-month language course before continuing research in the host university. Later, the student should return to the home university to conduct research. During the four years, each supervisor visits the other supervisor's country once a year. The purpose of exchange visits is to encourage further collaboration and supervision opportunities in future. Needless to say, the Ministry provides all the necessary funds for the new PhD system, including for the student, internal and external supervisors, travel, a monthly stipend, language course, and others where necessary. In order to avoid confusion, the Ministry gave this opportunity to PhD students who started their program in 2010-2011 on the old system to continue, but with some changes to make it parallel to the new system. Thus, academic year 2010-2011 was the last under the old PhD system.

Assessment and Accreditation

The final section of the reform concentrates on licensing and accrediting private and public universities in the region. There are ten private colleges and universities in the region and all are owned by businessmen and high-political figures. The aim behind establishing the private educational institutions was merely business and revenue. Usually, students who apply for the private universities/colleges are those who cannot secure admission to public universities or are not interested in the major they are offered at a public university. The quality of education in a private university/college is lower than in public universities in terms of teaching, curricula, and admission criteria. According to statistics from the MoHESR-KRG, 13 thousand students enrolled in private universities/colleges in 2010, of which 7 thousand were law students, and there are more in public universities. It further shows that the rate of success in the final exams in one of the private universities was 100 per cent, yet after auditing it appears that 99.2 per cent did not pass. Mostly, the number of students enrolled in private universities/colleges exceeds their capacity. Students' admissions and lecturers' employment are not managed according to clear regulations and the law.

The reform aimed to resolve these problems. The Ministry declared the Council of Ministers in the KRG to be the only body to approve/reject university licences, and the MHESR-KRG the only body to grant/withdraw accreditation. This new system requires the investor to meet all the necessary requirements for establishing a new university, and programmes of study should meet the needs of the region. Furthermore, the Ministry organized a senior committee of assessment to follow up and make annual visits to every new university. It is significant that this assessment applies to both public and private universities. Under this new system, one private university has been closed due to poor quality and a failure to meet the necessary requirements.

However, the Ministry designed a new system to assess private universities/colleges in the region. This system takes into account several factors:

- ❖ Transparency in academic performance and administration
- ❖ Annual revenue
- ❖ Outcomes of data collected annually by the senior committee of assessment
- ❖ Quality of teaching
- ❖ Quality of teaching materials
- ❖ Use of libraries and laboratories
- ❖ Access to research centres
- ❖ Availability of halls and other accommodation

- ❖ Human capacity
- ❖ Financial status.

After putting this new system into practice, the Ministry indicated that eight private universities met the regulations and criteria while two did not pass the assessment. Therefore, the latter two were required to revise their administration systems and academic performance to assure quality in their programmes. One of the latter two universities did not adhere to the Ministry's call, therefore, it has been closed.

Social Justice and Safety Environment

The higher education sector was the first entity to offer better pay and opportunities for scholarships for staff. In addition to a huge number of existing staff members, there was a massive demand for more posts in higher education institutions. In order to reduce discrimination and inequality in the process of securing employment in higher education institutions, halting the flow of employment, and seeking skilled and experienced employees, the MHESR-KRG decided to organize a committee to set up a new mechanism for obtaining work transferring services to the Ministry. This concentrated on the requirement for each university vacancy to be advertised on the Ministry website and in local newspapers, in order to provide equal opportunities. Later, all applicants meeting the requirements are interviewed by a committee acting as a panel to select successful candidates. This mechanism has been adopted by all governmental organizations.

Furthermore, the reform led to the launch of a new directorate, Health and Safety, in 2010. Its mission is to ensure better and safer work and study environments. The directorate has organized several committees to support higher education institutions in a framework of seminars and workshops to instruct staff, students, and academics about safety conditions and how to remove hindrances.

2.5. Conclusion

It is an inspiration to see that countries that have gone through wars and crisis are developing and rebuilding their countries. The Kurdistan region has witnessed more than crisis. One can understand that the higher education sector in the Kurdistan region exists by virtue of a reform process aimed at providing better services and quality education for learners. The MoHESR-KRG is trying to rebuild the region and provide the needs of society. While the preparation phase of setting up a new policy is crucial, it is more important to focus on the plan of the policy in theory and practice.

The Kurdish reform policy has been introduced by the MoHESR-KRG at the end of 2009. This study focuses only on the second section of the reform policy, entitled 'The quality Assurance Section of the Reform Policy'. This is the core of this study. The work introduces public policy studies; the policy actors; its instruments; the policy process cycles, agenda setting, formulation and decision-making, implementation, and evaluation and monitoring; top-down and bottom-up policy approaches; factors affect policy implementation; and the success/failure of a policy implementation.

Chapter 3: Public Policy Studies: Theoretical Framework

3.1. Introduction

Policy is theory comprised of mechanism and guidance to organize and process solutions for a new system or problem (USAID, 2010). It is defined as “a chain of causation between initial conditions and future consequences.” (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984, p. xxiii), which implies interrelated phases of a process and that each phase has a role that cannot be left out, because each phase is a continuation and complement of the previous. Policy becomes a programme when preparation is undertaken for these ‘initial conditions’ to transform policy as a theory, to a process. It is “the programmatic activities formulated in response to an authoritative decision. These activities are the policy designer's plans for carrying out the wishes expressed by a legitimating organization, be it a legislature, a judicial agent, or an executive body.” (Matland, 1995, p. 154).

The literature indicates that the roots of policy studies go back to Harold D. Lasswell's studies on policy in the 1940s and 1950s (Lasswell, 1949; 1951; 1956; deLeon, 2006; deLeon and Vogenbeck, 2007; Torgerson, 2007). Lasswell integrates policy sciences to social sciences suggesting that solving problems can be achieved through designing policy. He believes that there is a way to employ new policies to deal with problems that could lead to more productive and effective outcomes. There are several aspects that Lasswell emphasizes in his studies: signifying the role of participants within the social and cultural context; highlighting the impact of inquiry in social process and policy process; the need to adapt to modernism; the importance of having a plan to manage constraints; and bringing democracy to the public to solve the problem via discussion. Looking into Lasswell's studies of policy helps to construct a perspective about policy analysis. Therefore, it is necessary to look into policy actors, policy instruments, and policy process, in the first instance.

This chapter focuses on studies of policy and its design. It provides guidance to the analysis of the findings in a later stage of this study. Such guidance is embedded in the way it clarifies aspects about analysing policy document and components about a policy process. The chapter starts with policy actors who formulate, implement, and evaluate the policy process, including government and stakeholders. They have a role in the policy process, including front line staff members who deal with people's demands through to high level position managers who make decisions in an organization. The nature of actors' work is framed mostly in a network or community that

involves further actors in the policy, fosters tight relationship among its members, and shares the single task of achieving the policy objectives. Having such frames of policy actors as well as relationships among them is not based on control or hierarchy, rather is based on cooperation, experiences, shared objectives, and high integration. At the same time, this is one of the challenges to the continuity and effectiveness of the policy process.

This chapter introduces the mechanisms, resources, and tools used to implement and organize a policy, and are referred to as policy instruments. These are categorized in a variety of ways depending on the policy context and its objectives. Generally, there are economic, educational, informational, authoritative, technological, and others instruments of policy. The literature further refers to 'instrument mix', the use of more than one instrument type in the policy process. A mix of instruments is difficult to manage due to the use of various instruments needing to be integrated to achieve the same policy objectives and produce more effective outcomes.

Another aspect in this chapter is the elaboration of the policy process cycle in detail. Policy is viewed as a cycle by Bowe et al (1992), who divide it into three main dimensions: the influence of involved people to construct the policy, policy text, and policy effect and its implementation. Later, the dimension of policy was expanded by Ball (1994) to add outcomes that reflects the extent to which the process achieves the planned objectives, and the dimension of providing evaluation methods for the outcomes. However, there are other precise classifications of the policy process cycle, which is approached and divided in different ways by different scholars. The stages of policy cycle are interrelated and interdependent, yet work effectively together. Moreover, each stage has its objectives and value. These stages, as discussed in this study, are divided into agenda setting; policy formulation and decision making; implementation; and evaluation and monitoring.

There are different approaches to implementing a policy. These approaches, as presented in various literatures, are: top-down, bottom-up, and a synthesized approach of top-down and bottom-up. It is vital to understand these approaches to find which is most appropriate and leads to effective implementation. The choice to apply any of these approaches is determined by factors such as the role of policy actors, the managerial system, bureaucracy, and others. There are many factors that affect the implementation of a policy process. Such factors vary from the roles of government and approaches of communication to other factors. These are clarified in this chapter.

3.2. Policy Actors

Policy actors are individuals, organisations, or groups that have an interest or are involved in the policy. Their serious and effective contribution to the policy process can lead to effective outcomes and achieving policy objectives. Policy actors are considered the dynamic component of policy design. The term 'key actors', as introduced by Spicker (1995), refers to the set of actors (individuals or organizations) who might have a key role in the policy process. Spicker presents a model to label policy actors according to their ability to deal with problems and communicate with other actors. Spicker's model of policy actors has a hierarchical order that is organized according to actors' responsibility and authority in the policy process. Each actor(s) plays his role in the process. Spicker's model of key actors is classified as the following:

- "Dealing with problems as demands" such as staff members in an organization who are dealing directly with customers' enquiries and can be considered as street-level actors.
- "Dealing with problems as situations" which differs from the previous in one aspect, which is that these actors have a kind of skills and specific experiences.
- "Systematic service provision" indicates teams and different committees on an institution level. It covers a group of actors who work as a network and have shared goal(s).
- "Comprehensive service provision" refers to actors who have rich and wide knowledge about the whole unit and are able to manage that unit.
- "Comprehensive field coverage" covers actors who make decisions and make policy. Such actors are responsible for the whole field and are able to make decisions as appropriate. (Spicker, 1995, p. 72 and 73)

This classification of policy actors makes it possible to argue that the authority of each category can be based on the level of their contribution and influence on the policy. Actors' power and authority depend on what responsibilities they carry. Spicker's model shows that some actors have more authority than others; that is, those who occupy high senior managerial positions have more authority than those who occupy low junior managerial positions or front line services. In term of policy actors' communication, there is a continuous communication among them to guide and evaluate the process. And because each actor's role is indispensable, the communication process starts either at the comprehensive field coverage level and moves downward, as in the Kurdish reform process, or at the level of actors who deal with problems as demands and moves upward. These levels of policy key actors are illustrated in Figure 2 as a circular direction. Therefore, a policy process might be initiated at different levels. Actors with comprehensive field

coverage (e.g. policymakers) might initiate a policy process, which usually implies the adoption of a top-down policy approach. Street-level policy actors, who are on the level of 'dealing with problems as demands', might also initiate a policy process, which usually implies the adoption of a bottom-up policy approach.

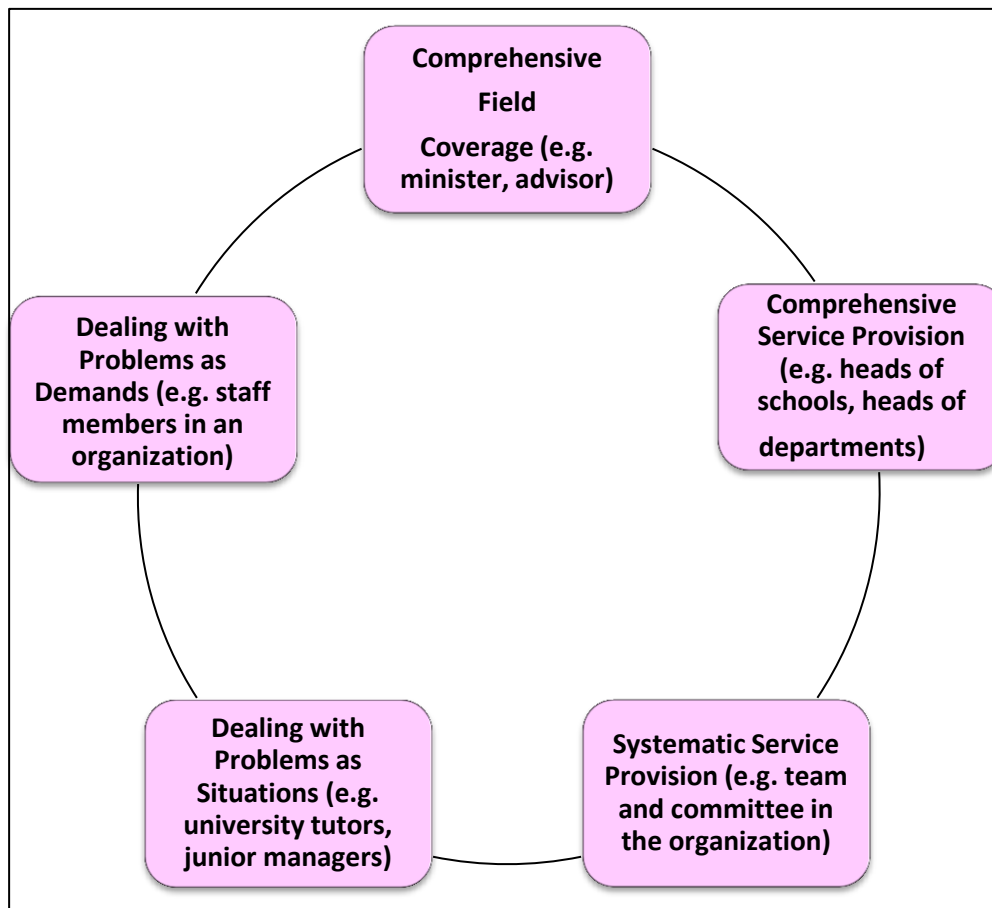


Figure 2: Policy actors

There are different models or approaches to classifying policy actors. They can be classified according to their power, size, interdependency, and interest in the policy objectives. Though policy actors agree on policy objectives and work on achieving them, they differ in how they contribute to the policy process and there may even be opposition and conflict among actors. Usually, those who occupy senior positions and enjoy more authority have roles in drafting the theory of the policy, and this is generally carried out in the early stages of the policy cycle. It includes agenda setting, and policy formulation and decision making. Actors who have less authority and occupy junior positions mostly contribute to turning the drafted policy into action via the implementation stage and sometimes, if it is not on a large scale, carrying out the evaluation. Based on such categorization, scholars distribute actors according to authority, responsibilities, resources, and communication. Therefore, it is possible to state that actors at

junior level can be referred to as the policy community, while actors at senior level can be referred to as the issue network.

The literature makes reference to the Rhodes model in terms of categories of policy network (Miller and Demir, 2007; Bache, 2000). According to Rhodes (1997), policy actors are categorized as either policy community or issue network, while policy network is located in between. Subsequently, Rhodes (1997) differentiates between the policy community and the issue network in terms of numbers of members, power, interdependency, and sharing resources. In this comparison (see Bache, 2000; Miller and Demir, 2007; Rhodes, 1997), an issue network is characterized as being more open for membership, a restricted interdependency between organizations involved, loosely coupled organizations, and of a temporary nature that mostly dissolves once the issues at stake are resolved. In contrast, a policy community is characterised as having a restricted membership, high interdependency, being tightly integrated, and remaining stable after resolving the issues at stake.

Jann and Wegrich (2007, p. 50) present a similar typology, reflecting on the relationship between state and society, and discuss "*iron triangles, sub-governments, or policy communities*" and "*issue network*" (emphasis in the original). The first category refers to government bureaucrats, parliamentary committees, and agencies that have common interests. The second category refers to "a multitude of actors, and with comparatively open boundaries and a looser coupling between the actors involved" (Jann and Wegrich, 2007, p. 50). Miller and Demir (2007) share the same notion and refer to a "policy community" as "a grouping of interrelated policy actors pursuing a matter of public policy important to them for instrumental reasons", where "...communication and influence may flow in nonhierarchical patterns and the resultant policy activism is associated with governmental fragmentation and political particularism" (Miller and Demir, 2007, p. 137). They further agree that a policy community is different from an issue networks in terms of the latter being more open and having looser bounds of involved actors.

As indicated by the latter scholars and Bache (2000), the style of communication takes a conversational pattern, far from hierarchy and traditional authority because, as the term community implies, there is a tight relationship among community members that makes such a community a stable entity and gives it a sense of high integration. This strong relationship makes the members share resources so they might have almost equal power, though sometimes some members are more powerful than others and this is attributed to the fact that some members have more resources than others (Miller and Demir, 2007). So far, the nature of members' relationship and community characteristics are understood, but who are the policy community

members? They share a single task: the accomplishment of the policy objectives. Therefore, any member who can contribute to the achievement and development of the policy objectives is eligible for membership of the community. This is exemplified by Miller and Demir (2007, p. 141): “A policy community can include journalists and policy analysts, as well as influential politicians and bureaucratic officials. In addition researchers and professors... Experts from universities, think tanks, or the law...” provided they effectively contribute to the accomplishment of the policy objectives. However, the tight relationship among community members is used as a criticism against its success. Miller and Demir (2007) refer to unexpected institutional changes that might cause changes in the members’ interest in the policy objectives. Such changes can lead to a break-up among members and disruption to the flow of the process. Another criticism addresses the role of the policy community in comparison to the overall role of the institution. The argument focuses on how to identify the role of the institution; does it have a role in the mission of the policy community or an independent role that cannot be integrated with the role of the institution? In other words, if the mission of the policy community is separated from the mission of the institution, then the community sounds meaningless in terms of its tight members’ relationship and high integration.

3.3. Policy Instruments

Policy instruments are considered “as tools... or techniques of governance... that address policy problems” and “are introduced by a governing body... in order to achieve policy objectives” (Rogge and Reichardt, 2013, p. 9). Rogge’s and Reichardt’s definition of policy instruments gives an idea about the function of these instruments as they process solutions to achieve objectives. Policy instruments are one of the components of policy design and are most commonly considered as economic, political, and cultural instruments (Sorrell et al, 2003). A second definition is given by Sorrell et al (2003, p. 15), who state that a policy instrument “is the legislation, law, regulation, initiative etc. which has been introduced by a governing body to address a particular problem and achieve one or more specified *objectives*. Objectives are desired policy outcomes” (emphasis in origin). This latter definition sheds light on the mechanism by which the instruments work: “legislation, law, regulation, initiative etc”. Sorrell et al (2003) consider an instrument as a mechanism to regulate a plan and ease the achievement of the objectives. A third definition is introduced by Howlett and Rayner (2007), who state that “Policy instruments are techniques of governance which, one way or another, involve the utilization of state resources, or their conscious limitation, in order to achieve policy goals” (Howlett and Rayner, 2007. p. 2). This definition urges the need to think about what type of resources are provided by the state.

Types of policy instruments vary throughout the literature. Rogge and Reichardt (2013) classify policy instruments into economic, regulation, and information. Lascoumes and Gales (2007) share the last classification, and add "Agreement-Based and Incentive-Based" and "De Facto and De Jure Standards Best Practice" (Lascoumes and Gales, 2007, p. 12) to the instruments types. Sorrell et al (2003) agree on the economic and information instruments, but add command and control and voluntary approaches to the instrument types. Moreover, Howlett (2000) and Howlett and Rayner (2007) classify instrument types into broader categories consisting of nodality, authority, treasure, and organization, with sub categories distributed according to purpose, implementation procedure, and feasibility (cf: Howlett, 2000; Howlett and Rayner, 2007). However, the different classifications might not be as interesting as the reasons behind these classifications. It is significant to find out how policy instruments are categorized and according to what basis. Howlett (2000) and Howlett and Rayner (2007) argue that policy instrument types are determined by the policy objectives and implementation approaches. The types of instruments are not haphazard, and the choice of instrument is linked to a process of finding solutions to problems in carrying out policy objectives. They further indicate that policy instruments are mostly associated with privatization and deregulation in the early 1980s, because these two categories were apparent at that time thus there was a need for instruments to assist with solutions to the problems at that time.

In addition, the classification of policy instruments is based on their features: descriptive (Rogge and Reichardt, 2013; del Rio, 2012) and abstract (Rogge and Reichardt, 2013; Kemp and Pontoglio, 2011). The descriptive features are, generally, concerned with describing the instrument: aim; target group; content; time limitation; and legal issues (del Rio, 2012). The descriptive features are a guide to how the instruments are, used so that effective outcomes are achieved. The abstract features represent the quality and reliability of the instrument. These features, as referred to by Rogge and Reichardt (2013, p. 13), are:

- “stringency”, which reflects the level of ambition of an instrument, usually of a regulatory or economic instrument types, such as performance standards
- “level of support”, which shows the value of impetus provided by the instrument and includes educational and economical instruments such as the amount of research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) support
- “predictability”, which refers to the certainty of further developing the instrument to encourage more investment such as providing investors with support for twenty years

- “flexibility” captures the resilience of choosing the best way that suits the use of the instrument and leads to innovation such as implementing new method to diagnose an existing disease
- "differentiation", which divides instruments according to purpose of usage, like using an instrument to measure height and another to measure size
- "depth" captures the extent of the instrument's innovation to identify whether its usage can provide the most solutions to the problem.

Moving to a more complex policy formulated on a large scale, more than one policy instrument may be used interdependently within a context, and this is called instrument mix (de Heide, 2011; Howlett and Rayner, 2007; Sorrell et al, 2003; Rogge and Reichardt, 2013). Howlett and Rayner (2007) state that economic and environmental changes lead to the emergence of new problems that could be so complicated and difficult to sort out using one instrument. Thus, there is a trend to use a mix of instruments to solve such problems. The interaction relationship between the instruments leads to making an instrument more effective than another (Sorrell et al 2003; Howlett and Rayner, 2007; Rogge and Reichardt, 2013). Some literature refers to this interaction relationship as the coherence of the policy process or consistency of policy elements (Rogge and Reichardt, 2013). This indicates that the operation among the instruments will undoubtedly affect each other and the outcomes of policy process. According to Sorrell et al (2003), the outcome(s) of instrument mix is either positive, such as using technology instruments with educational instruments, in which the former ones are supportive of the latter, or negative, especially if one of the instruments is not developed or updated, such as using outdated information instruments with economic instruments. However, Rogge and Reichardt (2013) refer to the more effective instrument(s) as the main one(s), with the less effective as secondary. The interaction characteristic of an instrument mix makes the operation more complicated and urges the need to consider several aspects affecting the operation of these instruments: How can this interaction be more effective? What is the limitation of this interaction? What objectives do these instruments share? What best implementation approaches can be used? What side-effects might result? Thinking about such questions signifies that it is difficult to replace or change an instrument in the instrument mix, because this will affect the policy process and might prompt a re-think of the whole policy cycle.

Ultimately, policy makers need to consider the most appropriate policy instruments or instrument mix, and understand how these will affect the policy process and subsequent outcomes of the process. Policy makers further need to work on increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the

policy process via improving its coherence and the consistency of policy elements. More precisely, any change in policy instrument or instrument mix will affect the whole process and policy objectives, which might affect policy actors' interests. Therefore, it has been suggested that selecting policy instruments should be based on a system so the process can be easily reviewed, evaluated, and improved through policy learning (Howlett and Rayner, 2007; Sorrell et al 2003).

3.4. Policy Process Cycle

Policy is a process, not an event; it is a series of subsequent theories and actions that cannot succeed independently. Components of a policy process are interrelated and designed according to a system that contributes to achieving policy objectives (Fullan, 1992, 2007; Karampelas, 2006). Policy reform has to be precisely planned in order to reflect its objectives. Implementing policy reform is a complicated process that needs to be understood and designed carefully. Fullan (1993) mentions four fundamental elements in building up a powerful reform potential at individual and institutional levels. The elements at the individual level are "personal vision-building, inquiry, mastery, and collaboration." (Fullan, 1993, p. 12), whereas elements at the institutional level are "shared vision-building, organizational structures, norms and practices of inquiry; focus on organizational development and knowledge, and collaborative work cultures" (Fullan, 1993, p. 12). Looking at Fullan's fundamental elements, the most important stimulus to a reform is having a vision clarifying the reasons for thinking about the plan, because undoubtedly reform cannot happen by itself. Later, it will be time to ask about the aims behind the reform, what results are sought and how it is planned. After arriving at the plan, it is the time to obtain knowledge and skills to manage the process to cooperate with others to implement the plan finally.

The policy process was first classified in stages by Lasswell (1956), who suggested seven stages of a policy process: intelligence; promotion; prescription; invocation; application; termination; and appraisal. Jann and Wegrich (2007) argue that Lasswell's model of policy stages was the basic framework for study of policy process for years until the emergence of other models suggesting subdivisions of policy process, as introduced by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), Elmore (1979/80), Hjern (1982). Spicker (2006) indicates that there are five main stages of a policy process: stating the goals and mission; studying the environment; proposing and choosing appropriate methods for implementation; the implementation process, and evaluation. Jann and Wegrich (2007) hold that there is a common policy process model that can be divided into five main stages: according to them, these are "agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation, and evaluation" (Jann and Wegrich, 2007, p. 43). Other scholars (Burke et al, 2012; Fullan, 1993; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984) share this notion

of policy process and emphasise that the policy process is regarded as a cycle beginning with identifying the problem and setting the agenda, then implementing and evaluate it.

Articles by Fischer et al (2007), Jann and Wegrich (2007), and Sidney (2007) combines policy formulation and decision-making into one stage because, as Sidney puts it, "It involves identifying and/or crafting a set of policy alternatives to address a problem, and narrowing that set of solutions in preparation of the final policy decision." (Sidney, 2007, p. 79). Moreover, the implementation cycle is divided by USAID (2010) into seven elements: content and objectives; social, political, and economic context; leadership; stakeholders; plan and resources; action and facilities; and feedback and assessment. This cycle is referred to by Kettunen (2011), who divides it into "plan" where objectives are clarified, "do" where the process descriptions are planned, "check" where feedback is collected and outcomes are tested, and "act" where the whole process is evaluated and improved (2011, p. 151). Furthermore, the OFMDFMNI (n. d.) states that the policy cycle is again divided into four main parts: "Strategic Thinking"; "Development of Policy"; "Implement Policy Change"; and "Maintaining Policy" (OFMDFMNI, n. d., p. 8). It becomes obvious that there are different views of the sub-divisions of the policy cycle but, in essence, the literature indicates that there are four main stages of reform policy as presented below (Figure 3):

3.4.1. First: Agenda Setting

This stage is the beginning of the whole policy process. If there is no recognition of the real problem and issues on which actors have different views, there will be no policy or an unsuccessful process. Jann and Wegrich (2007) emphasize that there will be no agenda setting if there is no true recognition of the real problem, when "not all the existing problems could receive the same level of attention" (Jann and Wegrich, 2007, p. 46), or when there is disagreement between two actors on an issue, when the less powerful one attempts to highlight the issue. There are four main patterns of agenda-setting as introduced by May (1991) and Howlett and Ramesh (2003). May (1991) describes three patterns: outside-initiation; inside-initiation; and mobilization.

- A. Outside-initiation refers to the role of the public in forcing the government to take their demands into account and put them on the government agenda.
- B. Inside-initiation is made by a group of people have issues to raise and have relations with the government, while the public is not aware of such initiation or issues (e.g. as in case of business groups and companies which share business and interests with government).

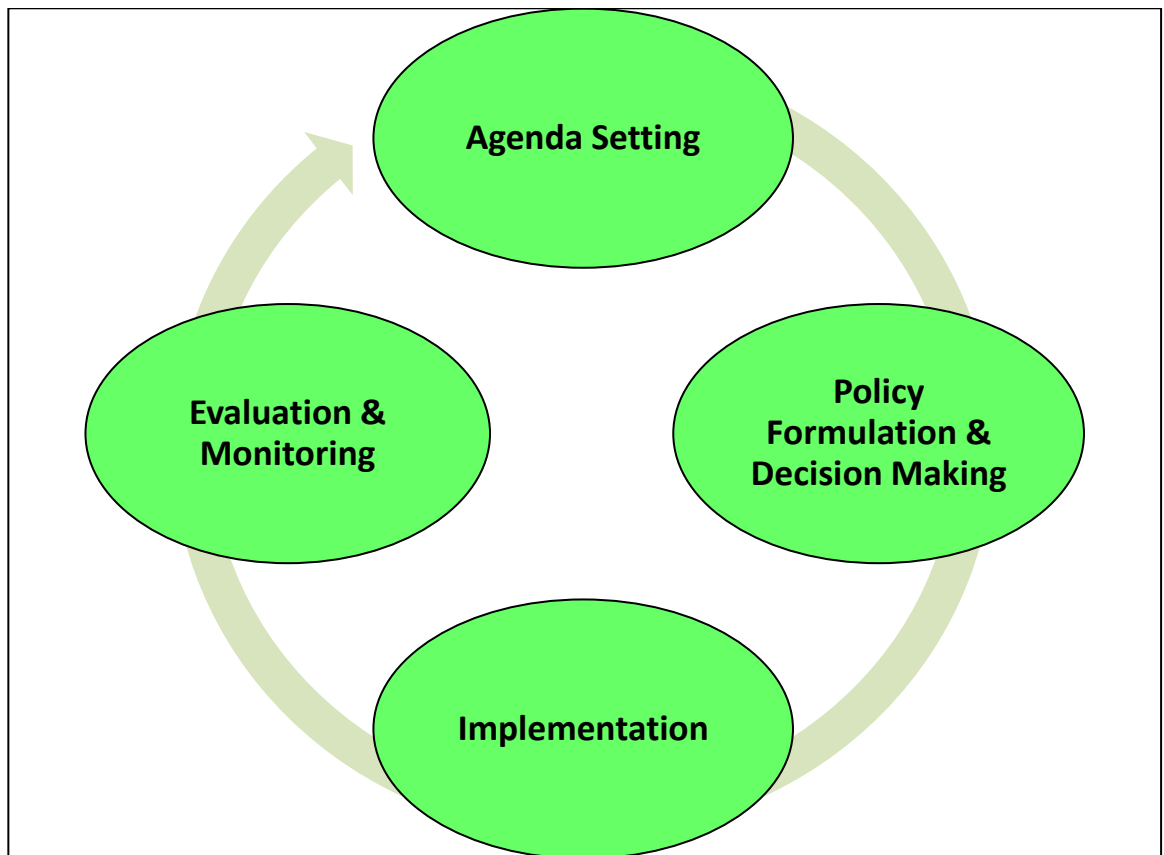


Figure 3: Policy process cycle

- C. Mobilization pattern emerges when the government supports an agenda initiated by the public although it has no role (e.g. campaign by public to implement use of Euro currency).
- D. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) introduce the consolidation pattern, which indicates that the government sets an agenda and it is strongly supported by the public.

Despite the different patterns of agenda-setting, it remains to understand the relationship between these patterns and the status of the society (such as democratic, modern,...etc.). In modern and democratic societies, the public mostly can take on the role of raising the problem and claim agenda-setting and policy initiation, but this kind of policy would have a short life cycle and be subject to amendment, especially when the public's interest moves away from the process (Lodge and Hoods, 2002). That stated, problems which need a new agenda and policy need to be supported by almost all of society and based on pragmatic assumptions. Therefore, understanding the culture and society as well as the economic environment is necessary to policy agenda setting. At this stage, policy-makers need to think about the factors that led to the emergence of the problem and investigate whether its solution needs a new policy or whether an amendment to an

old policy, if available, is appropriate. These factors mostly relate to identifying the needs of those who will be involved in the problem; specifying available and required resources; identifying available staff and budget; consultation with stakeholders; ensuring leadership; gathering evidences to depend on; and investigating that there are professionals to start the implementation process. When all these factors have been thought about, then it will be time to move to the second stage of the policy process.

3.4.2. Second: Policy Formulation and Decision Making (Planning)

After setting the policy agenda, it will be the time to formulate the policy and move it to the decision-making stage. These two phases tend to be closely connected and move the policy process towards implementation. One of the techniques used for decision-making is via politics (Rasch and Tsebelis, 2009), which means that governmental institutions, state bureaucracy and parliamentary committees and interested agencies that share the policy objectives have a crucial role in formulating the policy. In addition to politics, policy formulation can be achieved by involving policy advice from experts in policy formulation and decision-making. Jann and Wegrich (2007) stress that providing advice is not considered as merely getting information from experts but as a sub-stage of other techniques comprising policy formulation. Therefore, it is important to have interaction between policy actors in a network to study the possibilities of policy formulation and arrive at the most effective decisions through negotiation and analysis (Lindblom, 1968; Mayntz and Scharpf, 1975). Moreover, the size of such a network depends on the size of the policy, and there might be more than one network within the largest. Such a division of networks can occur in management, for example, to act as a link between managers with lesser networks. It becomes obvious that such networks represent a centre of power in policy formulation because of the diverse experiences and information in these networks. The actors include any members involved in the policy process such as stakeholders, government, and parliament that take on the role of policy formulation, while the final decision making is made by the institution that adopted the policy process. McCaffery (2004) emphasizes the importance of consultation and advice, and contributes these to the success of the reform process. Fullan (2007) further emphasizes that it is not only the responsibility of consultants to make the process successful, rather that the reformers themselves should have the skills to change the process and manage it.

A third approach of policy formulation is based on sciences and research, which mostly has an impact on long-term change to issue perceptions (Jann and Wegrich, 2007). On international level, however, there are specialized organizations in policy formulation such as Think Tanks, as well as experts can be approached by other organizations which are not specialized in policy

formulation such as World Bank. Mainly, this stage focuses on identifying method(s) to involve the actors in finding alternatives, analysing causes, identifying policy objectives, prioritising some of the alternatives, planning a framework covers all aspects affected by the policy, collecting resources, information, and data about the problem, studying and evaluating the suggested alternatives, and making decisions that mostly encourage and support cooperation among the actors in the future. It is important to highlight that making decisions is a crucial step at this stage because it prepares policy for the implementation stage and no issue that has not been formally approved can be implemented, while all what have been approved are transferred into action, according to priorities (UNEP, 2009). Transferring approved decisions to implementation is still a matter for debate, as far as there could be an absence of gravity, accountability, pragmatic objectives, sufficient policy instrument, or a sudden institutional change that might disrupt the progress of the policy process.

3.4.3. Third: Implementation

The well planned theory is put into effect. The implementation stage is concerned specifically with top-down and bottom-up approaches, and a synthesised framework between the two approaches. The top-down approach focuses on the policy-makers' role in controlling and managing the implementation process. This approach is presented by scholars such as Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), and Sabatier (1986). The bottom-up approach focuses on the role of street-level actors in developing the implementation process through a network of actors and negotiation, where they may have some autonomy to determine the policy process. The scholars who support this approach are Elmore (1997/80), Dyer (1999), and Hull and Hjern (1987). The synthesised approach mixes the first two approaches and views implementation as a network-based process that involves policy-makers and street-level actors, while the final decision is left to policy-makers, who retain the power to manage the process. This hybrid approach is supported by scholars such as Matland (1995) and Premfors (1984). On one hand, this stage is regarded as a backward process because when an approved section(s) in the policy plan has not been implemented, it is necessary to go back to the planning stage and make changes. This backward process might require the attendance of all concerned policy actors to discuss this section again and suggest alternatives. On the other hand, it is regarded a forward process when the policy plan is effectively implemented and the cycle moves forward to be evaluated and maintained. The UNEP report (2009) refers to three main factors affecting implementation. The first is attributed to support for and resistance to the process. The process can be successfully implemented when totally supported by government, stakeholders, and other policy actors. It would fail when it faces resistance from opposing or uninterested groups,

bureaucrats and even street-level actors because of a lack of financial support or human resources, or weak political support. The second factor is concerned with analysis skills, which can be complicated when there are many and vague tasks, changes of priorities due to environmental changes, weak planning, and weak classification of priorities. The third factor is concerned with administrating the process, such as ineffective structure of communication among members of the policy network, poor accountability and role clarification, and having weak or no motivation.

It remains to be mentioned that "implementation and policy formulation are highly interdependent processes" (Pülzl and Treib, 2007, p. 101). Implementation is putting into practice the theories formulated previously. Of these, parts, sometimes, face obstacles and therefore there is a need to formulate new theories and suggest alternatives. Implementers need to think about the availability of effective leadership and how sufficient guidance is provided. It is important to provide advice and instruction on the on-going implementation process and inform stakeholders about the development of the process. It has been suggested that it is the leaders' role is to follow up regularly and find alternative solutions when sudden changes or obstacles occur. There might be unexpected problems at this stage, such as structural or cultural changes to the organization. Thus, it is necessary to have a monitoring service at this stage in order to ensure that best practice is achieved.

3.4.4. Fourth: Evaluation and Monitoring

Policy evaluation means reporting all information concerned with the performance of the process and the results. This stage aims to find the extent to which the objectives have been achieved and the stakeholders are satisfied, and what alternative ways are there to deal with non-achieved objectives. This stage is important because it concerns the success or failure of the policy process, satisfaction of stakeholders, and quality of outcomes. Evaluating the policy process can be achieved via two main methods: internal and external evaluation (Wollmann, 2007). Internal evaluation is considered as self-evaluation and is carried out by the agency or organization implementing the policy process. External evaluation is carried out by an external agency which has no relation with the actors, administrative units, or the organization that implemented the process. Most external evaluation is carried out by top governmental organizations such as parliament or international agencies. However, before starting the evaluation process, it is significant to decide on what kind of evaluation is sought. UNEP (2009) highlights six main patterns of evaluation:

- ✓ Evaluation of inputs: This refers to financial evaluation of all the inputs (human resources, work environment,...etc.) of the process to be used as complimentary criteria to other evaluation processes if required.
- ✓ Evaluation of outcomes: This refers to evaluating of the policy performance and identifying the outcomes of the process. The data received in such an evaluation can be used as inputs for other comprehensive policy processes.
- ✓ Evaluation of the process: This refers to the evaluation of policy instruments, timing, and any procedures used throughout the process in order to make it more effective.
- ✓ Evaluation of competency: This aims to examine whether it is possible to have the same quality and quantity of performance but using fewer resources.
- ✓ Evaluability assessment: This pattern supports policy learning. For example, clarifying the process of analysis, the effects of the outcomes, implication of the policy,...etc. It is further used to devise any approaches and variants of assessment that can be considered as “criteria of technical feasibility, economic viability, and of practical merits” (Wollmann, 2007, p. 395).
- ✓ Evaluation of the adequacy of performance: This refers to comparing the outcomes of the process with the policy objectives identified at the planning stage. The evaluation of these outcomes is based on specific criteria agreed at the planning stage. This also has been referred to as “classical evaluation” by Wollmann (2007, p. 395)

Further, Wollmann (2007) and OFMDFMNI (n. d.) classify evaluation according to its function and timing into three major types as follows:

- Evaluation undertaken as an estimation of the process and prior to making decision in order to use such information as supportive data during the decision-making process. This evaluation is necessary to the policy development process.
- Evaluation made while the process moves on to identify the indicators that can affect the implementation process in order to be changed or modified to produce better performance.
- Evaluation made after completing the implementation process to compare the outcomes of the process and whether the policy performance matches the policy objectives (see also UNEP, 2009). This further encourages policy learning and helps to identify what works and what does not work in the process.

Wollmann (2007) adds that secondary evaluation is made after a simple primary evaluation of the process. It aims at either reviewing the standards of methods used during the evaluation or comparing the results of both evaluation processes. However, before assessing the evaluation process, it is crucial to take into consideration the factors that could affect the evaluation process. These consist of the impatience of policy-makers or government who cannot wait for the final results, devoting the evaluation process to the alignment of some individuals' or parties' or government's interest, an inability to analyse policy learning, a lack of information, and a lack of skill and experience (UNEP, 2009). Added to this, are missing loyalty and accountability, other factors that affect the evaluation.

Results from the evaluation process can be classified into three main categories: maintaining and developing the positive results; changing the negative outcomes through changes in the policy alternatives, changes in the policy instruments or implementation approaches as required; or cancelling the whole policy (UNEP, 2009). It is important to introduce two main approaches of policy evaluation in order to be able to understand which approach of evaluation the MoHESR-KRG has followed in the first year of introducing the policy. Bovens et al (2006) attribute politics in policy evaluation to two main approaches which concentrate on how the evaluation process is viewed. These are rationalistic and argumentative policy evaluation. Table 2 shows the differences between these two approaches.

Bovens et al (2006) aim to introduce the role of politics in policy evaluation. Looking at the Table 2, it becomes clear that the rational approach of policy evaluation seems to be more reliable and conveys for what the policy process is set. Evaluators need to understand that policy is not initiated to serve the interests of individuals, interested groups, chambers of parliament, committees or offices of government, or limited stakeholders. It is to serve the whole of society, government, stakeholders, and policy actors in order to provide better quality of services and to solve problems. Adopting the rational approach of policy evaluation does not mean that such evaluation is always successful in taking into account the factors that affect the evaluation, as mentioned previously. Policy evaluation can be initiated by the government or administrative staff of the organization itself or external agencies, depending on the level and quality of evaluation sought. In this regard, Wollmann (2007) emphasizes that "The more complex the policies and programmes under consideration are, and the more demanding the conceptual and methodological problems of carrying out such evaluations become, the less the institutions, initiating and conducting the evaluation, are capable to carry out such conceptually and methodologically complicated and sophisticated analyses themselves" (Wollmann, 2007, p. 395).

Table 2: Rationalistic and argumentative policy evaluation

No.	Rationalistic Policy Evaluation	Argumentative Policy Evaluation
1	Based on facts and data borrowed from natural and physical sciences.	Based on meaning and assumptions of objects and accumulated interpretation by scientists to give meaning to reality.
2	Supported by positivists	Supported by post-positivists or constructivists.
3	Decision-making and policy statement are based on reliable and valid empirical information.	Decision-making and judgment are based on stimulated debates on values among politicians.
4	Gives relevant information about expected and factual policy performance.	Policy performance is based on the best alternative and solution suggested prior to implementation and final judgment made after implementing the policy.
5	Judging the evaluation process is based on neutral values and facts.	It is difficult to judge the evaluation process, because it is difficult to determine the strongest argument or the most relevant voice; therefore, most such policy evaluations fail.

Therefore, the complexity of the evaluation process (besides lacking the resources and experiences for an evaluation) is the most common factor that forces institutions to seek external evaluations by other agencies. Though there is variety in the way that organizations undertake an evaluation process, there are 10 fundamental steps necessary for a successful policy evaluation, as suggested by the OFMDFMNI (n. d.):

- 1) Evaluation has to be planned before starting the policy process and, in order to achieve a more effective evaluation, prioritized sections in the process should be evaluated in the first instance.
- 2) Clarifying for what the evaluation is set.

- 3) To have more feasible evaluation, it is important to identify the policy rationality and objectives before implementing the policy, otherwise the evaluating agency/person will do so at the evaluation stage.
- 4) Identifying the indicators against which the evaluation will be measured. If an international evaluation is aimed at, then these indicators should allow international comparison.
- 5) Establish a comparison case for two groups; one controls the process and another is affected by the process; or the policy impact on a group before and after the process, in order to find the outcomes of the policy process.
- 6) Identify the cause and effect relationship; for example, the relationship between input and output.
- 7) Specify side-effects that may result from the policy process, such as equity of staff performance, and equality between males and females.
- 8) An effective analysis is based on identifying the purpose of the analysis (process or performance analysis) and the most appropriate approaches (quantitative or qualitative) to the analysis.
- 9) Clarify the evaluation outcome as either continuing the process, or continuing with partial modification, or modification, or cancellation.
- 10) To encourage policy learning, the final evaluation outcome should be formally documented and made accessible to others so they can consider future programmes and projects.

The evaluation of performance is the one with which this study is concerned to seek the quality of outcomes resulting from the policy process. It further determines whether the outcomes match the policy objectives agreed on during the policy planning stage. It shows the relationship between perceptions and achievements of the policy process and gives meaning to what it is that the policy is set. When all the outcomes are effective, implementers have to work on maintaining and monitoring or developing them further in the future.

It is important to mention that each stage is a complement to the previous. These stages are considered to be fundamental in the policy reform cycle, but there might be differences, not in the essence, from one sector to another or one organization to another, depending on the

purpose, size, and instruments of the policy. The Kurdish reform policy is a recent one and began at the end of 2009. Besides, no private or governmental organizations have evaluated the policy process. Therefore, all the four stages of the policy cycle are taken into consideration in this study.

Dunn (2014) introduces an integrated framework of studying a policy. This framework includes all relevant approaches to policy analysis and consists of identifying the “*policy informational components*” which are “*policy problem*,” “*expected policy outcomes*,” “*preferred policies*,” “*observed policy outcomes*,” and “*policy performance*” (Dunn, 2014, p. 5)[emphasis in original]; and the analytical relationship between these components which are “*problem structuring*,” “*forecasting*,” “*prescription*,” “*monitoring*,” and “*evaluation*” (Dunn, 2014, p. 8)[emphasis in original]. The integrated framework of policy analysis is shown in figure (4).

The “*policy informational components*” refers to the cycles of the policy process. The analytical relationship between these components is elaborated as follows:

- 1- Problem structuring: This refers to identifying the problems that need solutions. This means the observed outcomes should provide solutions to the problems.
- 2- Forecasting: This gives information about what outcomes are expected and what are the planned objectives of the policy.
- 3- Prescription: Identifying the expected objectives can help to decide on preferred policies to implement the policy process.
- 4- Monitoring: This gives information on how to follow up or monitor the observed outcomes of the implementation process.
- 5- Evaluation: This analysis shows the difference between the expected and observed outcomes of the policy and thus helps to find out to what extent the final observed outcomes contribute to the value of the policy performance, which finally leads to solving the policy problem.

This process of policy analysis and the analytical relationship seems to be complicated but they are interrelated to each other and follow a sequence.

3.5. Studying Public Policy Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches

Implementation simply means interpreting theory into practice. Creating new theories and ideas might not be useful when there are no effective approaches to implement them. There are some approaches to studying policy implementations that depend on how implementers deal with the problem. These are: top-down and bottom-up (Dyer, 1999; Elmore, 1979/80; Hjern, 1982;

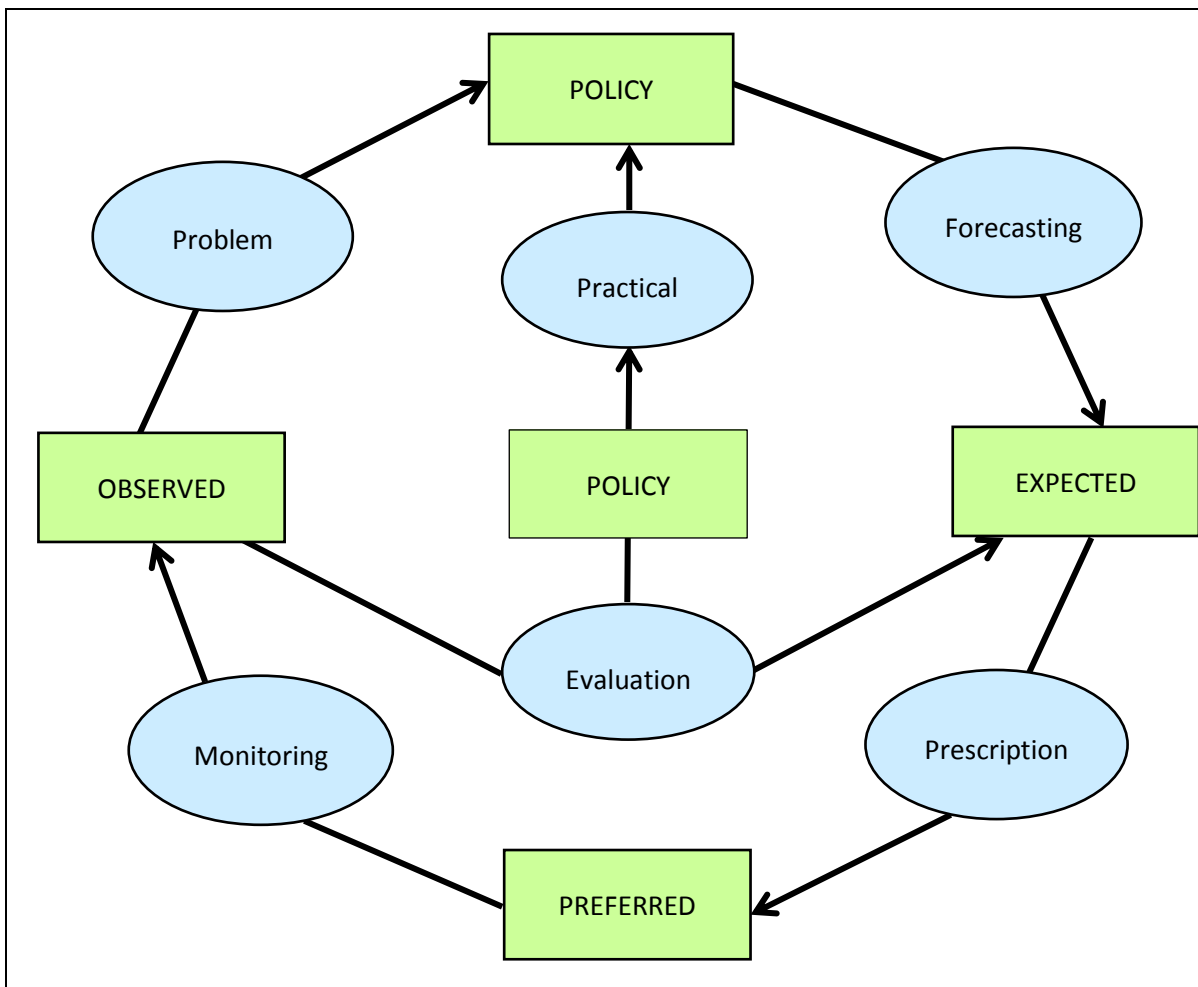


Figure 4: Integrated framework of policy analysis (Dunn, 2014, p. 6)

Premfors, 1984; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984; Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975). The top-down approach:

“begins at the top of the process, with as clear a statement as possible of the policymaker’s intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of implementors [sic] at each level. At the bottom of the process, one states, again with as much precision as possible, what a satisfactory outcome would be, measured in terms of the original statement of intent... .” (Elmore, 1979-80, p. 602).

Analysing policy by the top-down approach follows a hierarchical linear process of a set of events controlled by the organization authority or government (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984; Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Elmore, 1979/80; Hjern, 1982; Stofile, 2008). It starts at the policy-maker level and moves downward through a sequence of events. The main characteristics of this approach are hierarchy and control by policymakers. These characteristics make this approach more structural and the events functionally separated; that is, separate between the how and the what of the policy. Mok (2000) describes the role of a hierarchical small government which is run

by a few prominent individual as "...only taking care of law and order, protecting the sanctity of contract, and maintaining the minimum level of welfare to protect those really poor and vulnerable and facilitating the free operation of the market" (Mok, 2000, p. 640). In a centralized hierarchical government, the role of government is to issue regulations and set up policies, while implementation part is left to experts and academics in the higher education sector (Ali, 2012). Therefore, there is a kind of imbalance between enacting regulations or policies and implementation, which will definitely affect the quality of performance and learning outcomes and, as Porter expresses it, "the events and their consequences occur in different organizations. Thus the basic framework for either political or bureaucratic learning is not present." (Porter, 1980, p. 11).

There are three main criticisms of this approach. Matland (1995) states that the policy-makers are bureaucrats, as they control and administer the policy process while they ignore the role of other policy actors in the process, aiming at diverting policy for their own purposes. The approach considers implementing policy as merely an administrative process with apparent goals, without taking into account challenges and ambiguity that might emerge during the implementation. Bove et al (1992) argue that this approach mainly starts with putting decisions into action without precisely considering actions necessary in later stages of the process, because implementing a policy process is not only putting theory into practice.

The bottom-up approach starts with the lowest level of policy actor and moves upward to policy-makers. This approach is referred to by Elmore (1979/80), Dyer (1999), Hull and Hjern (1987), and Hjern (1982). According to this approach, policy starts:

"with a statement of the specific behaviour[sic] at the lowest level of the implementation process that generates the need for a policy. Only after that behavior is described does the analysis presume to state an objective; the objective is first stated as a set of organizational operations and then as a set of effects, or outcomes, that will result from these operations. Having established a relatively precise target at the lowest level of the system, the analysis backs up through the structure of implementing agencies,..." (Elmore, 1979-80, p. 604).

Elmore argues that the first attempts of implementation start at street-level and go up through different stages, making use of available resources and potential to find solutions at each stage until attaining a thorough review of the implementation process and finally shaping the policy. Elmore's interest, he argues, is in favour of the bottom-up or backward mapping approach because he believes that actors at street-level have more power and potential to identify the problems. They also have the opportunity to make use of the various resources and experiences

of each actor. This helps them to work as a network supporting each other to find the best solution to the problems (Elmore, 1979-80). Moreover, Elmore believes, as observed by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), in the possibility of an inverse connection between phases of implementation that probably lead to a result. Furthermore, this approach gives value to each stage of the implementation process by creating an interrelated relationship between the stages and moving as a chain. It does not consider implementation as only an administrative process but as a series of actions, making use of knowledge and skills to find solutions for most immediate problems rather than following a hierarchical system. The bottom-up approach depends on the skills at the micro level of implementers rather than on the power and control of the macro level of government implementers. Therefore, this approach has been criticised as a challenge to democratic society: as Matland states, “policy control should be exercised by actors whose power derives from their accountability to sovereign voters through their elected representatives.” (1995, p. 149). Another criticism is that this approach assumes that any activities performed to achieve the policy goals are referred to as policy implementation. It considers policy initiation and implementation as a repeated cycle of processes (Fullan, 1982; Elmore, 1979/80; Dyer, 1999).

In order to adopt a more appropriate approach to analysis of policy implementation, theorists (Elmore, 1979/80; Stofile, 2008; Dyer, 1999; Matland, 1995; Premfors, 1984) suggest a combination of the two approaches. Premfors (1984) argues that a mix of both approaches is necessary, taking into account the policy area and what strategies are planned for implementation. Elmore (1979/80) says that the top-down approach has precise policy objectives, apparent strategies, and clear outcome criteria by which to evaluate policy through implementation process. The bottom-up approach starts with a behaviour that needs to be changed at the lowest level, elaborates mechanisms to ensure the change, continuing the process upwards progressively until getting to the highest level of the policy. However, Matland suggests that Elmore’s mixed framework “insures consideration of the microimplementer’s and target groups’ interpretations of the policy problem and possible solutions” (1995, p. 151), but it is not based on hypotheses and that this makes it difficult to generalize the behaviour. Therefore, “As a tool, Elmore’s discussion is useful; as a theory, however, it lacks explanatory power.” (Matland, 1995, p. 151). Matland’s concern is more focused on having a theoretical relationship among variables in the policy implementation process. Policy designers have to think about what factors affect these variables and how to find solutions to changes caused by these factors. Matland (1995) refers to the two main variables of policy conflict and policy ambiguity and the relationship between them. Based on this, the latter writer indicates that policy implementation approaches can be used in the following situations, as shown in Figure 5:

		CONFLICT	
		Low	High
AMBIGUITY	Low	<i>Administrative Implementation</i> Resources Example: Smallpox eradication	<i>Political Implementation</i> Power Example: Busing
	High	<i>Experimental Implementation</i> Contextual Conditions Example: Headstart	<i>Symbolic Implementation</i> Coalition Strength Example: Community action agencies

Figure 5: Ambiguity-conflict matrix: policy implementation processes (Matland, 1995, p. 160)

- The top-down approach is used in a low-policy conflict and low-policy ambiguity situation. The implementation process is characterized as administrative and decision-making processes based on resources.
- The top-down approach is used in a high-policy conflict and low-policy ambiguity situation. There is a need to use power and government authority, because there are clear objectives set by the government, but policy actors on the street-level are unable to decide on the appropriate ones.
- The bottom-up approach is used in a high-policy ambiguity and low-policy conflict situation. This means that policy implementation takes a long time and this provides the opportunity for policy learning through experiences.
- The bottom-up approach is used in a high-policy ambiguity and high-policy conflict situation. This gives an opportunity to street-level actors to take responsibility and find solutions for any changes they encounter. The power of the process emerges in the street-level actors' coalition to create opportunities of taking responsibility and to find

solutions to any changes they encounter. This creates more interest in the role of accountability.

It might not be a matter of any interest, whether to apply one or the combined approach rather the significance is finding out the theoretical relationship among the components of the policy process and working on the strategies that best reflect the policy objectives.

3.6. Factors Affecting Policy Implementation

It is generally expected to refrain from accepting new policies and reform processes for a long time, especially if employees and academics are used to working in a traditional work environment, as in the case of Kurdistan higher education organizations. Therefore, when large scale of reform process becomes reality, it will be something of a shock, which leads to resistance and avoidance of cooperation (Walkline, 1992). Reformers need to refer to such resistance to be able to approach it and deal with it later. Now comes the role of leaders to deal with sudden obstacles and problems occurring during the implementation process. They have to investigate causes of resistance and compare them to the goals of the process to identify opportunities for flexible solutions. Implementation is "the carrying out of a plan for doing something. It focuses on operationalising the plan-the How, rather than the What." (Burke et al, 2012, p. 2). It is defined as a "process of interaction" (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984, p. 23) between objectives and how to achieve them. The policy implementation stage cannot be separated from the other stages of policy process, neither can the other stages lead to a complete policy process without implementation. The implementation process focused on here takes into account the synthesized framework of both policy instruments: the top-down and bottom-up. The feature shared by the instruments is the actors who can direct the process in the right direction. Therefore, the factors which affect the implementation of reform policy are discussed here to find out what factors play an important role in producing a more or less successful implementation. One of these factors refers to the relationship between the government and the organization. Fullan (1992) indicates, for example, that there is a kind of "episodic" relationship rather than "processes" between government and educational organizations (1992, p. 119). This kind of casual relationship affects the outcome of the reform process. Eventually, policy-makers make decisions while leaving implementation for others, without thinking about how to follow a process in order to achieve the objectives for which they made the reform. This leads to another, more complicated point, which is monopoly and de/centralization of higher education institutions. A system controlled by government minimizes opportunities in reform and innovation. Therefore, there would be even fewer leaders and policymakers, and these might struggle to introduce new policies (Clark, 1977).

This factor is more apparent in the top-down instrument because the policymaker or government has the power to control the process.

Communication is another significant factor. Stahl (2007) and Fullan (2007) states that clarifying the problem and finding out obstacles for policy actors are significant factors because they are the key to practise and implement the process in the organization. Stahl (2007) indicates that there should be clear and transparent communication between the leader and members of the policy network. Such communication helps in influencing the staff and creating a better understanding, a better organized plan and an atmosphere based on trust and loyalty. Communication, here, refers to both oral and electronic methods that facilitate and provide a better quality of communication. However, communication in a multi-cultural organization or with international individuals who would lead the reform process can be more complicated, due to different cultures.

Planning is considered as another factor that affects implementation. Fullan (2007) refers to a mistake that policy-makers might make, in focusing on initiating the process as a theory and ignoring the implementation stage. The author further attributes some of the factors to the reformers, as they are so enthusiastic in their plan and focused on reforming some aspects more than others, leading them to forget about identifying practical methods to implement the plan. In such a case, most of the attention will be drawn to aspects of the reform process and all the energy will go towards achieving these while ignoring complementary aspects in the same plan of the reform process. Accomplishing only some parts of the plan will undoubtedly lead to an unsuccessful reform process. Moreover, Fullan (1992) states that the planning stage is the key to a successful implementation, because it is "a multilevel social process involving thousands of people."(Fullan, 1992, p. 109). Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) share the same point as they state that implementation may succeed if there is good planning, and implementers have to expect hidden obstacles in the planning process that may become apparent in the implementation process. Thus, if there is a good planning from the beginning, it will be easier to find a solution such sudden obstacles. They further describe policy implementation as "a unitary process..., not a tandem operation" (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984, p. 166) of enforcing a plan to achieve a set of goals. Moreover, the authors state that simplicity has to be encouraged when the process moves in the wrong direction because, "The fewer the steps involved in carrying out the program, the fewer the opportunities for a disaster to overtake it. The more directly the policy aims at its target, the fewer the decisions involved in its ultimate realization and the greater the likelihood it will be implemented" (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984, p. 147). Having a complete policy theory

can provide successful and effective directions for implementation when it connects between theories and practice (Sabatier, 1986; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984).

Taking into account the stages of a policy cycle, a successful implementation is affected by the other three stages: a weak agenda might lead to difficult implementation of suggested solution(s); an ineffective plan based on ineffective formulation and decisions may lead the implementation process into a wrong direction; and an unsuccessful evaluation of performance might not give a total assessment of the whole implementation process but focus on prioritized aspects of the policy process. In addition, active policy actors, sufficient policy instruments, role of accountability, and loyalty at work are factors that affect the implementation of a policy process. To this extent, identifying the factors that affect implementation helps to study the success and failure of policy implementation.

3.7. Studying the Success and Failure of Policy Implementation

Theorists such as Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), who support the top-down approach, measure an implementation's success or failure against the degree to which implementation outcomes match the original policy objectives. This approach of measurement is used by those who consider implementation as a linear process and evaluate the outcomes against the original objectives set prior to implementation. According to the top-down approach, policy success is determined by clear objectives and effective control by policymakers.

The other approach of measurement, which is used by bottom-up theorists such as Elmore (1979/80), considers successful implementation as a complex process that takes into account any results, expected or unexpected, at the end of the implementation process. The unexpected outcomes are mostly attributed to the policy actors' interaction on the street-level and their attempt to find solutions to problems that emerge during the implementation process. Moreover, supporters of the latter approach state that any activities that lead to positive outcomes are counted as a success. Policy implementation failure can be diagnosed via studying and evaluating the assumptions about the cause-effect relationships at the time of designing the policy, as Jann and Wegrich (2007) argue. The latter scholars further attribute the failure of implementation to weak and unorganized interaction between those who implement the policy and the targeted group.

Ingram and Schneider (1990) note that a successful implementation of policy can be achieved if there is an active accountability, commitment to the regulations and instructions of the policy statement, working on achieving the goals, and improving the political environment surrounding

the implementation process. Despite the availability of factors to which these researchers refer to, Matland (1995) shows that the success of implementation rather depends on the strength of power of the policy maker. If the policy maker's power is superior to that of the other policy actors, especially at street-level, then applying the top-down approach is more appropriate and successful because the policy maker is able to control and direct the process and has stronger normative value. The latter writer, further, attributes the success of implementation to the clarity of policy goals stated in the policy statement; if the goals are clearly stated at the beginning, then the policy is successfully implemented and controlled by policy makers. When the goals are not clearly stated, it is difficult to progress the implementation process. It becomes obvious that the success of policy implementation is concerned with conflict about the means to implement the process and the ambiguity of goals, as referred to by Matland (1995). Thus, if these two variables are clear, that is, low conflict and low ambiguity, then the process is moving in the right direction and producing positive outcomes. However, if any of these variables are unclear then it is necessary to ascertain the source of power that can reduce ambiguity in order to control and redirect the process along the right path.

Failure of policy implementation, in specific instances, is attributed to the society. Smith (1973) argues that policy implementation is more likely to be unsuccessful in bureaucratic systems and the Third World nations, and more successful in modern Western countries. The reason why implementation is unsuccessful in the Third World nations can be attributed to, as Smith (1973, p. 199) states, "the nature of the policies which these political systems must formulate". Moreover, Third World Nations "have not been able to afford the luxury of incremental policymaking" via which "Policies tend to be ambitious, sweeping programs designed to bring about development and social reform". This signifies that society and organizational culture have a role in determining the success or failure of policy implementation. These environmental and cultural aspects should be taken into consideration when setting and formulating the policy agenda, in order to find alternatives for obstacles affecting the implementation process.

There are five fundamental principles that lead to more successful implementation process. Sabatier (1986) refers to these five fundamental principles in his study about top-down and bottom-up policy instruments. The five fundamental principles are:

- 1- Having clear goals provides better opportunities for more reliable assessment.
- 2- The formation of policy itself implies change theory which provides implementers with assumptions about the causes of the process and guides them in the right direction of the policy.

- 3- Supplying strategies and technologies stimulates implementers and interested groups.
- 4- Leaders' and policymakers' skills and experiences enforce an effective implementation.
- 5- Providing appropriate support from interested groups and individuals, especially when the implementation takes a long time.

Stofile (2008) and Jann and Wegrich (2007) agree with Sabatier in connecting implementation success or failure with policy instruments. The latter scholars state that some implementation approaches are achieved via using specific types of policy instruments as it is not appropriate haphazardly to use policy instruments in any type of implementation. They further concentrate on the relationship between cause and effect, and using the most appropriate implementation approach, top-down or bottom-up, while implementing the process. Walkline (1992) has a similar idea and argues that the implementation process is more successful when supported by government, policy-makers, and any other involved in the policy process. Walkine argues that such support can be made in different ways such as allocating resources, budgets, skilled and experienced policy actors, professional leaders, the political environment such as a suitable period of time and workplace; and socio-economic changes in favour of the implementation process. According to Sabatier (1986), the above first three principles can be dealt with during policy formulation, while the last three principles would emerge during the implementation process probably due to effects of society and economy. However, the implementation process, simply, is more effective if policy-makers structure their "program on a valid causal theory rather than a dubious one." (Sabatier, 1986, p. 25). The presented literature indicates that the success of the implementation process lies in formulating a well-designed plan at the start that not only indicates a theoretical process but takes into account inevitable socio-economic changes which leaders need to be prepared to deal with.

3.8. Conclusion

In a nut-shell, the OFMDFMNI (n. d.) introduces general characteristics of policy on which a well-designed policy can be based. These characteristics, briefly, are:

- a) Forward-looking and focusing on a long-term plan for about five years into future. This is because setting a policy is not an easy task, and it is unrealistic to set one biennially. Therefore, it is recommended to retain policy for the long term in order to have enough time to implement and evaluate it appropriately.
- b) Outward looking to identify whether the policy is initiated at a local, regional, or international level. If it is designed at an international level, it takes into account how

international policy is initiated and will be implemented. If it is designed at a national level, there are other factors that need to be taken into consideration, such as the culture and needs of society.

- c) Novelty and flexibility for creating opportunities to find alternative solutions to new or existing problems. This is so significant, especially when resistance or change occur while implementing the policy. Therefore, there should be alternatives.
- d) Based on evidences and documents that can be resorted to when necessary. Such documents are considered as reference or research or experts' advice.
- e) Comprehensive, to cover all aspects relating to the problem. It might not be pragmatic to leave some parts related to the same problem unresolved, because it would undoubtedly impact the policy process in later stage and might lead to its failure process.
- f) Components of the policy are interrelated. Indeed, each part of the policy has its role and cannot be separated. For example, a policy process cannot be implemented without policy actors, or policy tools, or without one of the stages of the policy process cycle.
- g) Learning from experiences to develop what is applicable, while changing what is inapplicable. This makes the policy a source of learning and helps to avoid committing the same mistakes in future.
- h) Effective methods of communication to ease communication among policy actors. Effective communication also provides a clearer understanding among policy actors and affects the flow of implementation and evaluation of the policy process. It might reduce the hierarchical distance between the levels of policy actors.
- i) Regular review and monitoring to develop or modify policy when appropriate. This is important, especially when sudden changes or problems occur. It further assists in saving time and resources.
- j) Evaluating the process to assess the achievement of the policy. It is not possible to establish the success or failure of the policy process without an evaluation. Evaluating the outcomes of the process is necessary to find out whether the policy process achieved its designed objectives and to what extent the problem was resolved.

This chapter provides the foundation to study the Kurdish higher education reform policy in the next chapter. The reform policy was set up to bring about high standards in higher education. So,

what is quality and quality assurance in higher education? Why has quality become a significant aspect in higher education institutions? What does it mean to accredit a university and how? These questions are answered in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Kurdistan Higher Education Reform Policy and Quality Assurance Programme

Part One: Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education

4.1. Introduction

This research focuses on studying two aspects of the Kurdish reform process. The first one is the reform policy that the literature has presented in the previous chapter. The second aspect is quality that is presented here. Literature on quality and accreditation is important to be presented in this chapter because it helps to find out what model or typology of quality and accreditation that the MoHESR-KRG has introduced. Is it based on an American typology as there are two American accreditation organizations are involved in the reform process? Or a British typology as the reform process is a vision of the reformer's educational experiences in British higher education system? Or a European typology as an interviewee refers to a plan to join the Bologna system? However, the first part of this chapter focuses on definitions of quality; the relationship between massification and quality in higher education; the meanings and types of quality assurance in higher education; the reasons behind the appearance of quality assurance in higher education and what aspects it covers; definitions, and types. In addition, definitions of accreditation, types, criteria, and decisions of accreditation in higher education are also introduced.

The second part covers quality assurance and accreditation systems in higher education institutions. Quality assurance and accreditation are two important elements in this study, because they are at the heart of the reform policy of Kurdistan higher education. It is important to bear in mind that the main aim of the reform policy is to implement quality standards of international higher education into the Kurdistan higher education (MoHESR-KRG, 2011). Therefore, there needs to be a presentation on concepts of quality and quality assurance, as well as different approaches to accreditation in higher education in order to investigate what concepts of quality are embedded in the Kurdish reform policy and what approach to accreditation is adopted by the MoHESR-KRG.

4.2. What is Quality?

Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional and contested concept. It is defined in terms of excellence, perfection, meeting expectations, value for money, and transformation (Mhlanga,

2013; Gibbs, 2010; Lomas, 2002; Harvey, 2002; Cheng and Tam, 1997; Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck, 1995; Reeves and Bednar, 1994; Harvey and Green, 1993).

Harvey and Green first introduced five main definitions of quality: "exceptional", "perfection", "fitness for purpose", "value for money", and "transformative" (Harvey and Green, 1993, p. 11). The first definition, 'exceptional', grants special privileges to an institution or program. The writers attribute the discussion on this definition to three main interpretations. Such interpretations indicate that quality is perceived as either something unique of a high level, or institution's output can be effective when the inputs are effective, or quality is related to checking and meeting minimum standards set by an institution. This interpretation of quality is not successful in giving the right definition of quality, because it does not identify what are the norms against which quality can be measured and only gives a traditional perception of quality (Harvey and Knight, 1996).

The second definition of quality as, 'perfection', implies that it is something that has specific characteristics and has no relation to standards, as in the previous definition. It further argues that quality is a process that be followed up in each stage so there is a consistency in producing flawless outcomes (Harvey and Green, 1993). The defect in this definition is that it is not logical to leave the outcomes unchecked, because if the outcomes do not meet the designed goals of the institution then the whole process is ineffective; besides, it is not applicable to the higher education context as "it is not the purpose of a higher education institution to 'produce' students" (Lomas, 2002, p. 71-72).

The third definition, 'fitness for purpose', focuses on the function of quality and has two interpretations. The first interpretation is that there should be a match between the outcome or product and the purpose for which it was designed. Moreover, it shows that it is the customers who decide on the characteristics of the service from the institution (provider) which works on providing such services to match the customers' needs. But the reverse picture is more logical; that is, it is the institution (provider) that creates the conditions for the customers to make them think about specific required services that are mainly based on society's needs and market forces (Deming, 1982). The second interpretation says that quality is the institution's achievements of its goal(s). There are several defects in this definition, as it does not identify who is the customer. Suppose the customers are identified: it is not necessarily the case that whatever right things have been done in the right way have led to satisfying the customers or meeting their expectations. The purpose might meet customers' expectation in the short term but, as Harvey and Green argue, it might not satisfy what they want in the future.

'Value for money', which is the fourth definition, argues that quality is the product of available funds. This definition further explains the relation between educational provider (higher education institution) and fund provider (government, private organization, stakeholders,...etc). The defects in this definition, on one hand, are that the outcomes do not necessarily reflect the performance of the institution, because the effectiveness of such performance is based on the cost or funds that the institution receives from the fund provider. On the other hand, students expect a high level of services and education in return for their money, but have no role in deciding the level or value of these services and educational programs.

The final definition, 'transformative', deals with quality in terms of continuity and change. Education should build upon students' knowledge, skills, and potential abilities and turn them into proactive graduates at the end of the learning process. According to this concept, students are not viewed as customer but rather as participants who have a role in the education system (Harvey and Knight, 1996). It focuses on enhancing and empowering students. It further indicates that learners have autonomy to lead, choose, and make decisions to empower their learning. Quality, here, is viewed as freedom given to students in order to think critically, search, make decisions, and create a body of knowledge which prepares them for life after graduation. Thus, as transformation, this definition implies a cycle of continuity and improvement which indicates confronting challenges that need to be dealt with properly. Measuring quality as 'transformative' would not be an easy process (Lomas, 2002).

Each of the above definitions deals with quality in way or another and each has its merits and demerits. However, interpreting the meaning of quality depends on the perception of higher education (Harvey and Williams, 2010). The most accepted definition of quality seems to be 'fitness for purpose' (Birnbaum, 1988; Kristoffersen et al, 1998) because, as the latter writers argue, quality should serve specific purposes in higher education system to satisfy stakeholders and students who have a variety of needs of mass higher education. Moreover, quality can be perceived as 'exceptional' in terms of giving certain criteria to one institution rather than another, for example. It could be 'perfection' when a program or training courses are designed to achieve a set of specific aims. It could be 'fitness for purpose' when specific academic programs are designed for specific purposes. Besides, quality could be 'value for money' in terms of the available budget, and finally, it could be 'transformative' when linked to enhancement, development, and internationalization.

4.3. Impact of Massification on Quality in Higher Education

Massification is a term used to describe the increased student enrolment in higher education. There has been a demand to expand higher education since the Second World War. More specifically, the expansion of the higher education started at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries (Guri-Rosenblit et al, 2007; Misaro et al, 2013). As described by Misaro et al (2013), massification can either be elite, which represents an increase of up to 15 per cent of student enrolment, or mass, which represents 50 per cent, or universal which exceeds 50 per cent. Guri-Rosenblit et al (2007) state that there are six issues that play a role in expanding the higher education system:

- External and internal boundaries: the external boundaries refer to which higher education institutions are excluded or included in the higher education system. For example, tertiary education might include any educational program after secondary education and research institutions which do not offer academic degrees. The internal boundaries refer to the internal structure of the higher education system which can be expanded; for example, types of academic programs, funding methods, accreditation, research and teaching potentials, institutional culture, etc.
- Top-down and bottom-up forces: the top-down forces refer to law, regulations, and any instructions issued by the government to organize the higher education system, while the bottom-up forces includes any initiatives by investors and individual stakeholders.
- Globalization and supra-national forces: globalization and internationalization trends have an important role in the expansion of the higher education system. Such trends were clearly noticeable in the 1990s and pushed many higher education institutions towards further development. As a result, the Bologna Declaration of 1999, for example, was signed. The foundation of the Bologna Declaration provides similar educational programs for students across 49 European countries, facilitates students' mobility within Europe, and at the same time attracts students from around the world towards Europe.
- Flexibility: it provides students with wider access to higher education, because it creates opportunities of equality for students. Having a diverse and flexible higher education system will create more opportunities for widening higher education. Many universities have opened branches in other countries to disseminate knowledge and offer their programs to a wider population of students. This helps to spread the reputation of the institution in the educational markets and establish relationships between the two countries (Maringe and Gibbs, 2009).

- Public vs private sectors: growing economy and business inference in the higher education sector are common forces to establish private higher education institutions. Therefore, establishing more private higher education institutions leads to widening access to higher education. Because most of the private higher education institutions in Europe and the developing countries operate for profit, they became centers of business and therefore quality criteria decrease.
- Technology: information technology and communication play roles in expanding the higher education sector. Many universities around the world offer their academic and training programs online to reach as much learners as possible in other countries. There are even workshops and teaching lessons accessible online. Creating opportunities through online educational programs, therefore, increases access to higher education systems and hence a larger population of students. A well-known online course is the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Open Courseware which offers thousands of courses online.

Although massification has advantages in providing more educational opportunities for students, it may lead to different challenges in the higher education system. Misaro et al (2013) argue that unplanned massification might pull the system into crisis. Allowing more students to enrol into higher education institutions definitely needs more human resources, academic staff, learning resources, physical infrastructure, and funds. It is so important not to ignore the quality criteria while expanding the higher education system, otherwise it might not be attractive to students. Therefore, quality is a form of accountability which refers to delivering services effectively and efficiently (Williams and Loder, 1990; Misaro et al, 2013). It is effective for services' beneficiaries, who have the right to ask for effective services, and it is efficient for providers, who have the right to know whether their resources are used efficiently. Williams and Loder (1990) point out that higher education institutions carry financial accountability, which is concerned with the provided financial resources and how to use them; political and social accountability, which is concerned with providing higher education access to those who have the right to benefit from it; and quality accountability, which is concerned with the kind of providing services and how the institutions perform them.

Marchese (1997) argues that the reasons behind pursuing quality programs in higher education are generally attributed to producing a higher level of services to customers, strengthening a kind of moral and teamwork environments among staff members, and improving academic standards. Moreover, Quality in higher education, according to the QAA (QAA, Assuring Quality and Standards, n.d.), refers to learning opportunities, facilities, and resources provided by higher

education institutions to students to assist them in achieving a designed award and qualification. It is the value which customers expect to receive. So, is there a relation between institutions' reputation and quality? An institution might have a pioneering role in one area or more, but not necessarily meet the international level of quality. Gibbs (2013) attributes institutions' reputation to customer satisfaction, research capacity, student admission requirements, and level of fees whereas quality refers to how much a student learns by the completion of a course or program of study. Gibbs (2013, p. 18) attributes the variation in quality between subjects and programmes among institutions to the wrong application of quality assurance program and bureaucracy besides "focusing on the wrong variables and using the wrong levers may even operate to limit the scope subjects have to improve".

The impact of massification on higher education leads to a wide range of institutions and offered programmes, as well as a gap between what is perceived and what is really produced (Williams and Loder, 1990). According to Williams and Loder (1990, p. 4), there is a trend of "cost-effective substitutes" in higher education institutions that indicates the higher education system delivers services and programs in relation to their cost. The authors further state that a 'cost-effective' relationship is possible to determine in a research capacity, as universities can be funded according to their research activities. But it is difficult to allocate funds for teaching because of the absence of any fixed or clear criteria for measuring teaching activities. However, Williams and Loder (1990) argue that teaching potential can be gauged by measuring some components such as:

- ❖ Inputs (students' qualification, staff number and experiences, physical resources)
- ❖ Outputs (graduation percentage, employers' and students' satisfaction)
- ❖ Market (entrants' qualification, role of market in offered programs)
- ❖ Process measures (students' progress, students' feedback of teaching staff, effectiveness of learning and teaching methods, review effectiveness, students' role in selecting courses).

Funding higher education might not have a major role in the quality of programs and courses, but there is a relationship between the institutional reputation and the quality of programs and courses. Maringe and Gibbs (2009) state that institutional reputation is the first factor to attract students' attention to a course. They further state that students are the key customers and clients of the higher education system. Therefore, institutions have to work at satisfying their customers in the first instance. To do so, they have to check what students need and want from the institution. Besides, an institution needs to create its internal institutional identity and be able to transform this to the public to give a clear image about the institution. Such an image is its

reputation, which the public will receive and be attracted by. Hence, the quality of this image is important to focus on.

4.4. Demands for and Aspects Covered in Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Quality assurance in higher education means enhancing and developing international standards of quality. Establishing quality assurance programs in higher education institutions is an outcome of the reform process intending to raise and change the quality of delivered education (Materu, 2007). The need to establish a quality assurance system in higher education institutions is enforced by several factors such as public demand, market demand, technology, and impact of business (Peterson, 1999). The first relates to public and government demands on how higher education institutions should spend government funds. The public asks for a good quality of higher education in return for the huge budget that higher education institutions receive. Therefore, universities have started on working to organize external examiner committees that focus mainly on programme evaluation and the self-accreditation process of the local institutions themselves. The second relates to market demands. Higher education institutions, as in the USA, are under the control of market forces and they need to work on producing a good quality to meet the market's demands. The third factor is concerned with effects of technology and communication on higher education institutions. Engaging technology in higher education leads to creating more than one method of delivering education, such as distance learning, thus producing a huge number of graduates with various values of education and certificates. The last factor is attributed to management. The first three factors involve managerial and financial skills and experiences to develop a quality assurance system. As a result, management and businesses play a major role in developing and expanding higher education institutions.

Added to these factors, graduates of high quality higher education institutions are more successful in securing jobs than graduates of institutions of low quality, because the former receive better knowledge and skills which support them to be more effective and successful in practice (Materu, 2007). Moreover, Materu (2007) states that the need of transparency and accountability is another reason to establish quality assurance in higher education, arguing that there has to be transparency in using resources and finding out how these affect the quality of institution's outcomes. Higher education institutions are not accountable only to students who pay considerable sums in return for education, but to the government that provides huge funds and resources and therefore has the right to how these resources are invested. Looking into the literature about the reasons for establishing quality assurance system in higher education, it is

possible to state that there are two main categories of factors of quality assurance systems in higher education institutions. Mhlanga (2013, p. 28) indicates that the first is “exogenous”, and includes factors outside the institution itself such as the role of national and international quality assurance agencies, stakeholders, external assessors, and others. The second is “endogenous”, which refers to the internal system of the institution itself such as its resources, academic potential, institutional goals and priorities, and so on. Therefore, institutions have to decide what level of quality assurance they intend to establish. If they intend to establish an international quality assurance system, institutions have to consider what counts as international standards in quality assurance. They have to focus on their potential and available resources to achieve their goals and establish quality assurance system at national or institutional levels.

Quality assurance is yet more complicated. It is clear that the aim of quality assurance programmes is to carry out an assessment of the higher education institution. But, what are the aspects which need to be assessed? Green (1994) clarifies that as the main mission of higher education institutions is teaching and research, the focus of quality assurance programmes should be mostly on these two. Green (1994) argues that higher education institutions have to be involved in more research activities to be able to expand their outputs. In this way, they are capable of building on more experiences and gain more knowledge. Further, the institutions can secure more funds if they increase their research activities and investment, hence the better the quality of their research, the more funds they can obtain. Quality assurance in higher education is concerned with the value of learning that a student gains during the learning process. It is a complicated task because there are several aspects that contribute to this process: assessing the quality of inputs, or outputs; or the teaching and learning methods. Probably, it is important to take into account the criteria for evaluating a course or an academic program and who sets up these criteria; that is, stakeholders, the department or the institutions. Besides, who decides the criteria, it is vital to identify “performance indicators” (Green, 1994, p. 11), referring to a set of signs or data, whether quantitative or qualitative, against which teaching or learning outcomes are measured. Generally, these are related to the “efficiency” of the process, “cost-effectiveness”, and graduates’ satisfaction (Green, 1994, p. 11).

As far as the learning process is concerned, there are several factors that contribute to learning gain. These are class size, teaching staff, available learning resources, feedback and assessment, collaborative learning, and students' involvement in the learning process (Gibbs, 2013). The smaller the class size, the better the learning outcomes, because this will create more spaces for almost all learners to be engaged in the learning process. Teaching staff should be qualified to teach at higher education level and have certificates. Besides teaching qualification, teachers

should have knowledge and rich information in their subject area. Libraries, well-equipped laboratories and other resources are necessary to enrich and enhance students' learning. Teachers should provide their students with regular and right feedback on their learning to help students recognize their areas of weakness and strength. Collaborative learning is related to learning hours and how much a student learns, whether as a group or individually. Students' engagement in learning can be recognized by calculating a learning average per week then calculating it for the whole duration of the study programme. It remains to be decided what sections of the learning process are considered as actual learning hours.

4.5. What Is Quality Assurance in Higher Education?

There is no single specific definition of quality assurance in the literature. Its definition depends on the definition of quality, because 'assurance' simply means evaluating the purpose of the quality program. Therefore, it is important to find out for what a quality assurance programme is designed. According to the QAA, quality assurance focuses on learning and teaching and indicates that "The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the expectations set out in the Quality Code, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved." (QAA, About us, Glossary, n.d.). Green (1994) agrees that quality assurance focuses on teaching and research as they are the main two missions in higher education institutions. Quality assurance is also defined in terms of excellence and continuous development. Mishra (2006) emphasizes that quality assurance is a continuous process which can lead to excellence through having benchmarks and an audit. The author further implies that it is a "process of maintaining standards reliably and consistently by applying criteria of success, programme or institution." (Mishra, 2006, p. 88). According to Mishra's definition, quality assurance is characterized by four factors:

- ✓ Enhancing the quality of the product
- ✓ Maintaining the quality of the product
- ✓ Possessing the system which maintain and enhance the quality
- ✓ Managing the system regularly in order to test the validity of the quality

Others describe quality assurance as an umbrella over other methods of evaluation. Vlăsceanu et al (2007) state that quality assurance is a:

"continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programmes. As a regulatory mechanism, quality assurance focuses on both accountability and

improvement,... Quality management, quality enhancement, quality control, and quality assessment are means through which quality assurance is ensured. Quality assurance is often considered as a part of the quality management of higher education, while sometimes the two terms are used synonymously." (Vlăsceanu et al, 2007, p. 74-75).

The authors further argue that the aim of the quality assurance program is neither to rank nor judge the level of the higher education institution but rather to focus on paving the way and providing guidance for such judgment. Furthermore, Federkeil (2008) makes clear a relationship between quality assurance and ranking of higher education institutions. This author argues that quality assurance is a method towards enhancement and accountability, and indicates that quality assurance can be achieved via different approaches: total quality management; peer review; benchmarking; comparative peer review; accreditation; and ranking. Quality assurance is not a single activity but involves different approaches. It is considered as a continuous process of development and improvement, which can be undertaken on the basis of Deming's cycle of 'plan, do, check, act' (Mishra, 2006).

4.6. Types of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Generally, the literature on quality assurance introduces two main types of quality assurance in higher education: internal and external. According to Harvey (2002), internal quality assurance is improvement oriented and initiated by members of the institution itself. It aims at monitoring quality in term of 'transformation' and phases of changes occur in quality (Kahsay, 2012). External quality assurance is accountability oriented and carried out by agencies external to the institution. Therefore, it tends to monitor quality assurance in terms of 'fitness for purpose' and 'value for money' (Kristensen, 1997). Some of these agencies are either government agencies operated by law and regulation such as the General Medical Council in the UK, or agencies are not operated by law but according to a set of standards of inputs, yet still recognized by the government such as, accreditation system in the USA; or they are independent in their process and operation, but linked to the government at the same time, such as the Quality Assurance Agency of the UK (Harvey, 2002).

Quality assurance focuses on evaluating different aspects of an institution. These aspects generally include (Harvey, 2002; Mishra, 2006):

- Teaching and learning: This covers curricula criteria, students' assessment, lecturers' performance, and academic achievement.
- Input: This refers to the resources used to support the process of teaching and learning. It covers physical infrastructure, facilities, human resources, and financial resources.

- **Outputs:** This refers to knowledge spread, researches achieved, ratio of graduate employability, and economic development. The last two are more concerned with external quality assurance, because they show the accountability and control of the institutions towards their inputs and outputs.

The purpose of quality assurance generally is to evaluate quality and standards of outcomes (Harvey, 2002). Stating that, it is necessary to take into consideration what concepts of quality (exceptional, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money, transformative) the institution adopts and, in addition, how it can establish a relationship between any of these concepts and the standard of the outcomes (see Harvey, 2002). The methods of quality assurance follow either self-assessment, peer-review, performance indicators, or the analysis of statistical information (Mishra, 2006; Harvey, 2002). Though there is debate on which is the most effective, the peer-review method is the most commonly and widely applied by institutions (Mishra, 2006).

But which type of quality assurance is more fruitful or required by institutions? Though it is up to the institution to decide what type of quality assurance to follow, most of the institutions tend to carry out improvements and developments of quality culture (Harvey, 2002). Furthermore, Wilger (1997) argues that institutions can achieve their best level of progress when they make an ultimate push on teaching and learning. Kristensen (1997) states that both external and internal quality assurance can be established within the same institution, taking into account communication. Thus, if the institution intends to communicate its information with the world and show its accountability and commitment, it should seek external quality monitoring. If the institution aims to communicate information from the world to the institution and seek improvement and progress, it should establish internal quality assurance. But, it is obvious that the latter author agrees that external quality assurance is less effective than internal quality assurance, and adds that "external quality monitoring can never effectively stand alone or be able to replace valuable internal quality monitoring" (Kristensen, 1997, p. 93). Likewise, Mishra (2006) argues that internal quality assurance is the basis for and preliminary step towards external quality assurance.

The core of quality programs is to seek improvement and continuous progress. And when institutions adopt quality assurance programs, the aim is to locate weaknesses and plan for improvement. The best way to do this is through establishing a program of continuous development.

4.7. Accreditation in Higher Education

Accreditation is a process of crediting higher education institutions and encourages international students' mobility (Haakstad, 2001). There are different concepts of accreditation. According to the European approach, it can be interpreted in a variety of ways:

"In one sense, it expresses the abstract notion of a formal authorizing power, acting through official decisions on the approval (on not) of institutions or study programs. In another sense, it refers to the issuing of a quality label to institutions or programs. In both cases, a judgment is reached through certain assessment processes." (Hämäläinen et al, 2001, p. 7).

The American approach has been summarized as follows:

"Accreditation is a process of external quality review used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and educational programs for quality assurance and quality improvement." (Eaton, 2012b, p. 1)

UK's QAA defines accreditation as:

"A process for verifying or approving a higher education programme, or a higher education institution, by an authorised external organisation. Programmes can be accredited by a professional or regulatory body such as the General Medical Council." (QAA, About us, Glossary, n. d.)

These definitions shed light on the main characteristics of accreditation such as: it is a process either accepted or refused in the form of giving (yes or no) on the basis of meeting or falling to meet minimum or certain standards set by the accreditation agency; it involves benchmarking assessment, and the decision is based on quality assurance criteria (Vlăsceanu et al, 2007; Hämäläinen et al, 2001). External evaluation and accreditations agencies are better acting independently and away from government authority. Such agencies should enjoy strong autonomy away from inequality and accusations of government alignment. Generally, there are three theoretical approaches to accreditation: European accreditation, in which the government has central control over the process of quality assurance; American accreditation, which is categorized as an autonomous and market-oriented quality assurance; and British accreditation, of which universities are responsible for self-accreditation and quality assurance (Sywelem and Witte, 2009). Furthermore, accreditation focuses on five main areas at the institutional level:

teaching and learning; health and safety; staffing and management; students' welfare; and management of quality (BAC, 2011).

4.8. Types of Accreditation

There are two types of accreditation: institutional and programme (or special) accreditations. Institutional accreditation is the process of certifying that an institution is successfully implementing a quality assurance programme. This is concerned with the institution as an entity, including available administrative and academic services, curricula, student and lecturer performance, administrative staff, available resources, buildings, teaching halls, and any other factor with an impact on the institution's development (Hämäläinen et al., 2001; Sywelem and Witte, 2009; Vlăsceanu et al., 2007). Moreover, this accreditation can be given at national or international level, according to the professional agency undertaking the process. Programme accreditation is specific to the evaluation of academic programmes, schools, or departments to find out to what extent these reflect the offered degree (Hämäläinen et al., 2001; Sywelem and Witte, 2009; Vlăsceanu et al., 2007). Programme accreditation can also be at national and international level.

4.9. Decisions of Accreditation

Institutional accreditation takes place within a particular period of time, depending on the accreditation agency. Basically, decisions of accreditation are one of the following four results (Sywelem and Witte, 2009; BAC, 2011):

- Unconditional approval of the accreditation application by the accreditation agency upon meeting the minimum standards set for institutional accreditation.
- Conditional approval of the accreditation application, in which the accreditation agency requires the institution to make further improvement to meet the minimum standards set for institutional accreditation within a specified period of time.
- Probationary accreditation, based on scrutinizing documents, and follow-up visit to find out whether the institution meets the required standards or not. The institution may be accredited within a specified period of time.
- Rejected accreditation, when the institution does not meet the standards and is not expected to meet them within a specified period of time.

Quality is a multi-dimension concept. It is interpreted in different ways by different authors. Many agree that quality can be defined as 'exceptional, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money,

and transformative'. In fact, the meaning of quality depends on the purpose of establishing it in any institution. Looking at the reform process in the Kurdish higher education system in 2009, it is clear that the main aim of the process is to bring quality standards into the system and cope with the economic development in the market (MoHESR-KRG, 2011). This means that the concepts of 'fitness for purpose' and 'transformation' are two possible purposes of establishing quality in the Kurdish higher education system. It is further stated in the reform policy document that this process aims to give students the opportunity to think critically, participate in lecturers' performance evaluation, and be able to make decisions. Moreover, the reform process has not been established only to cope with the economic development or provide the needs of the society, but due to the expansion of higher education system in the region. This was an outcome of enrolling large numbers of students from outside the region because of unstable and unsafe circumstances in those areas. Therefore, the MoHESR-KRG needed to establish new universities, especially in areas where there was no university but many students.

4.10. Criteria of Accreditation

Though criteria of accreditation differ from one county to another according to the accreditation agency, they share many aspects. Table 3 clarifies these main aspects of accreditation in terms of aims, history, recognition of organizations, funds, and governance in the USA, UK, and Europe.

Table 3: Criteria of accreditation

Criteria	USA	UK	Europe
Aims	Assure quality to students and public, give evidence of quality to private employers who provide more educational opportunities to their employees, make institutions eligible for state funds, ease students' transfer among accredited institutions as an accredited institutions is better than non-accredited institutions in quality (Eaton, 2012b). Accredited institutions indicate they maintain at least threshold standards of quality (Koenig et al., 2004).	Encourage higher education institutions to improve management of quality, ensure that higher education institutions fulfill their missions and effectively manage good quality, protect public interest in having a good quality of programmes, has a role to internationalize higher education through international cooperation and projects (QAA, 2005).	Maintain and enhance a good level of quality in European higher education institutions via ensuring meeting particular standards and to have a leading part in improving quality assurance in Bologna countries (ENQA, About ENQA, Mission and Statement, n.d.). Establish a unified system of credit and mobility transfer for students among European countries.
History	Accreditation has been around for than a century (Eaton, 2012a).	The QAA was founded in 1997 (QAA, Publications, n.d.).	It was first established as the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 2000. Then it changed to European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 2004 (ENQA, About ENQA, History,

			n.d.).
Recognition of Organization	<p>» USDE (United States Department of Education), which is funded by US Congress.</p> <p>» CHEA (Council for Higher Education Accreditation), funded by institutional dues (Eaton, 2012a).</p>	QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) which reports to the HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council in England) for issues of quality assurance in both areas (Sywelem and Witte, 2009).	ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).
Accreditation Fund	Fees paid for accreditation review by institutions and programmes, annual dues paid by accredited institutions and programmes, sponsor's funds sometimes, government's and private organization's funds for special plans (Eaton, 2012a).	Higher education funding councils in the UK, self-funding activities, and subscriptions from higher education institutions (Sywelem and Witte, 2009).	Accredited institutions and government.
Governance	Accreditation agency is autonomous, non-profit and not governed by government (Sywelem and Witte, 2009; Eaton, 2012b).	Universities are responsible for self-accreditation and quality assurance (Sywelem and Witte, 2009).	Government has central control over the process of quality assurance (Sywelem and Witte, 2009).

Part Two: A Critical Overview of the Kurdish Higher Education Reform Policy

4.11. Introduction

This work aims to study the process and preliminary outcomes of the reform policy process in the Kurdistan higher education sector that began in 2009. The analysis of the process and preliminary outcomes are based on perception data collected by questionnaires and interviews from a selected sample. The sixth Cabinet of KRG launched its activities on 28th October 2009 and initiated a reform programme in governmental sector. The purpose of this reform was to develop and provide a better government system in the region. Higher education was one of sectors under government control for which a tremendous reform process was initiated. Generally, the aim of this reform policy was to improve quality and accreditation of the sector (MoHESR-KRG, 2011). This chapter focuses on the reform policy of Kurdistan higher education, the policy actors, policy instruments, and the policy process cycle. The aim is to present a clear view of the reform policy and how to analyse it later. The reform process, briefly, focused on:

- building a teaching quality assurance programme
- establishing a continuous development programme for university lecturers
- upgrading student admissions to an electronic system instead of hard copy applications
- bridging Kurdistan universities' lecturers and European and international universities
- encouraging investment in higher education
- developing the administrative structure of higher education institutions
- establishing an accreditation system for higher education institutions in the region
- developing the Kurdistan Board of Medical Specialties
- adopting an electronic system for communication
- establishing health and safety systems and ensuring social justice.

The reform has been initiated in a short time. There were no agencies or committees of experts to design the policy. The MoHESR-KRG launched the reform policy on 1st November 2009 and submitted its vision of the policy to the Council of Ministers-KRG on 8th November 2009 to win the

approval of the Council. Then, on 7th December 2009, this vision was approved. The policy vision was based on the personal experience of the (former) minister of higher education in 2009. Since 1992, this minister was in contact with the top three long-established public universities in Kurdistan: the universities of Salahaddin, Sulaymaniyah, and Dohuk. Along with other Kurdish emigrants, he established in Europe the Society of Higher Education in Kurdistan (SHEIK). The missions of SHEIK are to guide and support these universities academically, and sometimes financially. Since 1992, this former minister built up his personal knowledge about the quality, problems, and needs of higher education sector in the region. Furthermore, he attained experience in management, research, and teaching while working in a British university. Therefore, his British academic and managerial experience and knowledge about Kurdish higher education system helped him to set in motion this reform policy for higher education in the region. The reform policy process involved several parties with a role in determining the result of the process. At the same time, it has instruments and resources that are used in/appropriately during the process.

This part focuses on the policy actors, instruments, and process cycle in the context of Kurdistan's higher education reform process that started in 2009, in order to provide a guide to analysing the findings of the study later. It is necessary to mention that the Kurdish reform process is a recent one, which is why it is difficult to use previous academic studies evaluating the process since there are few newspaper interviews available online to which I can refer.

4.12. Reform Policy of Kurdistan Higher Education Sector

4.12.1. Policy Actors

According to the document of the MoHESR-KRG (2011), there are several parties involved in the policy process. The document shows that the Kurdistan Parliament, Council of Ministers-KRG, Parliamentary Committee of Higher Education in the Kurdistan Parliament, MoHESR-KRG, presidents and deans of public and private universities in the region were involved in the process. This group of actors can be considered as being at the macro level, due to their authority and ability to make decisions. There are other actors at the micro-level in each higher education institution, college, and department. This group includes students, university lecturers, and administrative staff on the micro-level. There is a quality assurance office in each college with a representative in each department at the same college. The head of this office represents the college in all activities run by the quality assurance office in the university. The head of the quality

assurance office in the university is its representative, attending all activities run by the MoHESR-KRG.

This structure of network is designed for each public and private university. So, if we apply Jann and Wegrich's (2007, p. 50) approach of policy actors, the '*iron triangles, sub-governments*', we can divide the policy actors in the Kurdish reform policy into policy actors on the macro-level, who are at the top of the 'iron triangle', and policy actors at the micro-level, who are at the bottom of the triangle. In this case, it is necessary to state that the approach to study policy can be top-down because it follows a hierarchical order. This makes communication and interaction among all the actors more hierarchical and flowing from top of the triangle to the bottom. However, this might not be the case in all higher education institutions in the region. Therefore, it is relevant to find out whether there is a bottom-up approach to studying the policy and how it works in the centralized and hierarchical system of higher education. Following the 'iron triangle' approach of the policy actors can be helpful to analyse the policy actors in the Kurdish policy reform process owing to the various actors involved. In addition to the different layers of actors, this approach shows the hierarchical system of communication and cooperation among them.

Though these actors share resources from the MoHESR-KRG, some members seem more powerful, especially the heads of the quality assurance offices in the universities and MoHESR-KRG, as they possess all the information, guidance, and regulations about the policy. The actors with the most direct communication with the Ministry were the presidents of universities. They are considered as a bridge between the Ministry and offices of quality assurance in the universities. Their roles were to study and apply guidance and regulations issued by the Ministry, then to submit an annual report about the university to the Ministry. Accordingly, we need to investigate the effectiveness of the presidents' roles in this process, which might reflect each university's value of the outcomes. Given what is known about approach of policy actors in Kurdistan higher education, we might assume that there are two groups of actors: one is at the macro level, and the second at the micro level.

But how do these 'iron triangles' and policy community interact to bridge them and ensure the continuity of the process? What experiences and challenges did these actors have? How are decisions made and by whom? Stating that there are many actors involved in the reform policy process, we need to search for the active role of each actor and whether they had a role in designing the policy.

4.12.2. Policy Instruments

There is more than one instrument adopted in the reform policy. Following classification approaches to policy instruments by Howlett and Rayner (2007) and Howlett (2000), we can already identify several policy instruments that have been used to implement the Kurdish reform policy process:

- Authoritative instruments, represented by the Draft Legislation Law.
- Economic instruments, such as annual funding (\$100.000) for Human Capacity Development Programme scholarships and funds to build three new public universities in the region. This is partial funding, allocated only for these two projects, not the whole reform process.
- Educational instruments, like providing training courses and workshops in the region and Europe for staff on the quality assurance programme to obtain experience; workshops on health and safety in the region; an international conference held in the region in which hundreds of academics around the world participated; and launching educational fairs for international university representatives.
- Technological instruments, such as introducing an electronic admissions system to higher education institutions in the region and using electronic mails as a formal method of communication.

We understand from this presentation, along with what Sorrell et al. (2003) and Rogge and Reichardt (2013) state about policy instruments, that there was a mix of four instruments to implement the Kurdish process. This could be attributed to the large scale of the reform process on the level of the higher education sector, not a single university. Therefore, the reform might have needed to use several instruments to ease and maintain the process. The most confusing part of the reform policy process might, however, be its instruments. The policy document of the Ministry does not make reference to the budget allocated to the process or how the process has been financially supported by the KRG or an organization. However, we need to find out how effective and sufficient these instruments are. What is the status of the Legislation Draft Law and its impact? Was there any allocated budget for the reform process apart from the annual budget of the scholarship programme? What is the quality and the aim of the training courses and workshops? Furthermore, it is important to study the interaction between the instruments to identify the positivity and negativity. However, the use of the instruments seems vague and needs further investigation in order to be appropriately evaluated.

4.12.3. Policy Process Cycle

The policy process cycle, as explained in the previous part, consists of four main stages: agenda setting; policy formulation and decision making; implementation; and evaluation and monitoring. Following the literature presented on the policy process cycle, preliminary knowledge hints at the following elements and characteristics of the Kurdish reform policy process.

First: Agenda Setting of the Reform Process

As the heading indicates, initiating a policy process requires setting an agenda after recognizing the problem and achieving a consensus in support of the agenda. At the same time, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of the reality of the society where the reform is to happen because it leads to identifying the obstacles in the way of a successful process. Stahl (2007) and Fullan (2007) state that sharing the reality between the reformer and members of the institution where the reform takes place is significant, as they are the key to practice and implementing the reform. Based on May's (1991) pattern of agenda setting that focuses on the source of initiating the agenda, the Kurdish reform policy has been initiated by the government and, more specifically, by the MoHESR-KRG. This initiation step resulted in the recognition of the outdated and isolated status of the higher education sector, in line with the policy of Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research-Iraq (MoHESR-I) that was designed for a society with only limited and restricted development since 1988. Therefore, the MoHESR-KRG declared that the old policy did not suit the current developed and flourishing economy of the Kurdistan region. The Ministry found that the best way to involve graduates of universities in nation building and supplying needs of the market was through reforming the region's system of higher education and called for a meeting between the its Council members, who are mostly presidents of universities in the KR-I, and the minister who was the reformer.

The members approved and welcomed the idea of reform. But the question here is: Did they have a clear idea of how and what the reform was to cover? Did they have skills and experience in reform process and how to manage it? Did they make any suggestions on how to improve the process? None of the presidents had experience of reform process, reform policy, or managing change. Their approval of the reform process was not based on a transparent exchange of realities and ideas in their meetings, but a shaking of heads to express acceptance of the leader's (who was the minister) plan, without questioning the challenges or attempting to improve the process.

The Ministry further suggested, on the one hand, that some departments should be closed because their graduates could not contribute to the development of the market and the mission was not of interest to the market and for society. On the other hand, other new departments should be opened because they were thought to be significant in coping with the fast growth of the economy in the region. Having theorized the problem, the MoHESR-KRG submitted its reform agenda to the Council of Ministers-KRG for approval. However, there is no reference to the role of the higher education community (leadership and management, university tutors, students, administrative staff) in setting the policy agenda; and it is arguably possible that it was set only by the former Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The former minister was aware of his ministerial work two months prior to practising it. This gave him some time to draft his plan for changing the system of higher education, according to his personal experience and knowledge. However, if the policy document of the Ministry indicated that many actors were involved in the reform process, we need to establish if they had been involved in setting the policy agenda and who they are.

Second: Policy Formulation and Decision Making

This stage is considered the key to a successful implementation process, if well designed (Fullan, 1992). If most of the effort is focused on the theoretical design of the policy yet ignoring the practical part (Fullan, 2007), it could be the major reason behind unsuccessful implementation. Therefore, we have to question whether the formulation of the Kurdish reform policy connects theorizing and practicing the policy (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). According to the literature, the policy formulation and decision making stage is based on three main resources: advice and consultation, research (Jann and Wegrich, 2007), and politics (Rasch and Tsebelis, 2009). Based on this literature, we have to find out the standards and bases on which the policy has depended. It is difficult at this point to identify the resources used to formulate the policy under further investigation.

At the first glance, this stage might have been ambiguous in terms of availability of advisors, actors' experiences and skills, methods of communication with those involved in formulating the policy and making final decisions, and other factors that should have been taken into account in formulating the policy. One reason behind this is the very short period of time between the date of formally launching the Sixth KRG Cabinet (28th October 2009) and the formal initiation of the policy by the Ministry (1st November 2009). Despite the former minister's plan of introducing the vision of the reform policy, two months earlier, it was a tremendous challenge to set the agenda and formulate a huge reform policy for 24 public and private universities with over 93 thousand

students. We understand from the MoHESR-KRG (2011) document that the Ministry aimed to bring the Kurdish higher education system up to international standard.

It was a major challenge to plan a reform policy that is based – as it seems- on experiences in British higher education into the Kurdish higher education system. The reason is that the British system is characterized as more open to change and development, while the Kurdish system is characterized as bureaucratic and centralized, therefore resistant to reform. This aspect is noted by Smith (1973), who argues that implanting a Western policy cannot be successful in an eastern or Third World nation's culture because Western policies are 'designed to bring about development and social reform' (Smith, 1973, p. 199), thus, it is inapplicable to a centralized and bureaucratic culture. Professor Brendan O'Leary, director of programmes in ethnic conflict in the University of Pennsylvania, shares the notion and states that 'The Kurdistan region, Iraq and other states in the Middle East are going through dramatic changes, and in some cases, deeply regrettable authoritarian restorations', and continues that 'Most institutions are highly politicized in these societies' (Garner, 2013). Moreover, the Kurdish culture is classified as having a strong preference to avoid uncertainty (Hofstede, 1991). Kurdish people work hard, but might avoid innovation and resist it. Hofstede indicates that in such societies everything is based on rules, even if the rules do not work. People cannot adapt themselves to sudden change unless there is guidance. The author further indicates that in this society, hierarchy and centralization are dominant in organizations and people are satisfied with the work position they hold. They accept the notion that there is a boss and that others are their subordinates, and follow. Given the information about formulating the policy on the basis of the former minister's personal experiences in a British higher education system, we need to find out whether the formulation of the policy covered the problem intensively, whether it identified the people impacted by the policy, whether interested actors and stakeholders were consulted, whether the policy has been formally approved, and by whom.

Third: Implementation of the Policy Reform

This stage is concerned with transferring what has been formulated and decided into action. The literature presents three major approaches to implementation: the top-down approach stressing that the process is initiated by policy makers who have the authority and power to control the process, following a bureaucratic system (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984); the bottom-up approach stating that the implementation begins with street-level actors and moves upward to policy makers for approval, while the driver of the process is related to the street-level actors' network and their relative autonomy to run the process (Elmore, 1997/80); and the third

approach, which is a mix between the previous approaches and involves the participation of street-level actors and policy makers in the implementation process, while the final decision is left to policy makers (Premfors, 1984).

According to the literature, we might consider the implementation process of the Kurdish reform policy following the top-down approach, emerging in an environment where government has the most power and bureaucracy is dominant. The centralized system indicates that the government can play a significant role in controlling, processing the policy, and acting as a powerful policy maker (Matland, 1995; Walklin, 1992). However, it is somewhat confusing to think about this stage because we do not have any clues as to when this stage actually started. The only obvious point to which the Ministry's document refers is that the process was initiated on 1st November 2009 and the first year of implementation is considered as a review of the process.

According to UNEP (2009), one of the factors that affects implementation is government support. There was a consensus in support of the policy by the KRG, but the method of such support is significant: whether formal and according to a law, or informal. We further need to stress that the reform took place in a centralized and bureaucratic system. Focusing on the role of the government in the reform process, Clark (1977) presents a clear explanation of why bureaucratic and centralized government is considered as a barrier to reform and the effectiveness of higher education:

- A. A centralized bureaucratic system cannot be applicable to a wide and expanded system of higher education. It makes finance system, curricula, students' admission, and employment mostly centralized and serves the national system of the government without creating a pathway towards internationalization and marketization. Bureaucracy and centralization are two negative factors in the process of developing a mass higher education system.
- B. Controlling the sector through only one body or authority, in a monopoly of authority, would leave no opportunity for development and innovation. A centralized hierarchical higher education sector could be controlled by politics, or students, or academics, or a board of trustee, or a parliament, and so on. When only a single power runs a university or the sector, then others have no opportunities to participate in running the sector or even express ideas and make plans for further development.
- C. A centralized system does not give freedom to have more than one category of institution, that is, to have different forms of universities, institutions, colleges, research

centres and so on. Higher education should be varied, and should expand to cover and meet almost all needs and at different levels.

- D. Having free and open access to higher education encourages everyone to enrol in the sector, which causes great pressure and loss of control over quality. It is a challenge to decide on issues of equality and equity in accessing higher education. Higher education should work to provide equal treatment to all enrolled students but, at the same time, there should be differentiation of standards and criteria for admission to one university rather than another.
- E. There is a lack of decision makers and leaders able to plan for unplanned action and lead prudentially. Besides, identifying roles of staff is essential for clarity of mission and objectives. This will provide the basis for the sector's success and diversity.

Added to the previous five barriers to reform in a centralized bureaucratic government, all of which existed in Kurdistan higher education, the sector is missing an important role: accountability. The MoHESR-KRG, for example, might reward good achievements but there is no reaction to non-achievement. It should set up regulations or laws to warn employees and members who fail to achieve what they ought to do, upon nonfeasance and negligence as a step towards realizing the importance of accountability.

Though it is currently not possible to judge whether the process has been completely and effectively carried out, there are some sections of the policy that have apparently been implemented:

- 1) First-year students are still taking two new courses (critical thinking, English language) and postgraduates PhD students spend a year in one of the international universities to obtain new knowledge and experiences. These are parts of the teaching quality assurance programme.
- 2) University lecturers follow the new regulations and requirements of continuous development in the reform process. This is part of the continuous development programme of university lecturers.
- 3) High school graduates apply to higher education institutions via the new online system. This is what meant by upgrading to electronic admission to higher education institutions.

- 4) Newly opened academic departments, colleges, and universities follow the conditions and requirements set out in the reform. These are indicated in the new accreditation system for establishing new academic units.
- 5) Health and safety directorates are still running and active in higher education institutions.
- 6) The four new public universities in the region are still running.

Other factors affecting the implementation process, according to UNEP (2009), is clarity of planning and formulating policy. It is not clear if there are any prioritized sections in the policy or on what basis some sections have been implemented rather than others. The Ministry's document does not make any reference to prioritized section(s). Besides, we have to identify the role of the government: whether it acted only as a decision maker or followed up the process (Fullan, 1992). Yet, there are other areas which need further investigation, such as finding out the role of street-level actors in implementing the policy. Could this policy process be reversed to follow the bottom-up implementation approach?

Fourth: Evaluating and Monitoring the Policy Reform

The evaluation and monitoring stage focuses on finding out the success or failure of the policy process. It can be determined either via internal or external evaluation, then monitoring services provided to maintain or develop the performance level (Wollmann, 2007). Current sources of evidence are limited. There is a lack of previous academic research conducted to evaluate the Kurdish reform policy, and few newspapers articles concerned with the reform process. Further, the MoHESR-KRG devoted the first year of the reform process to testing and reviewing the process. According to the Ministry's report (2011), the review received generally positive results. As the review has been conducted in the first year of introducing the reform process, it can be regarded as an estimation of the process in order to use the information as supportive data during the decision-making process (Wollmann, 2007; OFMDFMNI, n.d.). Moreover, the review did not cover all aspects of the reform policy, merely the section concerned with teaching quality assurance programme in which students and lecturers have roles. Therefore, a lack of a comprehensive academic evaluation study of this reform by the MoHESR-KRG or the government could be traced, as Wollmann's (2007) argues, to its large scale, absence of experienced and skilful staff to conduct the evaluation, high demands of the analysis methodology, impatience by the Ministry, and resistance to the reform. But which of these obstacles had the most effect and how did the Ministry react? Stating some of the obstacles of evaluation, we need to investigate how the Ministry describes the outcomes of the reform process and the evidence. In the first

instance, we need to find out all the obstacles to evaluating the process and how the Ministry managed to deal with them.

Policy is set up and enacted to achieve goals according to pre-identified values and standards. It is intended for the purpose of organizing, guiding, and facilitating the mission of universities, not to impose restriction on their progress and mission, and Driscoll emphasizes this point and alleges that decision makers who follow fixed, unchangeable policies and regulations are 'guilty of nonmanagement' (Driscoll, 1974, p. 3). This is evident in centralized and hierarchical systems where reform is considered to be a matter to be challenged. Despite changes to MoHESR-KRG regulations over time, higher education institutions suffer from having no professional board or body to implement the updates on regulations, decisions, and institutional orders, and to organize an archive documents concerned with authorities and responsibilities. Having such a body would facilitate the managerial process in higher education institutions and give decision makers a clearer vision of their responsibilities and authority (Quantrell and Khidir, 2011).

Some newspaper articles shed light on the reform process and higher education in the region. In Garner's (2013) interview with Professor O'Leary, the latter criticizes the process and claims that the reform would be more effective if it took longer, as the region is facing rapid change and international investment. Thomas Hill, assistant professor at New York University Centre for Global Affairs, agrees and adds 'There are many, many people with very conservative views within the higher education sector in the Kurdistan region and many did not and do not like the progressive path the former minister was plotting.' He continues that he does not 'believe there is consensus even now that the reforms the former minister wanted to implement would have been in the best interest of the Kurdistan region' (Garner, 2013).

In contrast to both O'Leary and Hill, while the former minister of higher education in the KRG admits that the process faced great resistance at the beginning, he states that resistance faded away and the process moved 'from one milestone to another' (Ala'Aldeen, 2012). In an interview with Ameen (2013), he adds that these obstacles consist of laws – the foremost barrier – routine systems and decision making processes, method of performance and its assessment, a weak retribution system, interference of political parties in government affairs, and resistance from presidents of some universities and deans of some colleges (Ameen, 2013). In this interview the former minister contradicts his statement in the earlier article and states that the process went mid-way, then slowed down from then on to become completely ineffective (Ameen, 2013).

In an interview with the current Minister of Higher Education in KRG-2013 published on the Ministry's website, he states that the sector is witnessing great developments in terms of the

Human Capacity Development Programme scholarships that began in the last two years to reform the higher education sector (MHE-KRG, Ku, 2012).

However, these statements in interviews are not based on academic research but represent viewpoints of individual academics and decision makers. Thus, they cannot provide a guide to analysing the findings of this study. By now, clear aspects about the Kurdish reform policy process are presented here and are referred to in the policy document issued by the MoHESR-KRG. However, it is important to find out what students and lecturers think about the outcomes of the reform policy in terms of what they influence. This is because they are the first beneficiaries of the process. It is further important to find out what policy makers, and other higher education leaders and managers think about the reform policy process, and to find out about their role in introducing the reform policy process. For these purposes, the researcher needs to approach students, lecturers, and leaders and managers in higher education section in the region to establish their perception of how the policy was designed and envisioned by the higher education community.

4.13. Conclusion

The MoHESR_KRG is working to adopt the quality assurance programme in order to monitor the main mission of institutions which are teaching, learning, and research. As clarified in the reform process (MoHESR_KRG, 2011), the quality assurance programme is an internal one because it was initiated by the Ministry itself and followed and processed by both the universities and the Ministry. There are no external agencies involved, but there are external international agencies such as WASC and ABET with which the MoHESR-KRG coordinates to accredit programmes. This shows that there are attempts to establish an international accreditation programme in some higher education institutions in the region. While the accreditation programme follows the American approach, it is interesting that the reform was based on the former minister's experience of British higher education. It appears that there is a mix of British quality assurance and American accreditation. This makes the Kurdish reform intriguing and, therefore, it is necessary to find out students' and lecturers' perceptions, and what policy makers and managers think about establishing international American accreditation programme Was it the right decision to start with international accreditation from the start? Ultimately, it is necessary to indicate that both quality assurance and accreditation are significant to the improvement and development of higher education institutions.

Policy design is a complicated process. There are some concepts that are taken into consideration in studying Kurdish reform. These relate to the policy actors, policy instruments, and the policy process cycle. The Jann and Wegrich approach of 'iron triangulation' seems the most applicable to analyse the policy actors in the Kurdish reform policy. It is appropriate to reflect the hierarchical system of higher education in the Kurdistan region and its hierarchical system of communication among the policy actors. Communication and work orders start from top and go down to street level. Though there are some policy instruments referred to in the policy document, it is significant to find out whether there are other instruments used in the Kurdish reform policy, in the view of interviewees. Moreover, it is indicated in the policy document that the reform policy was initiated by the MoHESR-KRG and this means it follows the top-down approach of policy implementation. However, it is still important to find out through interviewees' perceptions whether there is any initiation of the bottom-up or synthesized approaches.

The Kurdish reform policy poses many questions. There are aspects of the Kurdish policy that need investigation to understand how the policy was initiated, formulated, approved, and implemented. Though the MoHESR-KRG conducted a review in the first year of implementing the policy, there is a need to investigate the outcomes of the policy process and compare them to the policy objectives to be able to evaluate the reform policy. This chapter provides guidance and a platform that help to analyse the findings of the study and ascertain answers to the research questions.

There are some unanswered questions such as: did the policy outcomes achieve the objectives? Was there any complete assessment conducted by the MoHESR-KRG or any other organization after implementing the policy? What do leaders and managers in Kurdistan higher education think about the reform? What were their roles in the process? Did the reform policy make changes to the previous system? What were the obstacles and how did the Ministry deal with them? Is the process still active? To answer these questions, it is necessary to contact individuals (students, lecturers, leaders and managers) in higher education in the region direct, to find out their perceptions about the reform policy process. Due to the large numbers, a questionnaire is the best way to obtain students' and lecturers' perceptions of their roles. Besides, higher education leaders and managers with experience and knowledge about the reform can provide useful information, so their perceptions can be gathered via conducting semi-structured expert interview and addressing a group of questions to help answering the research questions.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methodologies used while conducting the study. Specifically, it sheds light on qualitative and quantitative inquiries in research, mixed research methods, reliability and validity of the study, its research design and data collection strategies, and data analysis techniques, with preliminary findings about students' questionnaire, and ethical issues in the study.

5.2. Research Methodology

5.2.1. Qualitative Inquiry in Research

In qualitative research, 'the data are not in the form of numbers' (Punch, 2005, p. 3). This could be the most distinct feature of a qualitative research. The researcher tries to be subjective and to obtain as much detail as possible from a small size sample that is concerned with the research area (Blaxter et al., 2010), as in interview, observation, and document analysis. Kelle and Erzberger (2004) state that qualitative research methods have more significance because they can provide researchers with new hypotheses that have not before been approached or discovered. This is mostly because qualitative researchers try to study a social phenomenon in different ways, depending on the sample's personal experience. The philosophy of interpretive paradigm indicates that the existence of the world has different interpretations and perceptions (Cohen et al., 2011). A phenomenon can be approached and interpreted by different individuals and in various ways. Interpretive research is based on finding out a set of interpretations concerning a phenomenon then comparing these interpretations. As this type of paradigm takes into account individuals' subjective interpretation based on their personal experience and understanding of the phenomenon, researchers are dealing less with numbers and more applying qualitative methodologies for data analysis (Cohen et al., 2011).

5.2.2. Quantitative Inquiry in Research

In quantitative research, 'the data are in the form of numbers' (Punch, 2005, p.3). Dealing with numerical data could be the most apparent characteristic of this type of research. The researcher, however, tries to be objective while analysing the data. In the quantitative study, the researcher is not interested in finding individuals' viewpoints or perceptions regarding the social phenomenon based on their personal experiences rather how many individuals dis/agree about that social phenomenon. The philosophical belief of positivism indicates that the world really exists and

every entity has its own phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2011). According to Cohen et al. (2011), positivists study and analyse a social phenomenon based on laws or regulations. Positivist research is based on science, experiment, and rational theory. This means that the phenomenon can be analysed and studied depending on rules or laws, while the findings can be generalized based on rules. Positivist researchers use quantitative methodologies for analysing their findings. According to Cryer (2000), a research paradigm can be objective when the researcher moves away from collecting data depending on participants' personal experiences or analysing data following personal justification derived from the literature and personal experiences.

There are four main assumptions that a scientific researcher can start with (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 8-9):

- 1- The assumption of '*determinism*' [italicized in original]. This assumption indicates that each behaviour appears because of a reason. Scientists believe that each event occurs because of a reason or a circumstance.
- 2- The assumption of '*empiricism*' [italicized in original]. This assumption refers to having a relationship between a theory and the kind of empirical data that support it. The truthfulness of the theory is based on the supporting evidence.
- 3- The assumption of '*parsimony*' [italicized in origin]. As the term indicates, it refers to the use of as few methods of analysis as possible. It does not favour detailed explanation or narration if a phenomenon can be dealt with by two approaches instead of three.
- 4- The assumption of '*generality*' [italicized in origin]. It simply means that positivists can generalize the findings on a larger population because they deal with a real phenomenon that is explained according to law and rules.

However, having an absolute objective research paradigm is a matter of debate, because there could be subjectivity in the exact choice of statements in the questionnaire.

5.3. Mixed Research Methods

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011, p. 286) refer to mixed research methods as 'eclectic', which means the choice of the best characteristics from different resources. They continue to add that '*methodological eclecticism involves selecting and then synergistically integrating the most appropriate techniques from a myriad of QUAL, QUAN, and mixed research methods* in order to more thoroughly investigate a phenomenon' [emphasis in original]. The authors further describe mixed research methods as the best way to lend quality to the research because it helps the researcher to choose the characteristics of the methods to answer the research questions. The purpose of using mixed research methods is to obtain a fuller picture of a social phenomenon.

Teddlie (2005) states that there is a causal relationship in using mixed research methods, and the effect is usually determined by quantitative methods while its mechanism is determined by qualitative methods. Using qualitative and quantitative research methods helps to study the social phenomenon in different ways in order to produce 'a more comprehensive and valid picture' (Kelle and Erzberger, 2004, p. 173), because each method has its value to add to the research. Denzin (1978, p. 304) agrees with the same significant role of mixing research methods and states that it has a role 'to maximize the validity of field efforts'. Mixing research methods has its advantages. Dowling and Brown (2010) state that using more than one research method is necessary to fill the gaps that occur when using only one research method, and can add richness and credibility to the research. Silverman (2005, p. 63) also sheds light on the use of mixed research methods, which requires the researcher to be skilful enough and 'to get at many different aspects of a phenomenon'. Furthermore, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 15) encourage researchers to mix research methods and employ each method's best characteristics so as to 'offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions'.

At the same time, mixing research methods has its disadvantages. Silverman (2005) attributes the use of mixed research methods to the researcher's incapability of identifying the research limits to narrow down the research topic. Researchers mistakenly might think that by using mixed research methods the answer they want will come out from their analysis, but this is not right. It makes the analysis even worse by leaving a set of data effectively unanalysed, while moving to analyse another set of data (Silverman, 2005). Creswell (2011) states that mixing research methods is not the same as using multiple research methods. The author argues that the former refers to the use of *both* qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data, while the latter refers to the use of *either multiple* qualitative sources of data *or* multiple quantitative sources of data. Therefore, researchers have to make a distinction between multi-research methods and mixed research methods. Flick (2002) makes more of a clarification about the function of mixed research methods and indicates that it does not make the research more valid, but adds validity to the results and procedures of the study. Therefore, it is necessary to know the purpose of mixing research methods; is it to study one phenomenon by using different methods or studying different aspects of the same phenomenon? (Kelle and Erzberger, 2004). The purpose of this study is the former; studying the same phenomenon using different research methods.

Results of mixed qualitative and quantitative research methods fall into three categories (Kelle and Erzberger, 2004):

- They either lead to converge and produce the same findings

- Or establish a complementary relationship
- Or produce contradictory findings

In this research, it is difficult to decide which type of results will be produced before analysing the data. The key issue in integrating the qualitative and quantitative methods in this research is to gather as much useful knowledge as possible that can answer the research questions. Further, it tends to study and investigate the problem of the research from the different perspectives of students, lecturers, senior and junior managers, and policy makers. Therefore, the qualitative and quantitative methods are used to complement each other and add value to the research questions, but this does not mean that the results are complementary to each other. Kelle and Erzberger (2004) elaborate the complementary relationship results of mixed research methods as follows:

“Qualitative procedures can therefore often help to fill gaps in explanations using ‘sociological variables’ where statistical relationships are explained by additional assumptions after the event. Quantitative procedures are able to show super-individual structural relationships which are not consciously observed by the individuals and which therefore cannot easily be obtained with qualitative interviews. In both cases the procedures complement one another and give a more comprehensive picture of the object under investigation.”

(Kelle and Erzberger, 2004, p. 175)

Qualitative research methods are interview and policy document, used to analyse the content of the reform policy document according to the available literature on policy studies to find out areas of strength and weaknesses and its reliability. The interviews are used to find out policy makers’ perceptions of the reform policy document. On the other hand, as quality assurance is part of the reform policy document and as it is another concern in this research, the quantitative research methods; that is, questionnaires; are used to find out students’ and lecturers’ perceptions of the quality assurance programme. Due to the large number in the questionnaires’ sample, it is difficult to use a qualitative research method to obtain students’ and lecturers’ perceptions. Therefore, each method is used for a specific group but agree on the final purpose of the study, which is analysing the reform policy. Going back to Teddlie’s formula of effect and mechanism relationship, the effect of the cause, in this study, is the quality assurance programme that is analysed by using quantitative research method. The mechanism of the cause is the reform policy, which is analysed by using a qualitative research method. The findings of these three paradigms are important to analyse the reform policy of Kurdistan higher education from

different perspectives and find out areas of similarities and differences in the perceptions. This ultimately helps to answer the research questions.

5.4. Reliability and Validity of the Research

5.4.1. Reliability and Validity in Quantitative Research

Reliability in quantitative research refers to the extent of accuracy of the research instrument in measuring the phenomenon with as few errors as possible (Muijs, 2011). Having reliability means that there are similar results when using the same instrument on the same sample but at a different time. This study is not a repeated one and there are no previous works on the same subject area, as the Kurdish reform of higher education is recent. Moreover, the researcher could not repeat the test using the same instrument in two different periods of time due to the limited time available. Therefore, it is not possible to state that there is 'stability' or 'equivalence' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 200) in this study, because both of these types of reliability require the researcher to apply the same test twice or work with a team to measure the phenomenon and find out if there is agreement among team members. The best way to look for reliability in this study is by looking for 'internal consistency' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 201) and calculating the correlation coefficient. This requires dividing the items in the questionnaire into two then finding the correlation between them. In this study, the correlation coefficient is (0.6), which means the reliability is more than moderate.

Validity, in quantitative research, refers to having correct answer(s) to the research question(s); that is, successfully measuring what the research is supposed to measure (Muijs, 2011). Davies (2007) states that validity is to what degree the findings reflect the research question and whether the results represent what the researcher is looking for. Validity has three types which are 'apparent validity, instrumental validity, and theoretical validity' (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 22) or named as 'content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity' by (Muijs, 2011, p. 57).

The first type implies choosing the right questions to measure what the research wants to measure; as Muijs (2011, p. 57) states, 'the content of the manifest variables...is right to measure the latent concept...that we are trying to measure'. In this study, the items in the questionnaires are based on available literature on quality assurance and, further on, what the Kurdish reform policy document introduced. The questions generally reflect the content of the reform policy because the aim of the questionnaires is to measure students' and lecturers' perceptions about the quality assurance programme introduced in the reform policy document

by the MoHESR-KRG. Muijs (2011, p. 58) introduces another type of validity here and calls it '*face validity*' [emphasis in original]. The latter refers to having comments from a selected sample or experts to judge the validity, test, and refine the questionnaires. The researcher chose to give the questionnaires to a panel of experts who were PhD holders, assistant professors, and a professor. The panel consisted of 16, but only eight sent back their comments. Generally, their comments focused on:

- ❖ Whether to use 'student' of 'lecturer' instead of 'you'.
- ❖ Some suggested combining two concepts into one item.
- ❖ Adding other items related to administration, which is not in the scope of this study.
- ❖ Making items a question or a statement
- ❖ Concern at the many items in the questionnaires and those students will not be interested to answer all of them.
- ❖ Some of them commented on the language rather than the content.
- ❖ Two commented on the design of the questionnaire (its length, numbering and dividing the sections, and the options of the Likert scale).

It is worth mentioning that English versions of both questionnaires were given to the experts and all of them understood the language. After working on theirs and the supervisors' comments, the researcher drafted the final version and translated it into Kurdish, which is the researcher's and the sample's mother-tongue. Next, an academic PhD holder in English language, who also undertakes translation work, reviewed the Kurdish version and made some minor changes, focused mostly on choosing the right words.

The second type of validity is concerned with the relationship between the instrument and expected results (Muijs, 2011). Researchers can expect what results will come up when using a specific instrument. In this study, for example, the researcher expected that courses were not perceived to be designed to be of good quality. After obtaining students' responses in the questionnaire and using statistical measures, it became clear that most of the students had negative attitudes about the quality of the courses.

The final type of validity refers to the extent to which the items are interrelated to cover the general concept. This can be derived from theory and literature. The items covered to find out students' perceptions about the teaching quality assurance programme were derived from the theory of the reform policy document and supported by the literature introduced in chapter four, specifically by Harvey and Green (1993), Guri-Rosenblit et al (2007), Materu (2007) and Peterson (1999). For example, in order to find out about the quality of academic courses and

programmes in universities, the researcher addressed items reflecting such concepts as; 'Courses are designed to make the programme have good quality'; 'Courses help to build up my academic knowledge'; 'My programme prepares me for future employment'; 'My course handbook helps me understand what the course is about'; and 'Many of the courses have good teaching quality'. The researcher worked hard not to include general questions about the whole reform policy and put these to students and lecturers, because they do not have a role in every section of the reform process.

5.4.2. Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research

Reliability in qualitative research means, as Silverman argues, 'the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions' (Silverman, 1993, p. 145). By reliability, we mean the applicability of research methods used to get the results and whether the same results can be gained by other researchers, or by the same researchers but in different circumstances. To ensure reliability in social research, researchers need to arrive at the same results if they have conducted the same methods (Peräkylä, 2004). This means, however, if the same or another researcher applies the same methods to the same context and social culture, the same findings should emerge. It was not possible for the researcher to conduct the same study at two different times because of the limit of time; besides, the interviewees might not be ready to offer their time due to work responsibilities, as they occupy high managerial positions in higher education institutions. In addition, it would be difficult to arrange for another researcher with the same theoretical framework to study the same phenomena and then compare the results of both cases. This is simply because the subject area of this study is a new one concerned with the Kurdish reform policy of higher education and previous studies conducted on the same subject of this study are not available to compare findings. The only reliability in this study is that the data have been collected using a semi-structured purposive sample of expert interviewees who can add rich and in-depth knowledge, comprehensiveness, high details, and authenticity. The researcher kept a schedule of all the places, interviewees' information, the timetable, a recorder, and procedures of approaching the interviewees that would be useful to take into account while analysing the interview data.

Validity in qualitative research is referred to as 'understanding' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 180) rather than validity. Cohen et al. (2011) state that validity in qualitative research is seen as the extent to which researchers understand the society that they research and investigate, taking into account people's viewpoints concerning the problem they investigate. It is understood that

participants' depth and detailed knowledge and information are important in qualitative research, but this does not mean any information is to be taken into consideration. In this study, questions in the interviews are based on the reform policy document issued by the MoHESR-KRG, as one of the aims of this study is to analyse and evaluate the policy of the reform process. The questions are selected to cover precisely all the aspects in which the interviewees play a role. Each interviewee was asked group of questions in the frame of his/her responsibilities. Because it was an expert interview, the content of the interviews was analysed using deductive and inductive approaches.

It is difficult to predict interviewees' perceptions about the reform policy process because everyone had their own personal experiences. However, the researcher could predict most of the interviewees' perceptions about the reform process and whether they agreed with the content of the policy document. At the same time, there were very few interviewees who introduced unpredictable information in disagreement with the content of the reform policy document. This led to almost partial 'criterion' validity. The final type of validity of data available in this study is the 'construct' validity. As mentioned earlier, each interviewee has been addressed a group of questions according to his role and responsibilities in the reform policy process. Besides, all the interview questions are addressed to find out interviewees' perceptions about the reform policy process. All together, the questions are interrelated and organized to give a complete picture about the process. Their perceptions are analysed and compared with students' and lecturers' perceptions to find out areas of similarities and differences. It worth mentioning that the researcher continuously followed up and had contact with a number of academic and managers in higher education institutions in order to have update information about the reform policy process

5.5. Choice of Sample and Instrument

There is consistency between the choice of the sample and the instruments used to collect the data. For example; survey can be effectively used to collect data from a large number of participants when the aim of the survey is discovering percentages of agreement and disagreement; that is, the quantity is the key (Cohen et al., 2011). In this study, the survey is used to find out how many students and lecturers have positive and negative attitude concerning the quality assurance programme in order to know if the reform policy could achieve its objective. At the same time, the aspects covered in the survey have direct relationship with students and lecturers. Thus, their attitudes show if the reform process is

successful or not. Due to the large sample of selected students and lecturers who are the actors who provide data to answer the second and third research questions in this study, it is more applicable to use a survey to collect as much data as possible to find out their perceptions. And because these two groups of actor, students and lecturers, are the majority of actors who are affected by the reform policy, it is significant to find out their perceptions concerning the reform policy. The other group of sample consists of policy makers, senior and junior managers. Because of this group has a major role in planning and directing the reform process, it is significant to find out their personal knowledge and experiences of the reform policy in order to know how they planned and set up the reform process. Therefore, qualitative method is more effective to be used. The researcher used interview for this purpose. Each interviewee has been addressed a group of questions according to their roles and responsibilities in the reform policy process. Each interviewee has been given enough time to answer each question. And they have been offered the choice of speaking in any of the three languages; Kurdish, English, or Arabic. It is important to emphasize that the interview questions are based on the content of the reform policy document of the MoHESR-KRG and supported by the literature on policy studies. For example, most of the questions of the interviews focus on the design of the policy, aims, process, implementation, evaluation, and barriers as they have been presented in chapters 3 and 4 of this study.

Each one of these instruments is used for a specific purpose but they are complementary to each other at the same time. The results of the survey data give information about the status of the outcomes of the quality assurance programme while the interviews tell information about how the reform policy was set up.

5.6. Sample and Sampling Approaches

5.6.1. Who Are the Sample?

The survey sample consists of students and lecturers. The students were in their final year of undergraduate study which lasts for four years apart from those in the departments of architecture, who study for five years, and technical management, which had only first year students at the time of conducting the study. The reason for this categorization is so they had more experiences and knowledge about the reform and were better able to reflect and make choices. The reason behind choosing architecture students in their fourth year rather than their final year is to ensure the entire sample had the same level in their study programme and at least a similar level of knowledge. Moreover, some departments had morning and evening classes, yet only morning classes were selected. The total number of students who the researcher approached

is (1131) students. The other part of the survey sample is the university lecturers. There were no specific characteristics for selecting lecturers, apart from working on a permanent basis in the selected higher education institutions. The total number of lecturers who the researcher approached is (282) lecturers.

With regard to the interview sample, the interviewees were divided according to their roles in the reform policy process and their responsibilities. The reason for approaching these interviewees was because they had a direct relationship with the research area and the aim was to obtain rich and fruitful information that can provide answers to the research questions. Thus, they were divided into junior managers, senior managers, and policy makers in the selected higher education institutions. The total number of the interviewees who the researcher contacted is 17 but only eight agreed to participate in this study.

5.6.2. Sampling Approaches

Interview Sampling

In this study, the researcher followed theoretical (selective) sampling. This focuses on a group who are in the area or scope of the research questions and topic; the data add and enrich the main topic of the research (Silverman, 2005). The interviewees had been selected according to their 'relation to events. Events are what constitute the basis of the investigations' (Merken, 2004, p. 170). This method of sampling leads mostly to the type of research paradigm that is interpretive. As the researcher worked in three of these selected institutions, it was somewhat easy to approach the interviewees except in the private universities where the researcher had no work experience. Another factor which made approaching the interviewees an easy process was that the researcher was following up the progress of the reform process and she was in contact with some of the staff who were working on the process. The researcher followed the snowball method of sampling, which means the researcher asked an interviewee to recommend other people to interview (Merken, 2004). The policy maker in PT2 recommended the senior manager in PT1. A senior manager who orally apologized to be interviewed has recommended a policy maker and both were in HEI. The latter policy maker had a lot of experiences in almost all the aspects of the reform process, therefore, the researcher visited him in his office and he agreed to participate in the research. But, because it was the time of election of Iraqi parliament when the researcher conducted the study and the latter policy maker was a nominee, he won the election and the researcher could no longer contact him. The approaches that the researcher followed to communicate with the interviewees were either a direct visit to the interviewee's office, a phone

call, an e-mail, or a letter. The selected sample of higher education institutions is referred to anonymously in Table 4.

The policy maker in PC2 stated that he has no enough information about the reform policy and he recommended a senior manager in the same institution for the interview. The latter has deferred the date of the interview three times and later stated that he would answer the interview questions in writing because he could then recall information and details better. Therefore, the researcher e-mailed him the interview questions with the consent form and information sheet. After two weeks, the researcher phoned him to remind him and he confirmed that he would e-mail back the answers, but did not.

Table 4: Selected sample of the study

Institutes	Code
First public university	PC1
Second public university	PC2
First private university	PT1
Second private university	PT2
Higher education institution (a non-teaching institution)	HEI

The total number of interviewees who were approached by the researcher is shown in Table 5:

Table 5: Number of approached candidates of the interviews in each university/institution

No.	Institute	Policy makers	Senior managers	Junior managers
1	PC1	None	1	2
2	PC2	1	1	None
3	PT1	1	1	1
4	PT2	1	None	None
5	HEI	5	2	1

The same happened with one of the senior managers in HEI. The policy maker and junior manager in PT1 did not respond to the researcher's request. It is worth mentioning that the policy maker in PT2 had suggested and introduced the researcher to the policy maker and the senior manager in PT1 via e-mail and phone call. In turn, the senior manager in PT1 contacted the junior manager in PT1 but the latter did not respond. Three policy makers in the HEI orally apologized for not participating in the interview. Thus, the final number of the candidates who agreed to participate in the interviews and signed the consent forms is only eight, as shown in Table (6):

Table 6: Final number of candidates who agreed to participate in the interview at each higher education institution

No.	Institute	Policy makers	Senior managers	Junior managers
1	PC1	None	1	1
2	PC2	None	None	None
3	PT1	None	1	None
4	PT2	1	None	None
5	HEI	2	1	1

Survey Sampling

The researcher followed non-random sampling for selecting the higher education institutions. The criterion was based on having a large number of students and lecturers. Again, in each institution, the researcher intentionally selected two very different areas of academic programmes (humanitarian and sciences). In each, the researcher selected two majors (English language and law in humanitarian area, and engineering and sciences in sciences). This is clarified as follows:

- 1- Humanitarian programmes: Included the departments of English language, technical management, and law.
- 2- Pure science programmes: Included the departments of architecture and civil engineering, and sciences such as chemistry, biology, and computer sciences.

The objective of including different programmes is to receive perceptions from diverse background and to cover all the areas offered undergraduate level comprehensively. In addition, almost all the selected department are available in almost all the universities (For example: the programmes of English language, law, and sciences are available in three universities while engineering programme is available in all the four universities). The direct sampling selected students in their final year of study is because they are considered to have rich knowledge and

can make choices correctly, unlike than junior students. Then, random sampling followed to select around a hundred students in departments exceeding this number, to establish a balance in students' numbers in all the selected departments. In spite of the direct sampling at the start, the researcher was not able to be in direct contact with every single student or lecturer due to the large numbers. In random sampling, the quantity of data is important and researchers are not in direct or face-to-face contact with the sample, as they are not interested in the sample's experiences (Wisker, 2001). According to positivism, as Silverman (1993) argues, random sampling in interviews is necessary in order to obtain reliable and valid data. A non-random sample is still significant to obtain wide, relevant and factual information about the research topic and to investigate the topic from the eyes of experts and professionals. The selected departments, according to their universities, are shown in Table (7):

Table 7: The selected departments according to their universities

Institute	Language	Law	Engineering	Science
PC1	English language	Law	Architecture	Chemistry
PC2	None	Technical management	Civil engineering	None
PT1	English language	Law	Civil engineering	Computer science
PT2	English language	Law	Architecture	Biology

5.7. Data Collection Strategies

5.7.1. Interview

Interviewing is one of the research instruments used to collect data in this study. In interviews, the researcher tries to study 'the characteristics of an individual unit' (Cohen et al. 2000, p. 185) and the data are reliable and strong because the researcher deals with real experiences and collects data via direct contact with the sample. Interviewing has the advantages of the possibility of expanding and developing interviewee's response. The researcher can find out more meaning from the way a response is made such as uncertainty, hesitation, fright and so forth (Bell, 2005). The main disadvantages of interviewing are that it is time consuming and subjective, which allows there to be a possibility of biased data (Bell, 2005). In this study, the researcher tried her best not to move away from the main focus of the interview subject and adhere to the interview questions. This instrument can be used as the main instrument in research to collect data that answer the research's aims, or can be used with other research methods to validate them and

look for detailed and deep information from interviewees that best reflects the research questions, or can be used to examine hypotheses, as suggested by Cohen and Manion (1989). Moreover, Silverman (1993) states that researchers can obtain facts in interviews, because it has a relation to real stories and events in the interviewees' lives.

There are four main types of interview (Cohen and Manion, 1989; Cohen et al., 2011): structured or closed interviewing is based on an organized sequence of pre-designed set of questions which can be slightly modified; the unstructured or open interview is freely planned by the interviewer and the questions do not follow a fixed sequence or wording, rather the interviewer is free to ask any questions in a conversational way that achieves the research aims; the non-directive interview is usually used by therapists and psychiatrists, in which the interviewer has a minor role and less control while interviewees play the major role and are allowed to respond freely; and the focused interview concentrates on a specific area in which the researcher already has knowledge and information to make a comparison between this information and the collected data in the interview to get to the findings. The researcher used semi-structured interviews in which she pre-selected the themes that needed to be covered. This type of interview allows the researcher more balance in expressing and asking about the themes relating to the research questions, and at the same time gives more space to the interviewees to express their ideas and knowledge. It is mid-way between structured and unstructured interviewing. More precisely, the researcher used expert interviews, which is a form of semi-structured interviewing (Belting, 2008). Expert interviewing involves individuals who are experts and have unique and special knowledge about a profession. The aim of the expert interview is to reconstruct the ideas and knowledge of those who have long experiences in their profession. In this study, the expert interviewees were selected directly, based on their experiences and knowledge in the reform policy process in Kurdistan higher education.

It is worth referring to the language of the interviews in this study. All the interviewees were offered the option of choosing any of the three languages: Kurdish, English, or Arabic. This offer was made by the researcher to let each interviewee speak in the language in which he or she could best express ideas and knowledge (Bell, 2005). Only one senior manager and one junior manager chose to speak in Kurdish language; the other six interviewees spoke in English. The longest interview took one hour and 36 minutes, while the shortest took only 40 minutes. It is worth mentioning that seven of the interviews were conducted face-to-face while the eighth was through Skype. All the interviews were conducted during two phases:

- 1- The first phase was in October and November 2012.

2- The second phase was in April and May 2014.

The interviews were held in the interviewees' office during work hours. However, all were very kind and friendly and answered all questions with no exception. Four interviewees had to defer the date of the interviews, to which both researcher and interviewee agreed on in advance, due to their workload or missing the date or health reasons. Therefore, new dates were re-scheduled. With regard to the questions of the interviews, each interviewee has been asked a list of questions based on their knowledge, experiences, role in the reform policy, and work responsibilities. However, the questions were focused on the following:

- a) Teaching quality assurance and curricula development
- b) Academicians' continuous development programme
- c) Developing postgraduate programmes and research
- d) Investment in higher education
- e) Technology service
- f) Accreditation and assessment of universities
- g) Safety and social justice.

The list of questions consisted of open- and closed-ended questions, although the latter were followed by questions for further elaboration (for example: Do you think that the reform process could establish a quality assurance programme in universities? How?). Moreover, each question enquired about one concept in order to make the question clear and understandable. The list of questions addressing each category of the interviewees is shown in Appendix 1.

5.7.2.Survey

The different levels of participants in the survey helped in obtaining as much data as possible and from different points of view. This variety gives the research an invaluable quality (Avdjieva and Wilson, 2002). Using open-ended questions in surveys allows further freedom to the participants to write down further information. In questionnaires, a large sample is chosen in order to gather as much different and reliable data as possible. There are almost always response errors in questionnaire data (Willis, 2005). Willis attributes such errors to bias in the collected data because of unanswered questions, problems within research setting, choosing unrepresentative sample, and inappropriate coding and analysis. In questionnaires, there is a chance of receiving no facts, and here, questionnaire versus interview method. The reason for transferring information in social life is 'actually very complex and not easily transferable to the survey environment' (Willis, 2005, p.18). Examining questionnaire drafts through a focus group or an expert adds reliability to

the research method. In a survey approach, the researcher tries to 'estimate the relationships between variables' (Thomas, 1996, p. 115). So, it is estimation rather than true representation and, here, generalization is also possible because, as Thomas (1996) states, the data set that is collected from a survey sample is a representation of the population and the findings can be attributed to that population.

Prior to starting the fieldwork and visiting universities, the researcher could obtain data about the number of students and lecturers at the selected universities from the MoHESR-KRG. The total number of students in the concerned department was 1667, while the total number of lecturers in the concerned departments was (304). The data about students' and lecturers' numbers as received from the Ministry is shown in Table 8. After visiting each department concerned and meeting a number of staff members, it became clear that there were differences in the actual numbers of students and lecturers in several departments. Therefore, the final number of students in the departments concerned became 1131 and only 801 students responded, whereas the final number of lecturers in the departments concerned became 282, of which only 201 responded. These differences are shown in Table 9.

The researcher visited each department and met the head of each department individually. From this point, some agreed for survey copies to be distributed at the end of lecturers' classes, while some others suggested that the researcher coordinates with the lecturers to obtain their permission and then distribute the copies in their classes. Therefore, some of the heads of the departments introduced the researcher to the lecturers to arrange for a specific time to start the survey on one hand. On the other hand, secretaries of departments were helpful in introducing the researcher to the lecturers. So, through introductions and cooperation between the lecturers and the researcher, work started on selecting specific days and times to distribute copies of the survey.

All the lecturers apart from two; agreed that the researcher distributes and collects copies of the survey inside class. This provided a good opportunity to receive a high number of completed copies. The two other lecturers suggested that the researcher distributes the survey and leaves them so the students can answer the questions later. The process provided a lower rate of responses from students, as many did not return their copies. The time required to answer the questions in the survey was 15 minutes, but it increased to 20 minutes in some departments as students were perceived to be seizing the opportunity to kill time. The questions were written in English and Kurdish languages. In general, there were around ten students of Arabic nationalities. Some of these Arab students asked for the English versions, while the researcher had to interpret

Table 8: Student and lecturer numbers as provided by the MoHESR-KRG

No.	Institute	English Language		Law		Engineering		Sciences	
		Students	Lecturers	Students	Lecturers	Students	Lecturers	Students	Lecturers
1	PC1	99	23	105	37	48	40	120	62
2	PC2	None		46	7	52	16	None	
3	PT1	70	11	130	7	71	9	81	10
4	PT2	216	20	599	28	84	20	45	14
Total		286	54	880	79	255	85	246	86

Table 9: Final number of students and lecturers as provided directly by each department.

No.	Institute	English Language		Law		Engineering		Sciences	
		Students	Lecturers	Students	Lecturers	Students	Lecturers	Students	Lecturers
1	PC1	99	23	105	37	48	31	120*(100)	62
2	PC2	None		46	3	52	10	None	
3	PT1	70	12	130*(100)	7	69	7	81	10
4	PT2	216*(100)	17	217*(100)	28	84	22	77	13
Total		269	52	351	75	253	70	258	85

* All departments where students' number exceeded 100; the selected sample was only 100 students in each of these in order to create a balance among students' numbers.

it for the others. It happened that some students gathered to discuss and answer the questions together. A student's questionnaire data is shown in Appendix 2.

As far as the questions in the students' survey are concerned, the focus was on building the teaching quality assurance programme. The reason for choosing this section is because the students have a role in evaluating lecturers' performance and giving feedback on courses. The survey was designed according to the Likert scale giving five options: strongly disagree; disagree; neutral; agree; and strongly agree. There were a total of 44 short and simple questions, divided into seven sections focusing on the following:

- ❖ Courses and programmes
- ❖ Evaluation and feedback
- ❖ Library and study environment
- ❖ Teaching and learning
- ❖ Use of technology
- ❖ Role of university
- ❖ Change and progress in the recent years.

The survey ended with an open question to give students the opportunity to express and add any new information not been addressed in the questionnaire. There were very few notes by students in the open question space. All of the notes were criticisms of the higher education system. In addition, some of the students acknowledged the researcher for her work and wished her success. The students' survey is shown in Appendices 3 and 4.

As far as the lecturers' survey is concerned, it was designed on the same Likert scale. It consists of 69 short and simple questions. All the questions are divided into six sections while the first section is divided into five sub-sections. However, the lecturers' survey covered more sections in the reform policy because they have roles in these sections. These sections include the following:

- Teaching quality assurance programme and curricula development: It covers sub-sections:
 - ✓ Course and programme
 - ✓ Evaluation and feedback
 - ✓ Library and teaching environment
 - ✓ Teaching and learning
 - ✓ Use of technology
- Role of university
- Establishing academics' continuous development programme
- Academic development and investment through research

- Social justice
- Change and progress in the recent years.

The lecturers' survey also ends with an open question to give the opportunity to express or add new information not been referred to in the questions. The comments added in this space were limited and merely an acknowledgment and a wish for success on the part of the researcher. Similar to the students' survey, the researcher translated the questionnaire into Kurdish language and had it reviewed. The time needed to answer the whole survey was 20 minutes. Distributing the hard copies of the questionnaires involved more time and funds to visit each department. The researcher left copies of the survey with either the secretary or the head of the department, who took the responsibility of handing them to lecturers. Therefore, the lecturers' survey was not as productive as the students' survey. A copy of a lecturer's questionnaire data is shown in Appendix 5.

In spite of obtaining the contact number of a key person in each department and agreeing a deadline to collect the copies, the researcher had to visit each department four times, on average. The reason for these frequent visits was either the absence of the key person on the day of the visit, lecturers being occupied with a class, unavailability of the head of the department, students having exams, preparation for a conference (only in two higher education institutions), or lecturers forgetting to answer the questions or leaving the survey form at home. Yet, the researcher was pregnant at the time of the fieldwork but this has not stopped her from frequently visiting every department. The lecturers' survey is shown in Appendices 6 and 7.

5.8. Data Analysis Techniques

In order to limit the scope of the study, two private and two public universities were selected in the capital of the Kurdistan region, Erbil, which has the highest number of universities. The selection of these universities was based on: their sizes; number of undergraduate students, number of academic staff; and number of colleges and departments. Moreover, the availability of a counterpart department at these institutions was taken into account in selecting the universities.

This study intends to find answers to how the quality assurance programme is perceived by students and lecturers in private and public universities in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Moreover, it aims at providing an analysis of the reform policy of the Kurdistan higher education initiated in 2009. For the purpose of providing these answers, the researcher chose two research methods to collect data:

- 1) Survey: to collect data from undergraduate students and university lecturers in the departments concerned. The purpose is to find out how the quality assurance programme is perceived by this sample.
- 2) Interview: to collect data from interviewing policy makers, senior and junior managers in the selected higher education institutions in Erbil city. The purpose is to find out how the reform policy is perceived and understood by this sample.

5.8.1. Survey Analysis Technique

The quantitative data received from the survey were analysed using the quantitative approach. In this study, the researcher used SPSS. All the information and options of the answers in the survey were coded as normal. The coding system was conducted as shown in Table 10. The students' survey began with an introduction in terms of information about the name of the university, college, department, and gender, and age. Such information is helpful for analysis purposes later, especially to find out differences between universities or colleges. Though the study is not concerned with issues related to gender or age, they have been covered in the survey as they would probably be considered in the analysis. The lecturers' survey included the same introductory information in addition to enquiring about the year in which the lecturer started teaching in higher education institutions. Such information is necessary for the same purpose. In order to enter the data into an Excel sheet, all the survey forms were checked to confirm that all questions had been answered. Then, all the reliable forms were considered for data entry while the unreliable ones were discarded. Forms were discarded if they had any of the following features:

- 1- A single option for all questions, for example 'strongly agree' throughout the survey.
- 2- Introductory information but no answers to the questions.
- 3- Incomplete forms.

Two Excel sheets were prepared to enter the data; one sheet for students' survey and the second for the lecturers' survey. Students' survey forms were numbered, then, all the information entered into Excel. Later, codes of the answers were entered into the students' survey sheet. The same procedure was applied to the lecturers' survey forms. The confirmed completed sheets were copied into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 21).

Descriptive Statistical Analysis Using Univariate Analysis

Analysing the survey data, according to SPSS, focuses on using frequency distribution and measures central tendency. In order to find out the frequency of students' responses concerning

Table 10: Coding of survey information

Institute		College		Department		Gender		Options of Answers	
Name	Code	Name	Code	Name	Code	Gender	Code	Options	Code
PC1	1	Languages	1	English	1	Male	1	Strongly Disagree	1
PC2	2	Law	2	Law	2	Female	2	Disagree	2
PT1	3	Engineering	3	Civil Engineering	3			Neutral	3
PT2	4	Sciences	4	Architecture	4			Agree	4
		Technical Administration	5	Chemistry	5			Strongly Agree	5
		Technical Engineering	6	Computer Sciences	6				
				Technical Management	7				
				Biology	8				

each variable, the researcher used frequency distributions to find out which variables the students mostly agreed on, disagreed, strongly agreed, strongly disagreed, or had neutral perceptions. So, the aim is to find out student's responses regarding each variable and then establish their perceptions. In order to find the typical or average value of the variable, we need to find out measures of central tendency and levels of measurement (Muijs, 2011; Field, 2005).

There are three levels of measurement (nominal, ordinal, and scale) and three measures of central tendency (mode, median, and mean), elaborated as follows:

- 1- A level of measuring a variable can be nominal when numbers resemble names and the most considerably occurring variable is called the mode (Field, 2005). For example, in this study, we used numbers to refer to names of the universities. The numbers did not indicate which university was of better quality than another, but just indicates the name of the university. The same measure was applied to the names of the colleges, departments, and gender.
- 2- A variable can be measured as ordinal when data occur in order but do not make reference to the differences between values of the data (Field, 2005). The data in the middle of such order is called the median. For example, in the survey of this study, each question is given five options of response. These options are given in order starting from 'disagree', coded as 1, to 'agree', coded as 3. The measure of these options is ordinal.
- 3- A variable can be measured as a scale when it has continuity, and the most typical or average variable is called the mean (Field, 2005). For example, the age of participants in this study can be measured as a scale or continuous variables.

The survey was basically designed as a five option Likert scale; strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. At the time of analysis, this scale was changed to three options because the analysis of statistical significance of most of the items gave incorrect results; the expected count was less than the minimum expected in the chi-square table. This means the analysis was not correct. Because the researcher did not have rich experience and information about using the SPSS program, she got assistance and advice from an experienced academic statistician who suggested merging the five options into three without missing any data. In addition, the research questions aims at finding the perceptions whether positive or negative or neutral, the researcher agreed to merge the five options into three options. Therefore, the new codes of the answers were changed to:

- 1 to less than 3 is coded as number 1 and indicates a negative attitude
- 3 to less than 4 is coded as number 2 and indicates a neutral attitude

- 4 to 5 is coded as number 3 and indicates a positive attitude

Therefore, the mode is considered as the measure of central tendency in analysing the data (Appendix 6). Students' and lecturers' survey are analysed according to the following:

The following steps help to answer part of the second research question that focuses on finding out student's attitude about the teaching quality assurance program:

1. Finding the mode for every single item in students' survey
2. Finding the mode for every section in students' survey
3. Finding the overall mode in students' survey

The following steps help to answer the other part of the second research question that focuses on finding out lecturers' attitude:

1. Finding the mode for every single item in lecturers' survey
2. Finding the mode for every section in lecturers' survey
3. Finding the overall mode in lecturers' survey

And because lecturers' survey covers more items than that of the students', it is important to find the mode for the sections that are common in both surveys to find out students' and lecturers' attitude concerning the same sections. Therefore, the common sections in both surveys are the following:

- 1) Course and programme
- 2) Evaluation and feedback
- 3) Library and teaching/learning environment
- 4) Teaching and learning
- 5) Use of technology
- 6) Role of university
- 7) Change and progress in the recent years.

Measures of Statistical Significance

In order to find out the probability of a relationship between two groups concerning the same variable, while there is no relationship in the population, and whether this relationship is significant or not, the measure of statistical significance is used. The significance level in SPSS can be measured using 'Chi square test' to find out the 'p-value', which is referred to in the analysis as 'Asymp. Sig.'-(Asymptotic Significance). The 'p-value' ranges between (0-1). So, if the 'p-value' is less than (0.05), this means that the variables are in some way related and the relationship is

statistically significant. In order to find out where the difference lies, we need to use 'Cross-tabulation test' (Muijs, 2011; Field, 2005). This test is used to examine two nominal variables, or two ordinal variables, or an ordinal one with a nominal variable. In this test, we need to find out the actual count and the expected count value for each group concerning the same variable. In this study, the aim of using these analyses is to find out the opportunity of generalizing our finding of the sample to the larger population of higher education sector in the Kurdistan region. In addition, it helps to find answers to the third research question that focuses on the relationship between students' attitude, type of university, and gender.

5.8.2. Interview Analysis Technique

The questions of the interviews are based on specific themes in the reform policy document, which serves as the source of the questions. Analysing the data of the interview follows a qualitative content analysis method and includes the use of specific quantitative techniques in the analysis. Moreover, the content analysis is conducted following a mainly deductive approach. However, the researcher used an inductive approach as well whenever new themes emerged in the interviews. The content analysis method is 'the process of summarizing and reporting written data-the main contents of data and their messages' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 563). It is used with any written data as a text. The purpose of content analysis is to verify the content of mass media systematically, whether recorded or written, (Mayring, 2004). In other views, the content analysis is applied to any document as a text, which means a written text (Cohen et al., 2011). As far as this study is concerned, the content analysis is applied to the written transcript of the interviews. Transcribing the content of the interviews saved time and effort, besides greater accuracy in capturing every single word that could be meaningful in the analysis.

As far as coding is concerned, the researcher followed an open coding approach. The open coding, as Cohen et al. (2011, p. 561) argue, is used to 'describe and categorize' the text. All the codes that have a consistent relationship to each other are grouped into one category, and each category is given a specific name referring to a theme. The approaches used here to analyse the content of expert interviews are deductive and, if necessary, inductive. The deductive approach is '*tautological*' [emphasis in original], which does not imply new information, and '*truth-conveying*' [emphasis in original] because 'if the rule offered for application is valid, then the result of the application of the rule is also valid' (Reichertz, 2004, p. 161). This approach is applied when there are in advance-defined theoretical parts of analysis to testify them with a text (Mayring, 2000). The pre-identified theoretical parts of analysis are derived from the reform policy document and brought together with the interview text in order to compare and analyse them. Here, each

category is identified and given explicit definition derived from the literature on policy studies. Then examples are attached to each definition and later coding rules applied. In order to emphasize the reliability of coding and categorization, all the categories are revised for a final time throughout the text of the interviews. After finding out the results, quantitative analysis is used to find out the frequencies (Mayring, 2000). Furthermore, the aim is to study and compare between the different interviewees' perceptions of the reform policy and the text of the reform policy document. Nevertheless, this does not mean any new themes are rejected or left analysed. Any new themes, if available, are analysed following the inductive approach.

The inductive approach emphasizes that the themes are not defined in advance but emerge as new themes through the text, and that the researcher did not refer to or ask about them during interviews. Moreover, this approach 'supplements the observed features of a sample with others that are not perceived' (Reichertz, 2004, 161). Therefore, the procedure of conducting the inductive approach differs from the deductive one in terms of that the researcher has to search for the new themes then provide explicit theoretical definition of each theme, as derived from available literature. Hereafter, the rest of the analysis procedure follows the same as the deductive approach. An illustration of deductive and inductive coding is shown in Appendix 8

Adopting Cohen et al. (2011)'s framework of conducting content analysis and Mayring's (2000) of deductive and inductive approaches, the researcher has analysed the content of the interviews according to the following steps:

- 1- Transcribe the interviews.
- 2- Define the research questions.
- 3- Define the themes (categories). The themes are derived from the interview questions which are based on the reform policy document.
- 4- Provide explicit theoretical definition of each category. The definitions are based on the literature of public policy studies.
- 5- Give example(s) on each definition. The example(s) is derived from the interview text. For example, interviewees are asked about what are the barriers they encountered while implementing the reform process? Some referred to financial obstacles, other to experiences or skills, others to lack of experts, and so on. Thus, these answers are examples of the barriers to implement the reform process.
- 6- Apply coding rules to each category.
- 7- Revise all the categories and coding to ensure formative reliability and that all the categories are covered and constructed appropriately. This is done via examining the categories with the theoretical definitions derived from the literature on each category.

- 8- Read and read through the text to ensure that all the materials are covered and that summative reliability is met.
- 9- Conduct data analysis. Describe and interpret the content of each category, then use quantitative methods to find out the frequency of each category to compare with and discover consistency between students', lecturers', and interviewees' perceptions of the policy.
- 10- Summarize the results of the analysis. It refers to identifying key issues and concepts that are concluded from the analysis.
- 11- Provide critical interference to the findings as well as suggest areas for further investigation.

However, analysing interview data can be difficult because the researcher tries to study and analyse several different components, but still these are interrelated to make the complete phenomenon (Blaxter et al., 2010). A transcribed interview is shown in Appendix 9.

5.9. Ethical Issues of the Research

As a simple definition, ethics refers to behaviour and relationship based on respect and care between participants and researcher. The researcher took ultimate consideration concerning ethical issues and her relationship with the participants and the way she approached them. Prior to starting the fieldwork and coming into contact with the participants, the researcher followed the ethical policy of the University of Southampton and received ethics committee approval (Appendices 10 and 11) for conducting the research fieldwork. Following a formal process of conducting fieldwork in the researcher's home country, the researcher further received written formal approval from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the region (Appendix 12). The latter's approval letter was necessary to approach the selected higher education institutions and receive their presidents' approval, too. It adds authenticity and validity to the researcher's purpose of the visit to each institution. The formal approval went through a hierarchical system starting with the Ministry through to the president of each selected higher education institution, and to the dean of each concerned college, who sent it to the heads of each concerned department. In PT1, this approval needed to be discussed in the meeting of the Board of Trustee in order to be confirmed by all departments concerned.

After getting the formal approval, consent was obtained from each student (Appendices 13 and 14), lecturer (Appendices 15 and 16), and interviewee (Appendices 17 and 18). It was clarified in the consent forms that participants had the right to withdraw at any time without their rights being affected. All the participants were also given an information sheet (Appendices 19 & 20 &

21 & 22 & 23 & 24) to clarify the subject of the study, its purpose, the participant's role in the study, confidentiality, and the participant's rights. In addition, the researcher focused on how all the questions in the survey and the interviews reflected the aims of the study, to avoid bias and sensitivity towards unrelated aspects (Cohen et al., 2011).

All the selected higher education institutions were reported anonymously by using abbreviations such as (PC1, PC2, PT1, PT2, and HEI). The names of the sampled colleges and departments are referred to as they exist. This does not cause any offence or harassment to such colleges and departments, because there are similar names of colleges and departments in other non-sampled higher education institutions in the same city. The place of study has been identified and, again, this does not cause any offence or harassment to the sampled higher education institutions because there are other higher education institutions in the same city. Furthermore, all the data gathered from the questionnaires and the interviews were saved in a password-protected computer by the researcher and will be destroyed when they are no longer needed.

With regard to interviewees' names, none of them are reported personally and they are kept anonymously by the researcher. At the same time, no reference to the interviewees' work position or academic title is made. Due to face-to-face contact with the interviewees, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed (Cohen et al., 2011; Bell, 2005). However, all the interviewees have been categorized into mainly policy makers, senior managers, and junior managers without making reference to their higher education institution. Though the researcher held managerial positions in three of the selected higher education institutions before 2011, she introduced herself as a postgraduate researcher and respected the interviewees' choice of time for the interviews. She formally approached every single interviewee and respected their decisions whether to participate or refuse to participate in the study. All the interviewees are professionals and hold high managerial and leadership positions in the higher education sectors. Therefore, it is understandable that there was no sensitivity or fear between them and the researcher. In order to keep the interviewee's anonymity, everyone in this study is referred to as 'he'. Moreover, almost all the interviewees welcomed the researcher in a friendly and kindly way and some offered a cup of tea or water.

The researcher aimed at ensuring total anonymity, which is possible in conducting a survey (Cohen et al., 2011; Bell, 2005). Though very limited number of the participants in the survey wrote their names on the questionnaire papers, this was deleted by the researcher. Although the researcher held the position of university lecturer in one of the departments at one of the selected universities, she did not choose her students in the sample and did not approach the

department she worked in. The reason is that the selected departments are offering programmes on bachelor level while the department, where the researcher worked in, is offering programmes on diploma level, which is one degree lower than bachelor's. It is important to consider that the researcher worked in that department before 2011, which means before starting the postgraduate research programme. Moreover, there is quite enough distance between the selected samples and the researcher's previous department which can be reached by driving. The academic staff members are different in both departments and the scope of their interest and specialisation is different too. The researcher also introduced herself as a postgraduate student working on conducting research in higher education in the region. She never introduced herself as a former lecturer to the students nor to the lecturers in that university. There was no aggressive behaviour from any student or lecturer while receiving the questionnaire survey or filling it in. Some of the students gently refused to participate in the survey by giving back an empty questionnaire paper to the researcher. The researcher respected their decisions. It is worth mentioning that all the survey samples are over 18 years and mature enough to make their own decisions and be independent. This eliminates any opportunities for bias or coercion to take part in the study.

5.10. Conclusion

This chapter presents a sketch of how the data are collected and how they are to be analysed. It further elaborates the techniques of approaching the sample and all the ethical procedures taken into consideration in order to start the fieldwork. This study is based on mixed research methods for data collection. The data are collected via survey and interviews. Due to the size of the sample of the survey, the researcher used a survey to approach students and lecturers in the selected four universities. The questions of the survey are based on the quality assurance programme introduced in the reform policy in order to find out students' and lecturers' attitudes about the quality assurance programme. The interview approach is used to find out policy makers' and senior and junior managers' attitude about the reform policy, because the purpose is to find out their personal experiences and knowledge about the reform policy. The interview questions are based on the reform policy of higher education in order to find out policy makers' and, senior and junior managers' attitudes about the reform policy. Later, by following quantitative analysis techniques, it will be possible to find out any relationship between students' and lecturers' attitudes in private and public universities. In this way, through survey, interview and quantitative analysis techniques, it will be possible to answer the research questions of this study.

Chapter 6: Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Part One: Presentation of Findings

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, all the empirical data are analysed to provide answers to the research questions. Data are thus classified according to the research questions.

The first research question, which focuses on finding out about students' and lecturers' perceptions about the quality assurance programme, is answered through analysing the students' and lecturers' survey responses. The second research question focuses on finding out the relationship between students' perceptions and background factors such as type of university, type of college (area of interest), and gender. Then, the significance of such relationships is discovered. The third research question is concerned with finding out what policy makers, senior and junior managers think about the reform policy introduced by the MoHESR-KRG in 2009. Analysing interview data provides exclusive answers to this question.

Generally, this chapter presents answers on whether the reform policy led to improvement and progress in higher education institutions in the Kurdistan region.

6.2. Research Question (1): Policy Makers', Senior and Junior Managers' Perceptions

This part focuses on interview data. The interviewees were divided into three categories: policy makers, senior managers, and junior managers. The data from each category are analysed as follows.

6.2.1. Policy Makers

Four policy makers were interviewed in this study. Generally, they referred to the following themes:

❖ Reform

All the policy makers agreed that there has been change in one way or another. They believed that the reform process is still alive and running, but that it might be slower than before. One of

the policy makers attributed the effectiveness of the reform process to the institutions themselves and how they dealt with the process. He stated:

I think it all depends on the institution that is telling that. (He continued to add:) I wouldn't say that this is a perfect quality assurance but it is a very good start and we have learnt a lot. It has shaken the institutions, here, to tell them; Look, you have to set your directions. Where are you going? You have to tell us how you are going to achieve and deliver what you planned for? (Policy maker 1)

Another policy maker believed there were changes after introducing the reform policy and stated:

The reform process is still on going in the background but, it is not as active as before. But, actually, I don't believe when they say that it is no longer alive. If you perceive very nicely, look at the model in the whole of Sulaymaniyah University. It is not the same picture. (Policy maker 2)

One of the policy makers expressed his personal viewpoint about the continuity and activeness of the reform process:

All the sections are running, absolutely. There might be some slowdown in some of them but, no one on earth can stop this because we have a new generation who are waiting and they will not accept the status quo. (Policy maker 3)

Another policy maker pointed to a specific area in which change can be seen more than in any other area. He argued:

Lecturers' perceptions towards student feedback and the whole quality assurance process are much better now. (Policy maker 4)

❖ **Policy Process Cycle**

Generally, the policy makers referred to the following phases of the policy process:

Objectives

All the four policy makers agreed that the reform process aimed at setting standards and adding quality to higher education. It was referred to as 'setting direction' by Policy Maker 1 and raising the quality and standards of education to be more competitive and independent with highest possible standards by Policy Maker 2. The third policy maker stated that the aim is competing with world universities, as shared by the fourth policy maker:

To elevate the standards of teaching and learning in our institutions, to have graduates who can internationally compete to get jobs, to have university independency so that universities can establish their check and balance system,...[and] accrediting every university as soon as possible. (Policy Maker 3)

Planning

There are three different ideas about the plan of the reform process. The first policy maker stated that he did not have much knowledge about the reform and how it started, because he started his career after the reform process began. Both Policy Makers 2 and 3 agreed that the process started with a vision by a former minister of higher education without any committee or 'think tank' organization.

Policy Maker 2 stated that there was not enough time to form a committee to set up the policy agenda. Therefore, the vision of the policy had been drafted and reviewed by two staff members in MoHESR-KRG, but they did not wait to study it in detail, because this would have been taken several months. He argued:

Basically, Kurdistan lacks many such comprehensive bodies. You might call it a policy making body. But, there are individuals who are important in policy making and important in decision making... In the ideal world, they would have liked to have the opportunity to initiate a study, invite experts and design a policy document based on fundamental research as well as a space for the sessions. However, unfortunately, in the KRG and rest of Iraq, there was simply no such mechanisms that in short space of time can give that accuracy or would form such a study. So, there was no such tradition, culture, mechanism, and time. We needed to get on with the reform process and we had to be pragmatic and use our instinct and insight... For a reform like this, you need four years to launch it and the subsequent government to sustain it. (Policy Maker 2).

Concerning the timeframe of the process, he said:

We considered the reform as a long-term process and on-going process that should evolve with time, evolve with pilot studies, with segmentation, with learning, with achievements, with milestones. Every time we introduce new change, we need to review it, reflect on it, and improve it. In our opinion, the condition of higher education in Kurdistan and Iraq will need decades to change... So, clearly, we did not have a specific time deadline but we should say it will take generations not months or years of work. (Policy Maker 2)

He further indicated that introducing the reform policy was not difficult, in the sense that universities are managed by the MoHESR-KRG, heads of universities, Council of the MoHESR-KRG and the Ministerial Council of the KRG. He added:

The system of higher education is too complex and intertwined to be tackled piecemeal as one component at one time. It has to be approached from different angles... and the angles which show the teaching resources, management, international relations investing in new capacity, the environments, the finance, they had to change the system from numerous angles. (Policy Maker 2)

The third policy maker agreed with the second policy maker in terms of submitting only the vision of the reform policy to the ministerial council of the KRG. Later, the vision was discussed and enriched by presidents of universities and advisors. Then, the MoHESR-KRG worked on organizing different committees and departments to work on implementing the process.

The fourth policy maker referred to establishing a department of quality assurance in the MoHESR-KRG with similar departments in each university in the region, a representative in each college, and a coordinator in each department.

Implementation

The reform process had been set up and implemented by the MoHESR-KRG. Therefore, the approach to implementing the policy was top-down. Each of the policy makers referred to an aspect of the reform process that had already been implemented. Policy Maker 1 referred to implementing a quality assurance programme, especially lecturers' portfolios, student feedback, and a CAD programme. He added that there was a committee on quality assurance that met on regular basis and a department of quality assurance in his institution.

The second policy maker referred to many details of areas already implemented. He said:

The way the lectures are delivered now is heavily monitored. Students' feedback is taken, evaluated, and analyzed. Teachers have to participate in the university academic development process and that is evaluated.... Introducing new language and IT tools and raising capacity. Reforming the content of lectures, monitoring the environment, introducing health and safety measures, making the place more suitable for study, ensuring gender equality, making it more women friendly, and reforming the management structure. [We introduced] rules of accreditation of university and departments for private and public. (Policy Maker 2)

With regard to having different levels of implementation in all the universities in the region, despite a centralized system of higher education, he said:

[It] is attributed to the power of the ruling party in each city and lobby. The difference is also attributed to lack of commitment, determination, sustainability, and no pressure of performance. (Policy Maker 2)

Policy Maker 3 gave a clear idea of the aspects that had been approved and implemented. He stated that academic and research areas of the reform policy had been implemented because they were the responsibility and authority of the MoHESR-KRG and so did not need to be approved by a superior body. He said:

Administrative issues and financial issues were not approved. You know why? Because we had to change higher education law.... University should be independent scientifically, administratively, financially, and academically... It should be done through law... The law should provide framework for universities to establish their own check and balance system. (Policy Maker 3)

The fourth policy maker referred to establishing public universities in large districts and distant areas. He mentioned that the reasons behind establishing these universities were geographical and the large number of students in these areas, as well as developing such areas. He further added that another aspect that had been implemented was health and safety:

New campuses of the universities of Sulaimanyah, Koya, Dohuk, Soran, and Zakho are based on our standards of safety. We asked one of the universities to improve their standards of safety and they spent a year to do so before students were enrolled. (Policy Maker 4)

Assessment

Three policy makers agreed that there was an annual assessment for the process. Policy Maker 1 stated that it was early to start an assessment process, because they only started to implement the process last year. But, with regard to lecturers' performance, the institution acknowledged effective performance and cancelled the contracts of lecturers who had underperformed. Policy Makers 2 and 3 stated that it was time to involve international agencies to help with the assessment process, though there is a centralized local committee conducting the assessment process annually. The fourth policy maker stated that there was a plan to assess performance of the universities in order to rank them. Through the annual assessment, he believed that there was

improvement in lecturers' performance, methods of teaching, and academic competition. In addition, he considered the eastern culture as an issue for the assessment process. He said:

We live in an eastern culture where lecturers have special consideration in society. We have not reached the level to accept being evaluated by others, especially by our students. This does not please the lecturers but, it is necessary. We cannot ignore students; feedback because they are one of the components of the higher education system...The feedback of 80% students, who regularly attend their daily classes, is considered for evaluating lecturers' performance. (Policy Maker 4)

He indicated that there was improvement regarding relying on academic criteria while establishing a new academic unit. He rated such improvement as 95 per cent. He further referred to receiving 28 applications to open new private academic units, but only three applications have been approved and ten applications for new public academic units were rejected last year. Policy Maker 4 argued:

Those lecturers who get highest scores in the CAD program in their college are acknowledged by the president of their university. Those who get fewer points or do not get any will be warned if happening for the third time. This warning will also have an impact on the lecturers' academic promotion and vacancy application. (Policy Maker 4)

❖ **Policy Actors**

Policy Maker 1 mentioned institutions' main office of quality assurance and their departmental versions, in addition to the president of the university and the council of the university, as policy actors. He referred to quality assurance staff in the MoHESR-KRG as a source of information and guidance. Both Policy Makers 2 and 3 agreed that members of the Council of the MoHESR-KRG, who are mainly the minister, presidents of universities, advisors, and director generals, have an important role in enriching the debate about the policy document. Policy Maker 2 also indicated that there were also students, lecturers, university staff, and individuals who are experts in decision making and policy making, decision makers from the ruling political party, and people from the opposition party involved in the reform process. Policy Maker 3 added that there are directors and committees of quality assurance as well as WASC and ABET involved in carrying out an accreditation process for some public universities. Policy Maker 4 referred to the department of quality assurance that had been organized, which has similar departments in each university, representatives in each college and a coordinator in each department. They have regular meetings. He also added that the Minister and the Council of the Ministry are decision makers.

❖ Policy Instruments

The first three policy makers agreed that training courses and meetings were the most common policy instruments. Policy Maker 1 added that they were provided with technological instruments such as slide presentations. The Policy Maker 2 considered as policy instruments his personal experience of higher education in Europe, media, political instruments such as political leaders' support, and the draft law of higher education. Policy Maker 3 added that consultation with international universities that have established quality assurance programmes is another policy instrument. Finally, Policy Maker 4 referred to legal instruments such as higher education law and regulations issued by the MoHESR-KRG.

❖ Obstacles

All the policy makers agreed that lecturers did not accept the idea of change and pressure of performance; as Policy Maker 1 indicated, the lecturers did not like student feedback. Policy Maker 2 detailed the types of obstacles facing the process. Among these were: legislation; culture; lack of budget; politics; administration; limited time; lack of determination and the will of leaders; lack of accountability; changes of government cabinet; internal political unrest; an absence of public support, on time, from top leaders; and that the reform process had descended to a low priority in the new government cabinet. Policy Maker 3 expressed it as follows:

When you introduce reform that means you introduce better quality; that means you will introduce a lot of performance pressure on people. This is human nature. They sometimes might not be able to because the culture was not available, culture of quality assurance... even higher education culture itself was not available in the scientific and standard way... we found teachers were coming and signing papers. Hundreds, sometimes thousands were signing 'we do not want quality assurance'. Thousands! And they were trying to convince the government 'we do not need this. Take it out'. They were thinking we are the only country or the only nation that follow this quality assurance procedure!
(Policy Maker 3)

He added that some university leaders were vulnerable to redundancy even though they were in power. The fourth policy maker considered law as the main obstacle. He said that the law was not applied across every single part of society, and personal relationships played a major role in government.

❖ International Cooperation

All four policy makers referred to international cooperation. Policy Maker 1 said that his institution had academic links with one of the universities in the UK and aims to apply the British system of quality assurance. Three policy makers (2, 3, and 4) highlighted their cooperation with WASC and ABET. Policy Maker 2 stated that it was the appropriate decision to involve both WASC and ABET at the beginning of the process, because they are experienced agencies and can identify any gaps in the accreditation process. Policy Maker 3 emphasized that each department of a college should have an international partner. Policy Maker 4 claimed that five public universities and two polytechnic universities had been selected for this process and added that the accreditation process had begun at the colleges of engineering and, later, a similar process is to be applied to all public universities. Moreover, academic staff at the colleges of engineering attended training courses inside and beyond the Kurdistan region.

❖ Accreditation

Policy Maker 1 did not have any information on the accreditation process, but the rest of the policy makers remarked on the role of WASC, ABET, and the directorate of quality assurance in the MoHESR-KRG in the accreditation process. Policy Maker 2 said that there had never been an international accreditation body or self-assessment body in Iraq to help with accreditation. He confirmed that it was not too late to start up international accreditation in Kurdistan universities, because 'This helped to find the gaps then how to fill in these gaps' (Policy Maker 2). Policy Maker 3 stated that the aim of accreditation is to attain the highest academic standards. He continued:

Every university in Kurdistan should be accredited as soon as possible... We are entering Bologna system... I would not say any year or any time but as soon as possible. That is the vision. It should be accredited internationally in all aspects. (Policy maker 3)

Policy Maker 4 stated, 'We have our own standards of establishing a new university. We do not follow European or British or American standards because they have their own system of higher education'.

❖ Academic Development and Research

With regard to CAD and research, Policy Maker 1 stated that the quality assurance office at his institution follows the MoHESR-KRG guidelines, but has its own plan for research. He added that it has its own scientific journal at the institution and funds lecturers who publish a paper or a book. Both Policy Makers 2 and 3 referred to introducing lecturers' portfolio and students' feedback forms, and how the purpose of academic development is to bring high academic standards and

quality to the Kurdish higher education system. Policy Maker 4 referred to many achievements such as lecturers' academic portfolios, student feedback, course handbooks, academic debate lessons, the CAD programme, and having a research centre in each university. He continued that there are PhD and post-doctoral programmes where the researcher can make joint research within or outside the country, but the scope of the conducted research is not promising and below his expectations. He added: 'We have research centres, especially in the College of Engineering, which make investment through research. The income from this research goes to the lecturers who do the research, the College of Engineering, the University, and the MoHESR-KRG'.

❖ **Political Interference**

Policy Maker 1 did not refer to any cases of political involvement in higher education. However, both Policy Makers 2 and 3 indicated that the reform process faced great resistance from university leaders in power and supported by political parties and lobbies. In contrast, Policy Maker 4 said 'I, personally, never heard or saw political parties interfere with quality assurance process because it is a scientific issue'. However, while meeting various people in the higher education sector and having informal conversations with them, the researcher obtained information from two of these people stating that political parties are still interfering in higher education and calling them by phone or sending informal letters trying to impose pressure and approve certain applications. For the purposes of confidentiality and research ethics, no details concerning these people are mentioned here.

The statements expressed by the policy makers indicate attitudes, and these are classified into positive, neutral, or negative according to the following indications:

- 1- Positive attitude: any expression indicating progress, change towards improvement, support, and optimism.
- 2- Negative attitude: any expression indicating pessimism, no improvement, and unsolved obstacles.
- 3- Neutral attitude: any statement that has both a positive and negative meaning.

Accordingly, policy makers' perceptions about the reform policy are shown in Table 11. Senior and junior managers' attitudes are classified according to the same indications concerning positive, negative, or neutral indications.

Table 11: Policy Makers' Perception about the Reform Policy

Themes		Policy Maker 1	Policy Maker 2	Policy Maker 3	Policy Maker 4
Reform Outcome		Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Policy	• Objectives	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Process	• Plan	Neutral	Positive	Positive	Positive
Cycle	• Implementation	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
	• Assessment	Neutral	Positive	Positive	Positive
Policy Actors		Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Policy Instruments		Positive	Neutral	Positive	Positive
Obstacles		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
International Cooperation		Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Accreditation		Neutral	Positive	Positive	Positive
Academic Development & Research		Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Political Interference		No Comment	Yes	Yes	No

6.2.2. Senior Managers

Two senior managers were interviewed: one from a private and one from a public institution. The findings of the interviews are as follows:

❖ Reform

Senior Manager 1 believed that it is necessary to have reform and quality assurance is important to develop. But, he argues that the reform process was not active in all the universities in the region. Senior Manager 2 confirmed that the reform process is still running and said: 'We are at a good level. Many of the items of the process have been implemented. I think that all the parts of the reform process are still in progresses.'

❖ Policy Process Cycle

Both senior managers referred to the following stages of the reform process cycle:

Objectives

Both senior managers agreed that it is necessary to have reform and compete with world universities. Senior Manager 1 stated that if there is no reform, then universities will be left behind as they were before. Moreover, Senior Manager 2 indicated that his institution try to achieve the objectives that have been set in motion in order to progress and achieve better quality.

Plan

Senior Manager 1 did not have details about the plan of the process:

I have no idea about the background of the planning of the reform because it just established in 2008.... I do not know what they implemented and how they plan to reform but I heard from the Minister at that time that it sets the minimum standards. Our aim is to progress this plan. (Senior Manager 1)

Senior Manager 2 stated that the reform plan is supported by presidents of universities one hundred per cent and added:

There have been problems in their plan and the time schedule for implementing all these items in parallel altogether, especially the HCDP, because the financial infrastructure was not good.... There have been some committees working in the university like the board of vice presidents who worked with the council of the Ministry [MoHESR-KRG] which is represented by all, you know, presidents of public universities. In that committee, they negotiated and debated about these programs a lot, for many times and hours. They spent many hours just debating about these programs. Finally, the Minister himself will give priority to the items of the reform, I think. And some of the items need a lot of money. (Senior Manager 2)

Implementation

Senior Manager 1 stated that his institution is keen on ensuring good standards of buildings and safety conditions. He argued that there are concerned people working on implementing the quality assurance programme. Senior Manager 2 indicated that several aspects of the reform

process had been implemented, such as: sending scholars to study abroad within the frame of HCDP; developing curricula; introducing new teaching methods; introducing modules of critical thinking and academic debate; and having 34 postgraduates studying on split-site PhD programmes. He further stated that they try to implement the process item by item.

Assessment

Both senior managers agreed that they ran annual assessment at their institutions. Senior Manager 1 stated that there are two questionnaires per year at his institution. Students are given a questionnaire to evaluate their lecturers' and administrative staff members' performance. Lecturers are also given a questionnaire to evaluate administrative staff members' performance. Based on the results of these questionnaires, the work contract for underperforming academic and administrative staff may not be renewed for the next year, while effective performance by academic and administrative staff is rewarded at a special ceremony for this purpose. Senior Manager 2 stated that there are external assessors who evaluate each department in terms of curricula, infrastructure, labs, and teaching methods. He added that students of English language lessons are given two questionnaires; one at the beginning of the year and the second at the end. The purpose is to check progress in students' learning and the factors affecting it. The curriculum of English language lessons is especially designed for this institution by a European publishing agency. Therefore, the final report on students' perception about this lesson is sent to the curriculum author in order to review the book once a year. He agreed with Senior Manager 1 that they run lecturers' performance assessment annually. They reward effective performance by a formal letter signed by the dean of the college. A lecturer cannot apply for academic promotion without having this acknowledgment letter. If a lecturer has weak performance in all aspects covered by CAD and for the subsequent three years, he/she no longer has the right to teach. Generally, Senior Manager 2 was optimistic about the reform process and stated: 'I think people are very happy. Even the tutors, lecturers, and department staff are very happy about the progress of the quality assurance, I think, now' (Senior Manager 2)

❖ Policy Instruments

With regard to policy resources, Senior Manager 1 stated:

The tools are coming from the Ministry of Higher Education and we implement these tools in our staff handbook. The objectives and the rights of the lecturers and all administrative staff in the university are in that book. So, it is our resource. (Senior manager 1)

Senior manager 2 referred to several resources they had while working on the process. He said that they had leadership training courses sponsored by the DELFI Programme in the UK and the USA. He added that they attended and held several seminars and workshops about how to implement the quality assurance programme. He continued: 'The Ministry sent photocopier machines, computers, and everything possible to every college to establish the quality assurance office. But for the last two years, we did not receive anything, no training course, no fund, and no facilities' (Senior Manager 2)

❖ **Policy Actors**

With regard to the policy actors, both senior managers agreed that the following are all policy actors: the Minister of Higher Education; Council of the Ministry of Higher Education, which mainly consists of presidents of universities, advisors to the MoHESR-KRG, and general directors; vice-presidents; and heads of quality assurance.

❖ **Obstacles**

Obstacles were referred to by both senior managers. Senior Manager 1 stated:

I think there is no big problem or big obstacle in implementing the process because the system is helpful for implementing the quality assurance programme. The only obstacle, I think, is the evaluation of the students. Sometimes, their evaluation is not objective. They are giving good marks to the lecturer who, he or she does not care about students' attendance or the lecturer who give good marks to the students without presenting good lecture and information. I think, this is the greatest obstacle in term of implementing the teaching quality assurance process. (Senior Manager 1)

In addition to student feedback, Senior Manager 2 stated that one of the obstacles is the gap between older and new generations of academic staff. The new generation of lecturers has mostly been awarded their academic degree from outside the country and has a different vision from the older generation of lecturers. He stated that there was no appropriate financial infrastructure to launch the process and send thousands of students to study abroad. Other obstacles are a lack of regulations and funds for research, different colleges and departments being distributed haphazardly around the city centre, the difficulty in applying the new administrative structure set up in the reform policy, and not enough time to implement the plan of the reform.

❖ **International Cooperation**

Both senior managers stated that their institutions have academic links with world universities. Senior Manager 1 referred to having an academic relationship with 30 universities and funding two students to study abroad. Senior Manager 2 stated that his institution has academic relationship with many universities. Moreover, his institution runs a split-site PhD programme of which students complete part of their programme in a partner university abroad.

❖ **Academic Development and Research**

Senior Manager 1 stated that his institution applies the CAD programme that focuses on lecturers' academic activities over the year. He adds: 'We are giving flexibility to the lecturers. They are teaching their curricula but they do not stick to it. They are searching on the Internet and they are capable to bring and deliver what is applied in good universities in the world.' He further shows that they prepare to offer taught postgraduate programme when approved by the MoHESR-KRG. It is worth mentioning that the MoHESR-KRG decided to stop any kind of postgraduate programmes in private universities after the reform process, because they did not possess the potential to offer them. Senior Manager 2 confirms that the quality assurance programme is the major part of the reform process. He stated that they increased the hours of teaching English language from two to four hours per week and for constant 30 weeks a year. He agrees with Senior Manager 1 that they implement the CAD programme each year. With regards to research, Senior Manager 2 indicated that his institution runs the split-site PhD programme and scholars have to publish at least one research paper prior to the viva. He adds that there are several consultancy bureaus in the different colleges run by his institution. These bureaus cooperate with public and private sectors to implement and run different projects. However, any income resulting from these projects goes to the lecturers (60%), department (20%), university (10%), and the MoHESR-KRG (10%).

❖ **Accreditation**

Senior Manager 1 did not refer to any information about accreditation. However, senior manager (2) stated that his institution cooperates with ABET to accredit the College of Engineering. He added: 'Also for Business department, we started to work with some bodies in the US to get accreditation for that. But for the whole university, I think our infrastructure is not enough to start accreditation.... But, we will try to find partnership to get accreditation per individual department' (Senior Manager 2).

❖ **Political Interference**

Senior Manager 1 stated that the reason behind preventing private universities to offer postgraduate programmes is politics:

We applied to the Ministry of Higher Education to open master programmes... and we have joined new venture with some universities to open master programme but, till now we did not get any answer from the Ministry of Higher Education. See, till now, they say that not giving the permission to the private universities is not related to the policy of the private universities. It is related to the political decision. (Senior Manager 1)

Senior Manager 2 did not refer to any role of political parties within the higher education sector. Senior managers' perceptions about the reform policy are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Senior managers' perception about the reform policy

Themes		Senior Manager 1	Senior Manager 2
Reform Outcome		Negative	Positive
Policy Process Cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives • Plan • Implementation • Assessment 	Positive	Positive
Policy Actors		Positive	Positive
Policy Instruments		Positive	Positive
Obstacles		Yes	Yes
International Cooperation		Positive	Positive
Accreditation		Neutral	Positive
Academic Development and Research		Positive	Positive
Political Interference		Yes	No Comment

6.2.3. Junior Managers

Common themes which both junior managers referred are the following:

❖ Reform

Both junior managers believed that there is change in the higher education sector after the reform policy. Junior Manager 1 stated:

They now know what is the mission and vision of the departments. They know that the philosophy should be changed, not the subjects. The subjects which are not useful for students and their career, they should be removed. There are optional lessons which were not available before... there is quality in teaching now. Every teacher should prepare the course handbook to tell students what the course is about and how they are going to be evaluated. (Junior Manager 1)

Junior Manager 2 agreed that there is change and progress in lecturers' attitudes towards the quality assurance process and student feedback.

❖ Policy Process Cycle

Objectives

Junior Manager 1 indicated that the objectives of developing the curricula are to develop the second language (by which he means teaching English language as a second language), developing students' critical thinking, developing students' computer skills, and changing the curricula and the methods of teaching. Junior Manager 2 stated that, generally, the objective of the reform policy is to bring quality to and develop the higher education system.

Plan

Junior Manager 1 argues that the plan started and was introduced to his university by a meeting of the heads of the concerned departments in each college. He continued that many meetings and workshops were held to introduce the plan in detail and clarify everything to them. Junior Manager 2 referred to the plan of the reform on a macro level. He said:

We organized a team and had several training, workshops and conferences... we started to discuss and talk about quality assurance in the meetings and introduced quality assurance culture... we selected a group of universities as a sample in order to implement the process from October 2009 to June 2009... because of resistance and misunderstanding between us and universities' staff, we decided that 2010–2011 to be considered as a pilot programme. So, 2011–2012 was the real implementation... at the beginning, we did not have a detailed well-designed plan or policy but, we considered a

year and a half as pilot and test. So this pilot was like training for lecturers to get familiar with and experiences of the reform. (Junior Manager 2)

Implementation

On the one hand, Junior Manager 1 referred to implementing parts of the reform policy concerned with curricula development. He stated that the College of Basic Education cooperates with the public sector to find out its needs. Other colleges have been asked to cooperate with their peer offices in the public or private sectors but, unfortunately they did not do so. He added that they do not have a data set that identifies the needs of both sectors up to now. Furthermore, he stated that lecturers are asked to look at the websites of world well-known universities and see what subjects or modules are delivered, to choose the basics necessary for each major. On the another hand, Junior Manager 2 stated that around 30–40 per cent of the reform policy has been implemented up to now. Of these, he mentions teaching quality assurance, curriculum development, CAD, students' feedback, course handbook, annual peer review of lecturers' performance, teaching English language in the first year of each department, introducing academic debate lesson, and accreditation as the implemented parts. He added that there are many areas that need to be worked to implementing them: 'We still need to do a self-assessment report, quality assurance in research, quality assurance in library, management, and others still we did not begin with' (Junior Manager 2).

Assessment

Both junior managers agreed that their institutions run a kind of assessment to check on progress. Junior Manager 1 stated that he conducted surveys to find out students' attitudes towards the curricula. He stated, 'I think that our graduates now are more professional and what we say, they are better than the other ones previously. I believe in that, and we made some questionnaires about their attitudes and we felt that really. These changes in the curriculum made the change in the abilities of the students.' Junior Manager 2 again referred to assessment on the macro level. He stated that the first year and a half of starting the process was considered as a test to find out academic staff members' reaction to the process. This test was very useful to identify the obstacles. He further referred to students' feedback, which is used to evaluate lecturers' performance. So, if a lecturer was awarded 4.5 score out of 5 then he/she will be acknowledged. Last year, 123 lecturers were issued with a letter of acknowledgment signed by the Minister of Higher Education. He added that if a lecturer did not attain the required score, he/she would be reminded by the head of the department.

❖ Policy Instruments

Both junior managers agreed that there were training courses and workshops inside and outside the region. Junior Manager 1 stated that he is still in contact with an American university that is helping with curricula development, research, and methods of teaching with some of the Kurdish colleges. He further noted that the policy document issued by the MoHESR-KRG is another source of the policy. Furthermore, Junior Manager 2 referred to training courses, workshops, meetings, and conference as sources of introductions to and implementation of the reform process. He added that his institution deployed media channels to introduce the quality assurance programme and issuing a teaching quality assurance booklet as a guide. Finally, he indicated that formal letters have been issued to heads of quality assurance to clarify their responsibilities and duties.

❖ **Policy Actors**

The first junior manager stated that heads of the directorates are involved in the process, besides the vice-president of sciences and research. The second junior manager argued that all presidents of universities, quality assurance and accreditation team are on a macro level, as are the Council of the MoHESR-KRG, the Minister of Higher Education, General Director of Quality Assurance and Accreditation, and heads of quality assurance in every university and college.

❖ **Market and Future Career**

Junior Manager 1 stated that there is a kind of relationship between the curricula and market needs. He indicated that lecturers are asked to choose courses necessary for students' careers after graduation, but he evaluated this relationship as totally not good: 'I believe that the changes we did in the first year curricula to foundation year, teaching them basics in critical thinking, seminar presentation, and report writing prepare students for better future' (Junior Manager 1). Junior Manager 2 blamed the office of curricula development for not being able to establish a link between needs of market and students' future career. He said:

We introduced English language because we know it is widely needed in our labour market. We did not update our curricula to meet market needs. We have an active department of curricula development and they do a hard work but, they did nothing in this regard. They should have done it by now and it is easy. It can be done by making some Internet search. For example, I am teaching [X] course and can go to [X] or [Y] programs or whatever in university of [X] and find what modules they have. Then, I write a letter to the dean saying that I did this search and found that these items are taught in the university of [X] and [Y]. So, please let me know what you think. And they might do

this search at home and consider it as academic activities and claim for points to be considered for CAD [laughing]. Then they ask for acknowledgment! (Junior Manager 2)

❖ **Obstacles**

Both junior managers agreed that there are many obstacles to implementing the reform process. Junior Manager 1 stated that lecturers do not like even the idea of change. He added that 'Some teachers want to do it but they are not able to. Some teachers do not want to remove parts of their curricula because they want to get more lectures and allowance. Some take it personal. Some say how a big process like this is led by a [gender issue]'. The same junior manager indicated that there is lack of cooperation from heads of some of the departments, and lack of facilities such as fund and physical infrastructure. Junior Manager 2 referred to many details. He argued that 80 per cent of lecturers did not hear about quality assurance before introducing the reform process. Lecturers were against student feedback to evaluate lecturers' performance, because they argued that students are not capable of providing accurate and true feedback. He added that there is a weak system of higher education. He said that students have 160 credits in undergraduate programmes while there are only 130 credits in most European universities. In Kurdistan universities, students have 30 hours of classes per week. In return, they should be given 90 hours of academic activities and it means 120 hours in total per week. He said that this does not work for students. Another obstacle he mentions is having 'lazy' academic and administrative staff. He continued:

Lecturers have four hours for teaching per week and they think that this is all about being a lecturer. We added more responsibilities to lecturers in the quality assurance process, for example, CAD requirements, attending seminars, participating in committees, and etc. they do not like these extra activities and complain that these are Western culture and do not suit us. They collected 600 votes against me to leave the quality assurance office. (Junior Manager 2)

Moreover, he claimed that there is a lack experienced staff to work on quality assurance programme, and this is why it is very hard to follow up all the works of quality assurance in all the universities of the region. He added that lecturers, heads of departments, deans, vice-presidents, or even some presidents of universities do not cooperate with heads of quality assurance offices. The second junior manager referred to lack of a special budget as another obstacle to implement the process. He noted that all universities have been formally asked to claim for a specific amount of budget to be added to their annual budget, but unfortunately many universities did not follow the instruction. He continued that some universities did not organize their quality assurance office

and are not interested in the programme, while others have well organized offices. Furthermore, he said that they lack resources. Finally, he indicated that:

We are careless people. Most of the time, we criticize the government but we should criticize ourselves first. We do not have the sense of responsibility. The government is run by manager and general managers. 80% of the right person is not in the right position and have no knowledge about their work... we have lots of waste of time and money. Here, the final word is for the president or the head while the members just keep quiet and follow. This is wrong. (Junior Manager 2)

❖ **International Cooperation**

Both junior managers confirmed that they have cooperation with world universities for academic purposes. Junior Manager 1 referred to having international universities with two American universities. Junior Manager 2 stated:

We have cooperation with WASC in California for accreditation purpose and it is well known in the world... I was against this cooperation because it was very costly and it is better to start an internal accreditation then, if any of our universities is interested in international accreditation, they can start the cooperation themselves. And I still insist on this idea. (Junior Manager 2)

He added that there is also cooperation with ABET, which is specific to engineering colleges: 'UNESCO has started to organize workshops for the staff of the Colleges of Engineering for one year and a half. They submitted their self-assessment report and it will be reviewed by experts... it is a successful process until now.'

❖ **Academic Development and Research**

Junior Manager 1 referred to a method of teaching that he describes as being lecturer or content-centred. He attributed this to lecturers being overloaded with teaching, aiming at covering all their curricula, and weak follow up by the quality assurance team. However, Junior Manager 2 referred to the CAD programme of which each academic title has a specific number of points to collect per year, and that lecturers in the new and small universities have fewer points than lecturers in the big and old universities.

❖ **Accreditation**

Junior Manager 1 was not concerned with any accreditation programme. Junior Manager 2 referred to cooperating with both WASC and ABET for accreditation purposes, as mentioned earlier. He continued:

The process of opening a new academic unit is not like before [he means before the reform process] when the concerned university sends a formal letter asking to approve the request. Now, we have our team who should approve such applications. The concerned university should fill in our form, state the vision and mission of the academic unit, state the number of lecturers, courses, units, number and size of teaching halls, library, and books and references. Later, our team will visit the university to check out. If ever thing is alright, we suggest to the senior committee of quality assurance and accreditation that our team has visited the spot and everything is alright. Is something is vague, we call the person who submitted the application to visit us and clarify the vague points. (Junior Manager 2)

He also argued that he preferred to have a national agency for quality assurance and accreditation in the region and considered this step as the start point to establish quality assurance in Kurdistan universities, because the country will not be developed if there is no system, he claimed: ‘If we establish this, higher education will develop in Kurdistan’ (Junior Manager 2).

❖ **Political Interference**

Only Junior Manager 2 indicated that some academic leaders or senior academic managers have support from political parties. Therefore, even if they have a weak evaluation by their staff, they will not be replaced by another academic manager. He added, ‘I can tell you there is some VIP or politicians’ influences when opening a new academic unit. But, this has decreased about 90% after the reform process.’ Junior managers’ perception about the reform policy is shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Junior managers' perception about the reform policy

Themes		Junior Manager 1	Junior Manager 2
Reform Outcome		Positive	Positive
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives 	Positive	Positive
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan 	Positive	Positive
Cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation 	Positive	Positive
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment 	Positive	Positive

Policy Actors	Positive	Positive
Policy Instruments	Positive	Positive
Market and Future Career	Neutral	Negative
Obstacles	Yes	Yes
International Cooperation	Positive	Positive
Accreditation	Neutral	Positive
Academic Development and Research	Negative	Positive
Political Interference	Neutral	Yes

In a nut-shell, the interviewees' attitudes concerning the different sections of the reform policy are shown as percentages in Table 14.

Table 14: Interviewees' attitude concerning different sections of the reform policy

Items	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Reform status	87.5%	0%	12.5%
Policy objectives	100%	0%	0%
Policy plan	75%	25%	0%
Policy implementation	100%	0%	0%
Policy assessment	87.5%	12.5%	0%
Policy actors	100%	0%	0%
Policy instruments	87.5%	12.5%	0%
Obstacles exist	100%	0%	0%
Establishing international academic relationship	100%	0%	0%
Academic development and research	87.5%	0%	12.5%
Accreditation	62.5%	37.5%	0%

Political interference exist	50%	37.5%	12.5%
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Generally, almost all the interviewees have positive attitudes towards the reform process. Taking into consideration the common themes which all the interviewees referred to, their attitudes are shown as percentages in the Figures 6 :

6.3. Research Question 2: Lecturer and Student Perceptions

Overall, students and lecturers have a similar perception of the quality assurance programme. Both agree that it is an effective programme. Here, lecturers' and students' perceptions are analysed separately, then both perceptions are compared to find out if both groups agree or disagree on all aspects relating to the quality assurance programme.

6.3.1. Lecturers' Perceptions

Considering each section in the lecturers' survey, the teaching and learning section is concerned with learning outcomes, method of teaching, research conduction, students' learning, and encouraging students to undertake independent activities. Most of the lecturers (110 lecturers, 54.7%) indicated that the quality of teaching and learning improved after the reform process. They (193 lecturers, 96%) stated that they give students some time to ask questions to find out if students achieved effective learning, and that students prefer the lecturer approach to teaching where most effort is focused on the lecturers (160 lecturers, 79.9%). In addition, there are (59 lecturers (29.4%) with a neutral attitude towards the quality of teaching and learning while (32 lecturers (15.9%) have a negative attitude towards the quality of teaching and learning; they (110 lecturers, 54.7%) do not integrate research into teaching, they (86 lecturers, 42.8%) do not encourage students to undertake independent studies, and indicate that learning outcomes do not reflect aims of the course (84 lecturers, 41.8%). Table 15 shows the percentage of lecturers' positive attitudes towards the quality of teaching and learning.

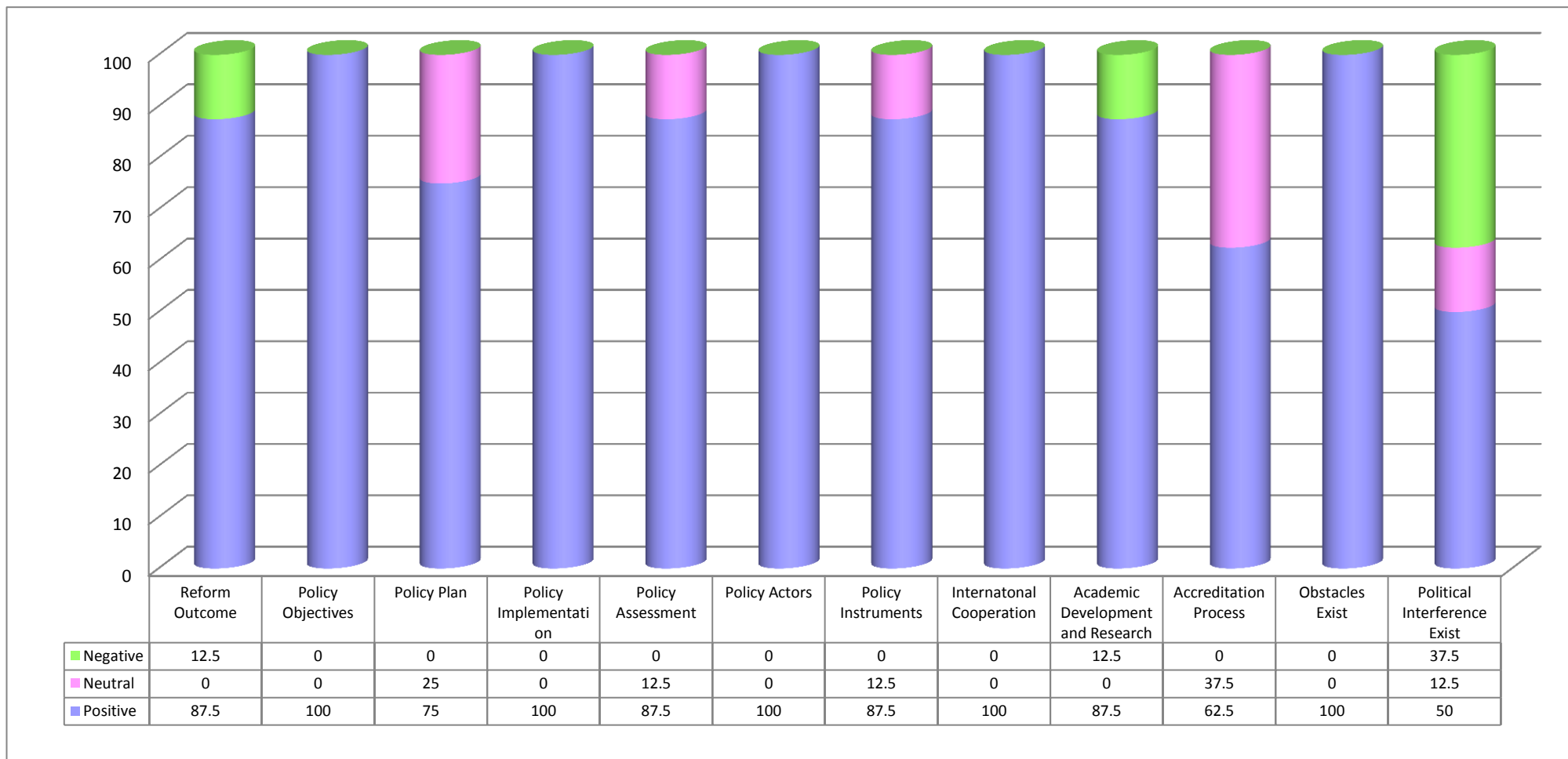


Figure 6: Interviewees' perception of the reform policy

Table 15: Percentage of lecturers expressed positive attitude towards the quality of teaching and learning

Item	Positive attitude
I give my students some time to ask questions and discuss inside class.	96%
Students like lectures better than other forms of teaching (e.g. seminar discussions, working groups).	79.9%

With regard to the role of university in rebuilding the society and generating active society members, generally most lecturers (154 lecturers, 76.6%) have a positive attitude towards the role of universities in rebuilding society and generating active graduates (130 lecturers, 64.7%) able to make society tolerant (125 lecturers, 62.2%) and cohesive (126 lecturers, 62.7%), and establish social network (129 lecturers, 64.2%) in society. They further believe that the programme they teach is important for society development (193 lecturers, 96%). Only (13) lecturers (6.5%) have a negative attitude towards the role of universities to rebuild the society. The number of lecturers who neither agree nor disagree on the effective role of university is (34) lecturers (16.9%). Table 16 shows lecturers' positive attitudes to the role of universities in society.

Table 16: Lecturers' positive attitude towards the role of university

Item	Positive attitude
Studying programmes are important for society development	96%
Students are able to establish social network in society	64.2%
Students are able to contribute to make society cohesive	62.7%
Students are able to contribute to make society tolerant	62.2%
Universities are for generating active society members	64.7%

With regard to the academic development and research section that focuses on the new PhD system, academic portfolio, CAD programme, and research conduction and investment, the majority of the lecturers (103, 51.2%) expressed a positive attitude to achieving academic development. They (145 lecturers, 72.1%) stated that the new PhD programme system is of higher quality than the old and that their academic portfolio is considered for academic promotion (139 lecturers, 69.2%). They also claim that they are keen on organizing their academic portfolio annually (154 lecturers, 76.6%) and fulfill requirements of the CAD programme (153

lecturers, 76.1%). But, (51) lecturers (25.4%) have a different perception concerning their academic development and investment through research, as they show that their university has no active research centre (125 lecturers, 62.2%), and that universities do not secure extra income through research (175 lecturers, 87.1%) and do not encourage investment through research (159 lecturers, 79.1%). However, there are (47) lecturers (23.4%) who expressed a neutral attitude towards academic development. Table 17 shows the percentages of lecturers' attitudes towards academic development and investment through research.

Table 17: Lecturers' attitudes to the quality of academic development and investment through research

Item	Positive attitude
The split-site PhD programme has higher quality than the old system of PhD programme.	72.1%
I am keen on organizing my academic portfolio every year.	76.6%
My academic portfolio is considered for academic promotion.	69.2%
I fulfill requirements of the continuous academic development (CAD) programme.	76.1%
The university has a research centre.	62.2%
The university encourages investment through research.	78.1%
The university secures extra income through research.	87.1%

Aspects of the quality assurance programme to which lecturers expressed negative perceptions about include the teaching environment. The majority, some 89 lecturers (44.3%), are not happy with the teaching environment, inappropriate copies of books about their area of interest (97 lecturers, 48.3%), inappropriate other resources (116 lecturers, 57.7%), bad quality materials and equipment in laboratories (150 lecturers, 74.6%), and lack of facilities for physically disabled staff (193 lecturers, 96%). In contrast, 88 lecturers (43.8%) indicated that teaching environments have good quality and high standards (Table 18). They further indicated that they are satisfied with their work office (112 lecturers, 55.7%), the class size they have (116 lecturers, 57.7%), the availability of appropriate resources related to their area of interest (89 lecturers, 44.3%), the importance of an electronic library (199 lecturers, 99%), the number of academic staff in their department (101 lecturers, 50.2%), maintenance of safety and health conditions (112 lecturers, 55.7%), the availability of quiet area for students to study on campus (104 lecturers, 51.7%), and

Table 18: Lecturers' positive attitudes towards the quality of teaching environment

Item	Positive attitude
School/department building has a high standard quality.	47.8%
I am satisfied with my work office.	55.7%
My class size has suitable number of students.	57.7%
There are appropriate available resources about my teaching area (e.g. books, journals, and library).	44.3%
An appropriate electronic library is essential.	99%
There is quiet area provided for students to study while on campus.	51.7%
Safety and health conditions are maintained in my department.	55.7%

having no outside noise to affect students' learning (110 lecturers, 54.7%). Moreover, only 24 lecturers (11.9%) have a neutral attitude to the teaching environment.

As far as the quality of courses and programmes are concerned, most of the lecturers (103, 51.2%) said that courses and programmes are of low standard. They indicated that academic programmes do not prepare students for future employment (126 lecturers, 62.7%), that courses do not help students to build up their academic knowledge (136 lecturers, 67.7%), that courses do not make the programmes have good quality (106 lecturers, 52.7%), or that they do not update their course handbook annually (138 lecturers, 68.7%). But 34 lecturers (16.9%) agreed that the courses and programmes are of good quality and that their course handbook is informative and organized (170 lecturers, 84.6%), (Table 19). There are 64 lecturers (31.8%) with neutral perception about the courses and academic programmes.

Table 19: Lecturers' positive attitude towards the quality of courses and programmes

Item	Positive attitude
Course handbook is informative and organized	84.6%

Evaluation and assessment is the section on which most lecturers complained. It focuses on areas concerned with giving students the opportunity to give feedback, accuracy of students' feedback, exam schedule, learning measure, giving students appropriate feedback, and external assessors. Most of the lecturers have a negative attitude (99 lecturers, 49.3%) towards the quality of

evaluation and feedback process. They stated that students do not provide accurate feedback on their performance (162 lecturers, 80.6%), or that they do not give students appropriate feedback on their learning (98 lecturers, 48.8%), or there are no other measurements to measure students' learning apart from exams (135 lecturers, 67.2%). In contrast, 40 lecturers (19.9%) have a positive attitude towards the quality of feedback and evaluation process (Table 20). Moreover, they argued that they give students the opportunity to give feedback on their performance (157 lecturers, 78.1%), announce exams timetable at the appropriate time (134 lecturers, 66.7%), that the assessment they receive from external assessors is based on academic criteria (114 lecturers, 56.7%), and that they are satisfied with the external assessor's evaluation of their academic portfolio. In between, there are 62 lecturers (30.8%) with a neutral attitude to quality (88 lecturers, 43.8%), feedback, and evaluation.

Table 20: Lecturers' positive attitude towards the quality of evaluation and feedback

Item	Positive attitude
I give students the opportunity to give feedback on my performance	78.1%
I announce exams timetable on appropriate time	66.7%
Examination is an important measure for students' learning	61.7%
External assessor's assessment is based on academic criteria only	56.7%
I'm satisfied with the outcome of the external assessor's evaluation of my academic portfolio.	43.8%

The section on the use of technology focuses on providing appropriate Internet services, e-learning, and training courses. The majority of the lecturers (154 lecturers, 76.6%) expressed how they are not satisfied with the quality of such services. They argued that there are no appropriate Internet and information technology services (134 lecturers, 66.7%), and most of them do not use learning videos (160 lecturers, 79.6%), iPads (185 lecturers, 92%), or audio approaches (170 lecturers, 84.6%); besides, the university does not provide training on computer applications, even if there is demand from the staff (82 lecturers, 40.8%). Only ten lecturers (5%) claimed a good quality of Internet and information technology services (Table 21) and how they specifically present their sessions in a PowerPoint presentation (133 lecturers 66.2%), while (37) lecturers (18.4%) have a neutral attitude.

Table 21: Lecturers' positive attitude towards the quality of technology services

Item	Positive attitude
Lecturers use PowerPoint	66.2%

The section concerned with continuous development programmes for academic staff focuses on providing training courses on pedagogy, students' assessment, teaching skills, and curricula development. Some 106 lecturers (52.7%) argued that there is no effective programme for lecturers to develop their skills. They stated that there is no available appropriate training on student assessment (145 lecturers, 72.1%), they have no access to online teaching professional development programmes (151 lecturers, 75.1%), they do not have opportunities to improve their teaching skills (107 lecturers, 53.2%), or they cannot even obtain consultancy service on developing curricula (122 lecturers, 60.7%). However, 39 lecturers (19.4%) expressed positive perceptions (Table 22). They claimed that the available 20 per cent range of flexibility is appropriate for course content development (98 lecturers, 48.8%), they are encouraged to develop their research skills (97 lecturers, 48.3%), and that pedagogy training courses are of good quality (88 lecturers, 43.8%). The number of lecturers who expressed a neutral attitude is 56 (27.9%).

Table 22: Lecturers' positive attitude towards the quality of continuous development programme

Item	Positive attitude
Pedagogy training courses are of good quality	43.8%
Encouragement to develop research skills	48.3%
20% range is appropriate for course content development	48.8%

The section on social justice emphasizes equity and discourages discrimination. Overall, 90 lecturers (44.8%) indicated that the reform process did not lead to considerable changes here. They argued that lecturers' selection for managerial vacancies is not transparent (112 lecturers, 55.7%), there is no equity in job offers in higher education (111 lecturers, 55.2%), political interference in higher education institutions had not decrease (98 lecturers, 48.8%), and that CAD is not considered when applying for a job (105 lecturers, 52.2%). In contrast, 43 lecturers (21.4%) have a positive attitude towards social justice (Table 23). They claim there is equal opportunity for Master's and PhD holders to win jobs (95 lecturers, 47.3%). They did agree that political affiliation has an impact on getting a job (100 lecturers, 49.8%) and that there is discrimination in recruiting

Table 23: Lecturers' positive attitude towards social justice

Item	Positive attitude
Master's and PhD holders have equal opportunities in getting a job.	47.3%
My political affiliation has an impact on getting a job.	49.8%
There is discrimination in recruiting academic staff.	55.2%
I think that lecturers sometimes discriminate students because of their gender, religion, ethnicity or political opinions.	60.2%

academics (111 lecturers, 55.2%) and that there was discrimination against students because of religious, gender, ethnical, or political background (121 lecturers, 60.2%). Some 68 lecturers had a neutral attitude (33.8%).

Finally, the section of change emphasizes the effectiveness of the reform process and its outcomes to find out lecturers' attitude about the process after five years. The majority of lecturers (133 lecturers, 66.2%) expressed that the reform process did not make any change or progress in the past years. They argued that the quality of information and communication technology (126 lecturers, 62.7%), university building and office (121 lecturers, 60.2%), and research capacity and output (112 lecturers, 55.7%) has not improved or changed in recent years. They claimed that students' skills in discussion and critical thinking (86 lecturers, 42.8%), and the opportunities for staff development in research (129 lecturers, 64.2%) or teaching (141 lecturers, 70.1%) have not improved in recent years. In contrast to these perceptions, 29 lecturers (14.4%) agreed that the reform process led to great changes and development (Table 24), as in the quality of teaching (124 lecturers, 61.7%) and students' learning (86 lecturers, 42.8%). Some 39 lecturers (19.4%) have a neutral perception.

Table 24: Lecturers' attitude towards the quality of change in the recent years

Item	Positive attitude
Quality of teaching has changed in the recent years	61.7%
Quality of students' learning has changed in the recent years	42.8%

Lecturers' attitudes to teaching quality assurance programme are shown in Table 25 and Figure 7.

Table 25: Lecturers' attitude to teaching quality assurance programme

Items	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Teaching and learning	54.7% (110)	29.4% (59)	15.9% (32)
Role of university	76.6% (154)	16.9% (34)	6.5% (13)
Academic achievement and research	51.2% (103)	23.4% (47)	25.4% (51)
Evaluation and feedback	19.9% (40)	30.8% (62)	49.3% (99)
Teaching environment	43.8% (88)	11.9% (24)	44.3% (89)
Social justice	21.4% (43)	33.8% (68)	44.8% (90)
Courses and programmes	16.9% (34)	31.8% (64)	51.2% (103)
Technology services	5% (10)	18.4% (37)	76.6% (154)
Academic development programme	19.4% (39)	27.9% (56)	52.7% (106)
Change and progress	14.4% (29)	19.4% (39)	66.2% (133)

Overall, the majority of lecturers (91 lecturers, 45.3%) expressed a neutral attitude to the teaching quality assurance programme, while (76) lecturers (37.8%) have a negative attitude. However, 34 lecturers (16.9%) argued that the quality assurance programme is successful. The overall results of lecturers' perceptions are shown as percentages in Table 26 and Figure 8.

6.3.2. Students' Perceptions

Here, the overall result of each section and the final overall result of students' survey are presented. The first section of the students' survey is evaluation and feedback, which focuses on students' feedback on lecturers' performance and the evaluation of students' learning. Most of the students (313 students, 39.1%) have a positive attitude to the quality of feedback and the evaluation process. They stated that they have the opportunity to give feedback on their lecturers' performance (408 students, 50.9%) and their evaluation of the lecturers is taken into consideration (517 students, 64.5%). They felt that they have enough time to prepare for

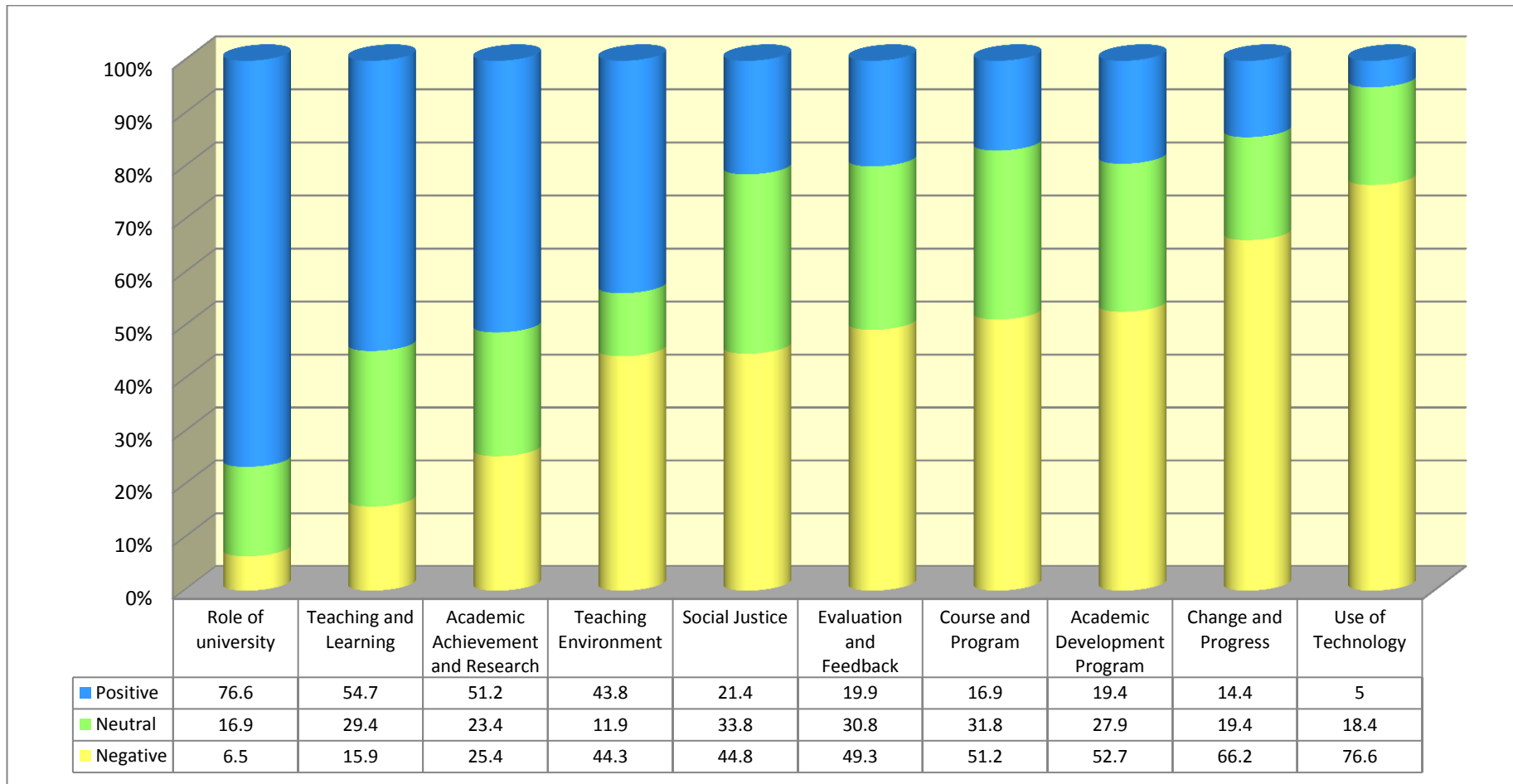


Figure 7: Lecturers' perception about each aspect of the quality assurance program

Table 26: Lecturers' overall attitude to the teaching quality assurance programme

Items	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Overall attitude	16.9%	45.3%	37.8%

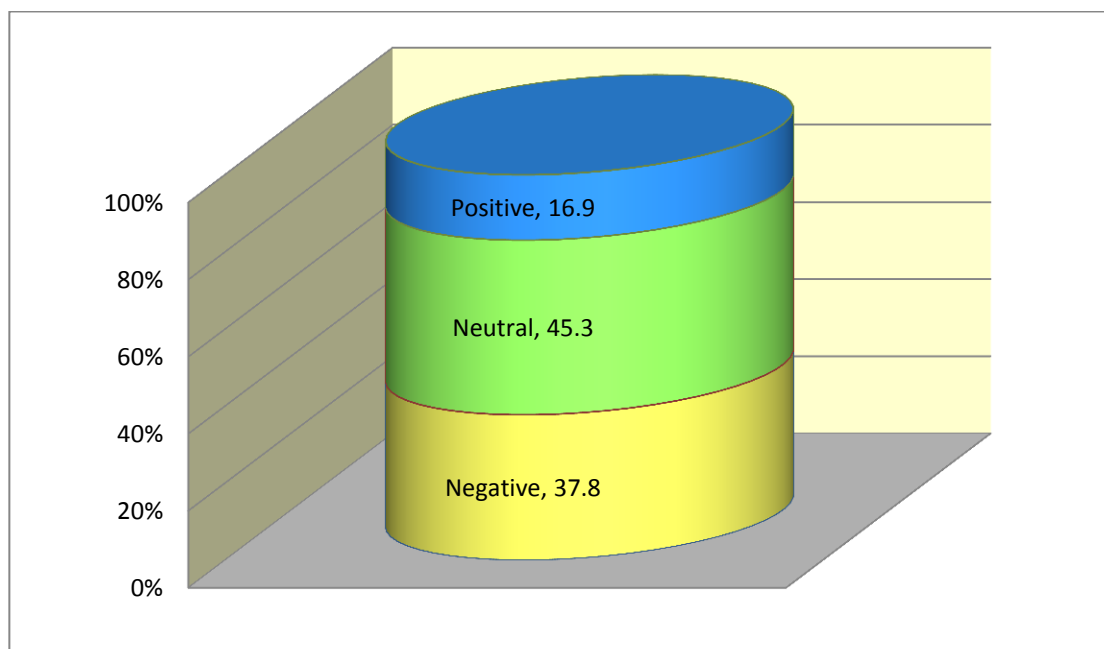


Figure 8: Lecturers' overall perception

exams (420 students, 52.4%) and that exams are important measure of their learning (583 students, 72.8%). In contrast, (272) students (34%) have a negative attitude towards the quality of feedback and evaluation process. This contrast is shown in the students' disagreement on receiving helpful feedback on their learning (490 students, 61.2%) and rejecting other measures of learning, apart from exams (482 students, 60.2%). However, there are 216 students (27%) with a neutral perception of the process of evaluation and feedback (Table 27).

Table 27: Students' positive attitude towards the quality of evaluation and feedback

Item	Positive attitude
I have the opportunity to give feedback on my lecturer's performance	50.9%
My evaluation of my lecturer is taken into consideration	64.5%
I have enough time to prepare and do exams required from me	52.4%

Students also consider the process of teaching and learning as a good process. This section focuses on methods of teaching, undertaking independent study, effective learning, and discrimination among students. Most of the students (361, 45.1%) have a positive attitude towards the quality of teaching and learning (Table 28). Most agreed that lecturers give them time to discuss and ask questions in the class (443 students, 55.3%), that they prefer lecturers to other forms of teaching (538 students, 67.2%), and believe that lecturers sometimes discriminate against students because of their gender, religion, ethnicity or political opinion (422 students, 52.7%). There are (333 students, 41.6%) who have a positive attitude towards undertaking independent study. Then, there are (298) students (37.2%) who neither agree nor disagree on the quality of teaching and learning and take a neutral status. However, there are (142) students (17.7%) with a negative attitude to the quality of the process of teaching and learning. More precisely, 228 students (28.5%) have a negative attitude towards undertaking independent study and 226 students (28.2%) say that lecturers do not discriminate among students.

Table 28: Students' positive attitude towards the quality of teaching and learning

Item	Positive attitude
My lecturer gives me time to discuss and ask questions inside the class	55.3%
I like lectures better than other forms of teaching (e.g. seminar discussion, working groups)	67.2%
Lecturers sometimes discriminate students because of their gender, religion, ethnicity or political opinion	52.7%
I'm encouraged to undertake independent study (e.g. assignment, research)	41.6%

There are 569 students (71%) who have a positive attitude towards the role of universities in rebuilding society and producing active society members (Table 29). Most students agreed that their programme of study is important for society development (623 students, 77.8%) and that they are able to contribute to make the society tolerant (560 students, 69.9%), cohesive (578 students, 72.2%), and establish social network in the society (554 students, 69.2%). In contrast, there are (127) students (15.9%) with a negative attitude to a role in rebuilding the society. Their

Table 29: Students' positive attitude towards the role of university

Item	Positive attitude
My programme is important for society development	77.8%
I will be able to contribute to make society tolerant	69.9%
I will be able to contribute to make society cohesive	72.2%
I will be able to establish social network in society	69.2%

disagreement is obvious in their perception that universities have no role to generate active society members (546 students, 68.2%). However, 105 students (13.1%) take a neutral status. With regard to the study environment, many items are all covered in this section, such as: quality of the buildings; teaching halls; libraries; health and safety issues; academic resources; quiet area for studying; libraries; facilities for disabled students; and electronic library. Most of the students (361 students, 45.1%) have a negative attitude towards the quality of the study environment. Their dissatisfaction is clear in their perceptions about available facilities for students with learning difficulties (708 students, 88.1%) and physically disabled students (567 students, 70.8%), quality of materials and equipment in laboratories (491 students, 61.3%), having other appropriate resources such as journals and newspapers (357 students, 44.6%), and outside noise affecting their learning (354 students, 44.2%). But 294 students (36.7%) have a different perception and argue that the learning environment is in a good condition (Table 30), that the building and departments are of high quality (394 students, 49.2%) and there is quiet area provided for them to study while on campus (445 students, 55.6%). They further agree that there are appropriate learning resources (532 students, 66.4%) and copies (439 students, 54.8%) available to help them with their study. Moreover, they consider having an electronic library to be essential (484 students, 60.4%) and are happy with safety and health conditions in their department (407 students, 50.8%). Some 146 students (18.2%) have a neutral perception about the learning environment.

Table 30: Students' positive attitude towards the quality of studying environment

Item	Positive attitude
School/department building has a high standard quality	49.2%
There is quiet area provided for me to study while on campus	55.6%

There are appropriate learning resources available to help me with my study (e.g. books, journals, and library)	66.4%
There are appropriate copies of books in my study area	54.8%
An appropriate electronic library is essential	60.4%
Safety and health conditions are maintained in my department	50.8%

The section on the quality of courses and programmes offered in higher education institutions in the region focuses on the quality of the courses, and whether they are cohesive, prepare students for future employment, and build up their academic knowledge. This section further sheds light on the course handbook, and whether it is informative and well organized. The majority of students (551 students, 68.8%) stressed that courses and programmes are weak. The items on which they expressed disappointment are the quality of their courses to make the programme of a high standard (554 students, 69.2%), their ability to build up academic knowledge depending on their courses (574 students, 71.7%), the quality of their programmes to prepare them to find a job (524 students, 65.4%), and the teaching quality of many of the courses (496 students, 61.9%). There are (143) students (17.9%) with a positive attitude towards the quality of courses and programmes (Table 31). The latter group of students agreed that their course handbook helps them understand what the course is about (368 students, 45.9%). There are 107 students (13.4%) who expressed a neutral attitude, as seen in students' attitude towards teaching quality of many of the courses (122 students, 15.2%).

Table 31: Students' positive attitude towards the quality of courses and programmes

Item	Positive attitude
My course handbook helps me understand what the course is about.	45.9%

The section on technology services is the one where most of the students expressed a negative attitude. This focuses on the quality of Internet services, the use of e-learning approaches, and providing training courses. Some 624 students (77.9%) confirmed that the technology services are inappropriate and not easily accessible. Students' dissatisfaction is very obvious in their perception of lecturers' use of learning videos (637 students, 79.5%), iPads (588 students, 73.4%), audio approaches (624 students, 77.9%), availability of appropriate Internet and IT services (464 students, 57.9%), and the capability of universities to provide training courses on computer programmes if there is appropriate demand (560 students, 69.9%). There are 104 students (13%)

with a neutral attitude towards technology services generally and lecturers who use PowerPoint slides to present their sessions specifically (281 students, 35.1%). However, 73 students (9.1%) think there is appropriate available technology service such as PowerPoint (273 students, 34.1%), (Table 32).

Table 32: Students' positive attitudes to the quality of technology and Internet

Item	Positive attitude
Lecturers use PowerPoint slides	34.1%

On whether the reform process has made any progress, 535 students (66.8%) believe that the reform process did not lead to any change and progress in recent years. Students' negative perception is expressed on issues concerned with the quality of teaching (548 students, 68.4%), quality of learning (553 students, 69%), quality of information and communication technology (598 students, 74.7%), quality of feedback (416 students, 51.9%), and lecturers' performance (583 students, 72.8%). There are 184 students (23%) who indicated that there has been change and progress due to the reform process (Table 33). Their satisfaction is concerned with the quality of buildings and departments (411 students, 51.3%), and improvement in students' skills of discussion and critical thinking (375 students, 46.8%). The number of students who had a neutral attitude concerning any changes in the recent years is only 82 (10.2%).

Table 33: Students' positive attitude towards the quality of change in the recent years

Item	Positive attitude
In recent years, buildings, offices and classrooms of my department have improved.	51.3%
In recent years, students' skills of discussion and critical thinking in my department have improved.	46.8%

In a nutshell, students' attitudes are shown in Table 34 and Figure 9:

Table 34: Students' attitude to each section of the quality assurance programme

Items	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Teaching and learning	45.1% (361 students)	37.2% (298 students)	17.7% (142 students)

Role of university	71% (569 students)	13.1% (105 students)	15.9% (127 students)
Evaluation and feedback	39.1% (313 students)	27% (216 students)	34% (272 students)
Study environment	36.7% (294 students)	18.2% (146 students)	45.1% (361 students)
Course and programme	17.9% (143 students)	13.4% (107 students)	68.8% (551 students)
Technology services	9.1% (73 students)	13% (104 students)	77.9% (624 students)
Change and progress	23% (184 students)	10.2% (82 students)	66.8% (535 students)

The overall result of students' perception shows that the majority of the students (365 students, 45.6%) stated that the teaching quality assurance programme is unsuccessful. At the same time, there are 251 students (31.3%) who expressed a neutral attitude. The smallest group, with just 185 students (23.1%), claims that the programme is successful (Table 35 and Figure 10).

Table 35: Students' overall attitude to the quality assurance programme

Items	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Overall attitude	23.1%	31.3%	45.6%

Comparing lecturers' and students' perceptions, we see there is a difference. Covering the seven areas that are common in students' and lecturers' survey (Course and programme, valuation and feedback, library and teaching/learning environment, teaching and learning, use of technology, role of university, and change in the recent years), difference and similarities in lecturers' and students' attitudes are shown in Table 36. The only area on which both groups had different attitude is the quality of the feedback and the evaluation process. Lecturers argued that the process of feedback and evaluation is of poor quality, and this is clearly expressed in their dissatisfaction with the accuracy of student feedback on their performance, giving students helpful feedback, and rejecting other measures of learning apart from exams. Students also expressed that they do not receive helpful feedback on their learning outcomes and that there are no other measurements of their learning apart from exams. In addition, students' and lecturers' overall attitude concerning the shared seven areas of the reform policy is neutral (42.1%, 422 students and lecturers), as shown in Table 37.

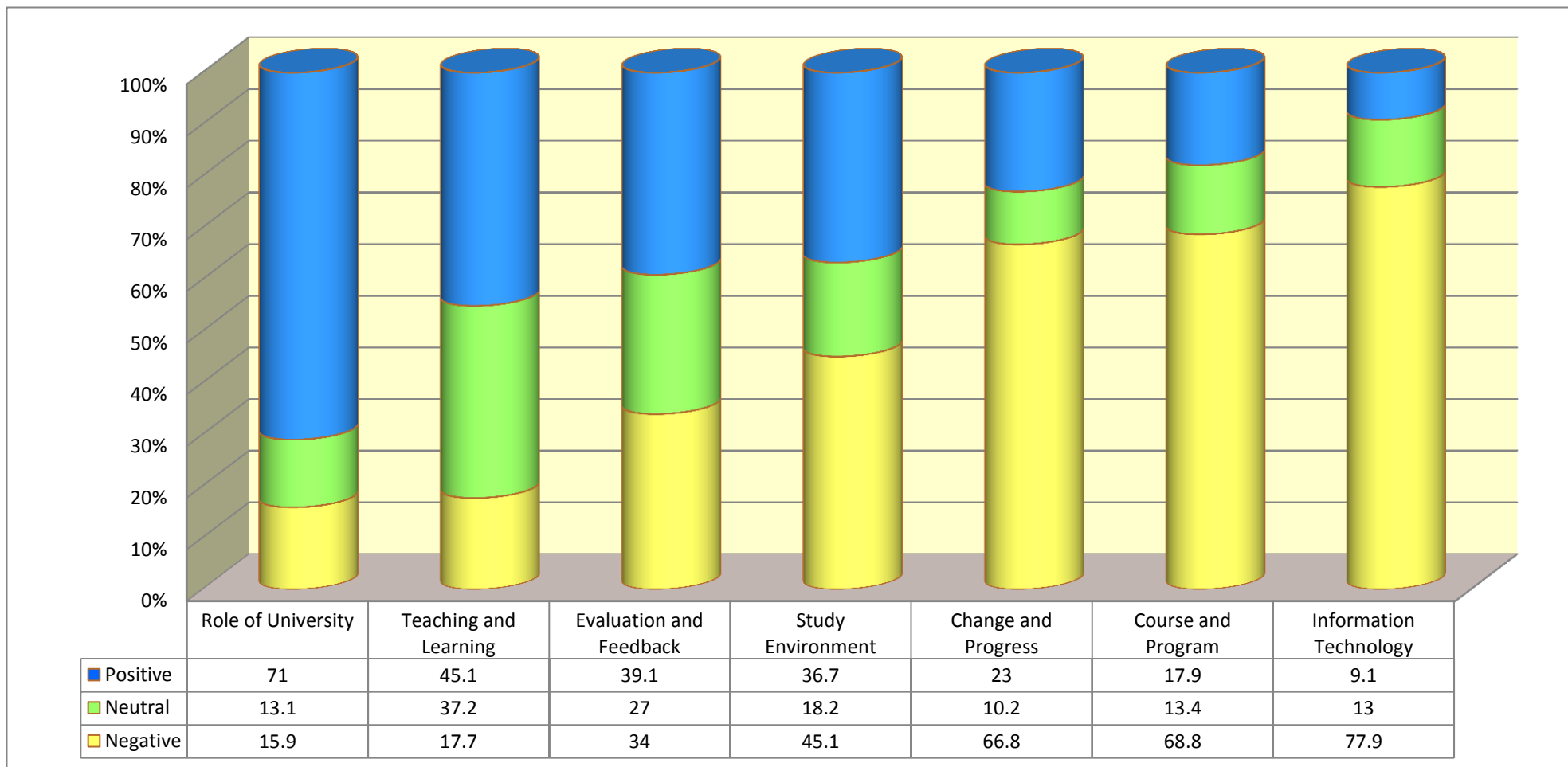


Figure 9: Students' perception about each section of the quality assurance program

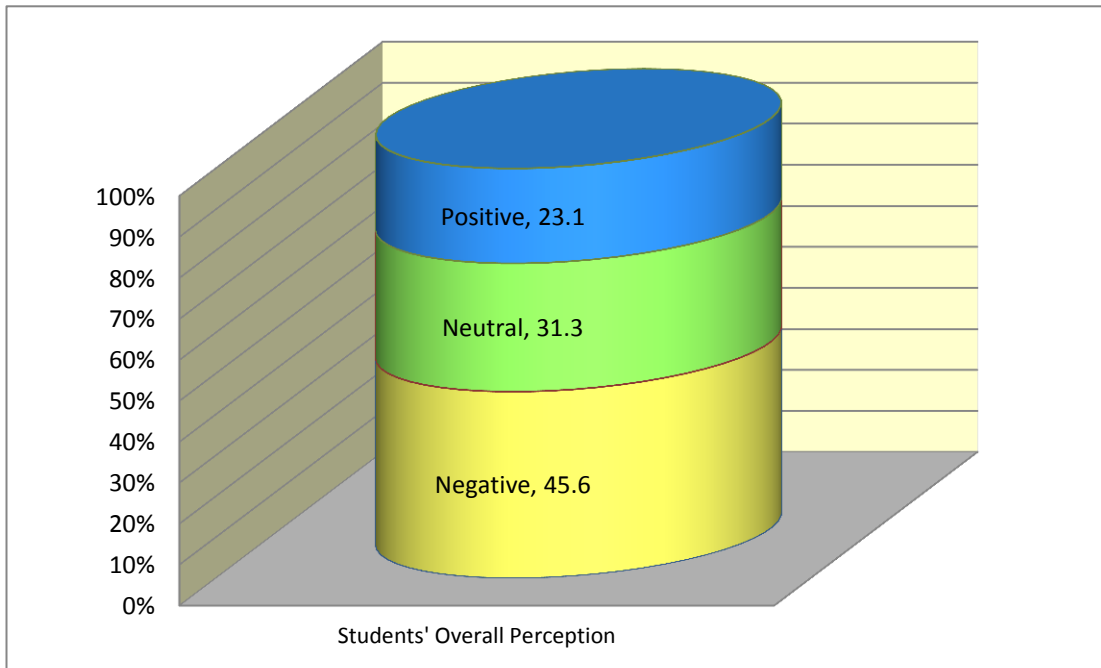


Figure 10: Students' overall perception

Table 36: Comparison of lecturers' and students' attitudes

Item	Lecturers' Attitude	Students' Attitude
Course and programme	Negative	Negative
Evaluation and feedback	Negative	Positive
Library and teaching/learning environment	Negative	Negative
Teaching and learning	Positive	Positive
Use of technology	Negative	Negative
Role of university	Positive	Positive
Change in the recent years	Negative	Negative

Table 37: Students' and lecturers' overall attitude concerning the seven shared sections of the reform policy

Attitude	Lecturers' Attitude	Students' Attitude	Total
Negative	12% (24 lecturers)	45.6% (365 students)	38.8% (389)

Neutral	85% (171 lecturers)	31.3% (251 students)	42.2% (422)
Positive	3% (6 lecturers)	23.1% (185 students)	19% (191)

6.4. Research Question (3): Relationship between Students' Perception and Background

In this section, the aim of analysing students' data is to find out whether there is a relationship between their perceptions and the type of their university attended and their gender. Here, students' attitudes concerning each aspect of the teaching quality assurance programme is analysed against type of university and gender.

6.4.1. Students' Attitude and Type of University

The cross-tabulation analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between students' overall attitude (taking into consideration students' overall attitude about the teaching quality assurance programme) and the type of their university, whether public or private. To report the results of the analysis, we refer to chi square as (X^2), and the degree of freedom of each analysis is 2. Thus, $X^2(2) = 58.314$, $p < 0.001$. Further, the odds of students' number in the public universities are 1.25 times higher than in the private universities. Further analysis on each aspect of the teaching quality assurance programme showed that there is no relationship between students' attitude to the quality of courses and programmes and the type of their university, $X^2(2) = 4.242$, $p < 0.120$.

With regard to the relationship between the type of university and students' attitude concerning the quality of feedback and evaluation, the analysis indicates that there is a significant association, $X^2(2) = 6.057$, $p < 0.048$. This explains that the odds of students who have positive attitude in the private universities are 1.52 times higher than in the private universities. The relationship between students' attitude to the study environment and their type of university is statistically significant again, $X^2(2) = 169.295$, $p < 0.001$. To report the odds ratio, it shows that the odds of students in the public universities are 1.82 times higher than in the private universities. Analysis shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between students' attitude concerning the quality of teaching and learning and the type of their university, $X^2(2) = 4.674$, $p < 0.097$.

There is, however, a statistically significant relationship between the type of the university and students' attitudes to the quality of technology, $X^2(2) = 56.383$, $p < 0.001$. The odds of students in the public universities are only one time higher than in the private universities. The analysis also indicates that there is no relationship between the type of university and students' attitude concerning the role of university, $X^2(2) = 2.961$, $p < 0.228$.

The last part of the teaching quality assurance is the quality of change in recent years. The analysis indicates that there is statistically significant relationship between the type of university and students' attitude to the quality of change, $X^2(2) = 8.714$, $p < 0.013$. The statistics show that the odds of students in the private universities are 1.14 times higher than in the public universities. Table 38 presents these relationships in brief.

Table 38: Relationship between students' attitude and type of university

Students Attitude	Type of Relationship
Overall Attitude	Statistical significant ($P < .001$)
Attitude of the quality of courses and programmes	No relationship
Attitude of the quality of feedback and evaluation	Statistical significant ($P < .048$)
Attitude of library and study environment	Statistical significant ($P < .001$)
Attitude of the quality of teaching and learning	No relationship
Attitude of the the quality of technology services	Statistical significant ($P < .001$)
Attitude of the role of university	No relationship
Attitude of the quality of change in recent years	Statistical significant ($P < .013$)

6.4.2. Students' Attitude and Gender

The second factor considered is relationship between students' attitude and their gender. The analysis affirms that there is no relationship between students' overall attitude and gender, $X^2(2) = 0.257$, $p < 0.879$. So both variables, students' overall attitude and gender, are independent variables. Looking into the relationship between students' attitude concerning individual sections of the teaching quality assurance programme and gender, the analysis shows that there is indeed a statistically significant relationship between students' attitude concerning the quality of courses and programmes and gender, $X^2(2) = 7.527$, $p = 0.023$). The odds of the number of females are 1.08 times higher than the number of males. The analysis shows that there is no relationship

between students' attitude concerning the quality of evaluation and feedback and their gender, $X^2(2) = 2.698, p < 0.260$.

Analysing the relationship between gender and students' attitude to the quality of the study environment affirms that both variables are independent and there is no statistical relationship between them, $X^2(2) = 1.054, p < 0.590$. The analysis of the relationship between gender and students' attitude regarding the quality of teaching and learning indicates that there is no statistical significant relationship between the two variables, $X^2(2) = 3.830, p < 0.147$.

With regard to the analysis of the relationship between gender and student's attitude concerning the quality of technology services, it shows that there is a non-significant relationship between the variables, $X^2(2) = 0.576, p < 0.750$ and both stand independently. The analysis also shows that there is no significant relationship between gender and students' attitudes concerning the role of university, $X^2(2) = 0.802, p < 0.670$. Finally, the analysis shows that there is no relationship between gender and students' attitude concerning change and progress in recent years, $X^2(2) = 1.647, p < 0.439$, and both variables are independent. Table 39 presents the relationship between students' attitude and gender. More discussion on the relationship between students' attitude, type of university, and gender is presented in section 6.8 in the second part of this chapter.

Table 39: Relationship between students' attitude and gender

Students Attitude	Type of Relationship
Overall Attitude	No relationship
Attitude of the quality of courses and programmes	Statistical significant (P <.023)
Attitude of the quality of feedback and evaluation	No relationship
Attitude of library and study environment	No relationship
Attitude of the quality of teaching and learning	No relationship
Attitude of the the quality of technology services	No relationship
Attitude of the role of university	No relationship
Attitude of the quality of change in recent years	No relationship

Part Two: Discussion of Findings

6.5. Introduction

The interpretation and the discussion of the findings of this study are presented in the next pages. The analysis and discussion are categorized by research questions.

6.6. Research Question (1): Policy Makers', and Senior and Junior Managers' Perceptions

There is an apparent difference between the participants in the survey and the interviewees. Interview participants had positive attitudes towards the reform process. They all agreed that the reform process led to progress and change. Lecturers' portfolios and CAD programmes are the aspects most mentioned by interviewees and they believed that there is good progress in these two areas. This is in accordance with the result of the survey conducted by the MoHESR-KRG in 2010, as stated in the reform policy document: 'We are proud to say that the system has proven to be very successful' (MoHESR-KRG, 2011, p. 23). Moreover, this is supported by lecturers' perceptions as they indicated that they are keen on organizing their academic portfolio annually (154 lecturers, 76.6%) and fulfilling the requirements of the CAD programme (153 lecturers, 76.1%). Moreover, all the policy makers, senior and junior managers agreed that the objective of the reform policy is to introduce a better quality of higher education and compete with world universities, as also indicated in the reform policy document: 'to raise standards and achieve quality throughout the higher education system, i.e. to raise the quality of teaching, research, administration, funding, communication, environment etc.' (MoHESR-KRG, 2011, p. 9).

However, these objectives seem to be very broad and set on a micro level. They do not refer to objectives at the macro level. This can be attributed to weak recognition of the real problem of the higher education system, referred to as 'the Kurdistan Region has inherited an old-fashioned and outdated higher education system from the 'old Iraq', a system that was developed for a closed, centralized and isolated country. This system is no longer in keeping with the demands of Kurdistan Region or that of globalization' (MoHESR-KRG, 2011, p. 8). A major reform process set up at the regional level to cover all private and public universities definitely needs to identify all the problems accurately at the macro level and draft a plan to solve such problems. If the problems are identified, it will be possible to set the objectives. The agenda-setting of the reform has a consolidation pattern (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003) that indicates that it is set by the

government (MoHESR-KRG) and supported by the public (presidents of universities, and most lecturers and students).

Not all the interviewees had appropriate clear information about the plan of the reform policy. Both Policy Maker 1 and Senior Manager 1 had a neutral attitude and no information on how and who set up the reform policy agenda. Both Policy Maker 1 and 2 stated that the reform policy was set by a former minister of higher education and scientific research in the region. This means the ex-minister was the only one who set up the agenda and made the final decision to introduce the reform policy. This means there was no consultation with experts (Jann and Wegrich, 2007), politicians (Rasch and Tsebelis, 2009), or research based policy (Jann and Wegrich, 2007). This is confirmed by what the Policy Maker 2 referred to, as there is no policy making agency in the region and all over the country. Therefore, the whole plan was based on one person's personal experiences and knowledge about higher education in the UK and the Kurdistan region. In addition, this was only two months before formally introducing and initiating the plan by the MoHESR-KRG. It is important to remember these dates; the Sixth KRG Cabinet had been launched on 28th October 2009, the reform policy had been introduced by the Ministry on 1st November 2009, the vision of the reform policy had been send to the Council of the Ministry of the KRG on 8th November 2009, and the vision had been approved on 7th December 2009. Beside the lack of 'think tank' organizations and policy makers in the region, the Ministry implemented the reform plan in a very short time because the ex-minister had only two years to reform the higher education system, as mentioned by Policy Maker 2:

Our government was a coalition government and was close to swap cabinets – both governments after two years. So, it's very difficult for any government to introduce such a massive reform in two years and we didn't even have the two years because fifteen months later we had the crisis of 17th February [internal crisis], that was started. For a reform like this, you need four years to launch it and the subsequent government to sustain it. So what was lacking was time. (Policy Maker 2)

All the policy makers, and senior and junior managers had positive attitudes towards the implementation of the process. They believed that a good part of the policy has been implemented up to now. They all agreed that teaching quality assurance is implemented in each university and is still going on. However, Junior Manager 2 stated that only 30 to 40 per cent of the policy had been implemented up to now and that many other areas needed to be worked on. Other interviewees indicated that other areas of the reform policy (Senior Managers 1 and 2) keep being implemented. As far as the implementation approach is concerned, it is clear that the

policy implementation followed a top-down approach (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984; Sabatier, 1986). The initiation and regulations were introduced by the MoHESR-KRG and sent to all universities in the region. This further implies the hierarchical system of higher education, where orders are introduced by policy makers in the Ministry then distributed to other actors in the universities. But, we find that some universities initiated collaborations with world universities for academic purposes, as indicated by Policy Maker 1, Senior Managers 1 and 2, and Junior Manager 1. These interviewees expressed that they started cooperation programmes, especially in terms of funding students to study abroad, curricula development and English language modules. This stated, we understand that the implementation approach is a synthesis (Matland, 1995; Premfors, 1984) of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Each of those programmes was initiated by universities while the final decision was made by the Ministry. None of the interviewees referred to a bottom-up approach to implementation.

All apart from Policy Maker 1 had a positive attitude towards assessment in the reform policy. They confirmed that there is annual assessment process in every university and the final decision is made by the Ministry. They agreed that effective performance of lecturers is acknowledged while underperformers are reminded, then warned and finally dismissed from teaching. They see improvement in lecturers' performance, lecturers' portfolios, the CAD programme, students' feedback and academic criteria for establishing a new academic unit.

These improvements are consistent with the reform policy document; however, this is not what lecturers and students agreed about. Lecturers had a negative attitude to the quality of students' feedback and the academic development programme that affect lecturers' performance. They also believed that the reform process did not lead to effective change, while students had a positive attitude to their evaluation of lecturers and a negative attitude to the outcome of the reform process, lecturers' performance and teaching quality. This difference in attitudes can be attributed either to their selecting the wrong survey response and being inconsistent in their answers, or to blaming others for own weak performance.

According to the interviewees, there are several categories of policy actors involved in the reform policy process. Specifically, there are students, lecturers, junior managers, senior managers, policy makers, decision makers and members from political parties. Reflecting on Spicker's (1995) model of 'key actors' of policy, the Kurdish reform policy actors fall into the following category:

- Dealing with problems as demands: it covers those street-level actors who work in offices of quality assurance and accreditation, health and safety, and curriculum development.

- Dealing with problems as situation: actors who fall into this category of are university lecturers. It also includes junior managers such as heads of quality assurance offices in the Ministry and universities, but they lack skill and experiences in quality assurance, as stated by Junior Manager 2.
- Systematic service provision: this level can include quality assurance teams in the MoHESR_KRG and their peers in each university.
- Comprehensive service provision: this level of actors is present and includes heads of departments and deans of colleges in universities.
- Comprehensive field coverage: there are several actors on this level such as the minister, three advisors, presidents of universities and director generals.

So, according to Spicker's model of key actors, the Kurdish reform policy has actors on each level. Nonetheless, the actors with comprehensive field coverage are the decision makers and have the major role in drafting regulations and guidance. They are also the ones on the macro level, while the actors on the first three levels of Spicker's model are those on the micro level. However, the actors on the comprehensive service provision can be considered as mediators who mostly carry out administrative responsibilities to ensure the flow of the process. Policy Maker 2 indicated that the process was supported by the President of the region, the Kurdish Prime Minister and politicians. If we consider classifying the policy actors according to 'iron triangles' (Jann and Wegrich, 2007), it is possible to compare the actors of the Kurdish reform policy to a triangle: actors on the macro level are at the top, while actors on the micro level are at the bottom. The triangle shape also implies the authority of top actors over the actors at the bottom, who receive guidance and regulations from the MoHESR-KRG and presidents of universities. This gives a hierarchical structure to the process of communication among the actors. That is why almost all the universities follow a top-down approach to implementation.

As far as policy instruments are concerned, we find that seven policy makers, and senior and junior managers had positive attitudes about the availability of policy instruments. They all indicated that there were information instruments (Rogger and Reichardt, 2013; Lascoumes and Gales, 2007; Sorrell et al., 2003) such as training courses, workshops and seminars to inform students and staff about the reform process, as well as sending heads of quality assurance offices abroad to obtain knowledge and experiences about how quality assurance programmes are organized and implemented. However, Policy Maker 2 said:

In Kurdistan and Iraq, we never have the institution of policy research and policy making. So, we have to improvise. We have to design a plan of our own and mobilize the various platforms and various tools available. So, we had to work within the structure, the

management structure of the Ministry, to influence the universities. We had to hold workshops, training and conferences. We had to engage media and also personally I had to go around and lecture in every university, inviting every teacher, every staff member to have a view and listen to the strategy to be informed of what is going to amend, invite their criticism and suggestions. But we do not have the machinery to help us do that. We have to make one. (Policy Maker 2)

From the above quote, we see that Policy Maker 2 referred to using media as an instrument to introduce and publicize the reform policy, to make people listen and obtain ideas about the reform policy. The same policy maker referred to introducing an electronic system for admission to higher education institutions that new applicants to undergraduate programmes can use. This means that the MoHESR_KRG uses technology as another instrument of the policy. Throughout the interviews, only two policy makers (2 and 3) referred to the legislation drafted by the Ministry to set up a new system of higher education in the Kurdistan region. Thus, the draft law is another instrument that is considered as authority (Rogge and Reichardt, 2013; Lascoumes and Gales, 2007; Howlett, 2000; Howlett and Rayner, 2007) in higher education. The final instrument used in the Kurdish reform policy is the economic instrument (Rogge and Reichardt, 2013; Lascoumes and Gales, 2007; Sorrell et al., 2003) of scholarships and establishing four new public universities in the region. The latter is referred to by the Policy Makers 2 and 3 and 4, but there was no specified budget for the whole reform process. In order to discuss the quality and reliability of these instruments, we need to reflect on the abstract features of policy instruments introduced by Rogge and Reichardt (2013):

- ‘Stringency’: except for the technological and media instruments, other instruments are not used on a regulatory basis; the MoHESR-KRG did not identify standards of performance to be used as criteria to evaluate the outcomes of the process.
- ‘Level of support’: because of having no specific budget for the reform process, opportunities for further development and investment are almost unavailable. That is why most of the instruments are no longer active. For example, training courses, workshops, and conferences have almost stopped in universities. It is understood that the Ministry has organized several workshops, training, and conferences to support the process, but have the outcomes of these activities been documented for use for learning purposes (Howlett and Rayner, 2007; Sorrell et al., 2003) and tackling weaknesses in the process? Moreover, the economical instrument used to send scholars for postgraduate studies in world universities is no longer available. There are tens of hundreds of scholars who still have the right to a scholarship (HCDP), but cannot start their programmes

because of inappropriate budgets, and this is attributed to economic and political reasons.

- 'Predictability': though two of the interviewees (Policy Maker 4 and Senior Manager 2) mentioned that there are research centres in some of the universities that carry out various projects for the private and public sectors in the region and this encourages investment, the majority of universities have no such research centres. Unfortunately, some of the instruments are no longer available and this decreases opportunities for development and investment in the higher education sector.
- 'Flexibility': the Kurdish reform policy did not have many options of instruments and this can explain why it has slowed down after two years of its initiation.
- 'Differentiation': the Kurdish reform policy successfully used different instruments for various purposes such as technology to develop the student admission procedure, training courses, workshops, and conferences to train staff in quality assurance offices.
- 'Depth': the economic instrument used to establish four new public universities in the region are still running and served the wider area, as many students are enrolled in these universities. So, the instrument met its objectives. However, the economic instrument was not successful for the scholarship programme (HCDP). The technology instrument also achieved its objectives and helped students to save time and money by applying online to higher education institutions instead of filling in hard copies of application forms and submitting these in person. As understood from the interviewees, the training courses, workshops, and conference had an effective role in informing lecturers, staff, and students about the reform process, but were these events successful in training staff and obtaining experience in quality assurance so they can lead programmes? This contrasts with what was mentioned by Policy Maker 2 and Junior Manager 2. This again might explain why the reform process slowed down, generally. Ultimately, the draft legislation that was drawn up to change the complete system of higher education had no role in the process. However, the Ministry attempted to change parts of that law and resubmit it to the Council of Ministers of the KRG, as mentioned by Policy Maker 3.

The Kurdish reform process was not free from obstacles and resistance. This is something on which all the interviewees agreed. The most common obstacle was resistance from university lecturers who were against feedback from students. The lecturers believed that students are not mature enough to evaluate their performance and might be unfair in their evaluation, which would undoubtedly have an impact of lecturers' academic promotion. In addition, the relationship between lecturers and students is more akin to a manager-employee relationship and minimizes opportunities of friendship, trust, and understanding. The other category of staff most against the

reform process was that of academic leaders such as presidents of universities. Both Policy Makers 2 and 3, and Junior Manager 2 indicated that some academic leaders and presidents of universities were against the process because they benefitted from the old system of higher education supported by some politicians. Policy Maker 2 referred to this as 'the greatest barrier' and said:

'There are multiple networks of interest that are formed over the years that exploit the whole system that was full of legislative holes where people have been taking advantage of the weakness of the system. Their interest is entrenched and we see conflict with the standards of academic as well as conflict with the public interest because the private interest and the public interest were at odd all the time...Importantly, there are various people who are against the reform who are chosen by their political objectives. (Policy Maker 2)

Policy Maker 2 continued, 'we just had to tackle the interest groups head on and we had to tolerate their attack, physical and political'. But, could that strategy of 'tackling heads' overcome such barriers? The lecturers and students have different attitudes, as they indicate that the reform process did not led to considerable change and they mostly have a negative attitude in this regard (535 students 66.8%, 133 lecturers 66.2%). However, the reform process had insufficient budget to implement the process effectively, as referred to by the policy maker: 'the budget was not sufficient enough especially to allow us to do things a little more effectively and underpin the process in a sustainable way'. Moreover, the Ministry lacked the higher education culture necessary to familiarize academic and administrative staff as well as students with a system of higher education that allowed flexibility to develop and change. This is a factor referred to by Policy Maker 3, who stated that all facilities were available, but there was no higher education culture.

The Ministry began to involve international agencies, such as WASC and ABET for accreditation purposes. Three policy makers (2, 3, and 4), Senior Manager 2, and Junior Manager 2 referred to cooperation with those international agencies and that the collaboration has not stopped. Actually, the collaboration had expanded from dealing with four public universities to cover another three in the region, as stated by Policy Maker 4. Meanwhile, Policy Maker 3 referred to another step of internationalization, European accreditation, as he expressed: 'We are entering Bologna system'. In addition, it seems that individual universities have established academic cooperation programmes with world universities, as stated by Senior Managers 1 and 2, and Junior Manager 1. Commenting on the importance of involving these international agencies at the

start of the reform process, only Junior Manager 2 was against it, because he felt it was appropriate for the Ministry to establish the national quality assurance and accreditation system, to save money. In contrast, Policy Maker 2 stated that it was time to involve those international agencies at that time in order to help in finding gaps and how to fill them, because both the region and Iraq lack such agencies. However, the reform process led to establishing a national system for accrediting academic units in the region, as implied by Policy Maker 4 and Junior Manager 2.

The Ministry set several rules and conditions that must be met before opening any academic unit. These are concerned with academic and infrastructure aspects of the proposed academic unit. There is a committee that reviews applications to establish academic units, with the power to reject or accept applications. But approving or rejecting applications to establish new colleges is made by the Council of the MoHESR-KRG, while approving or rejecting applications to establish new universities is decided by the Council of Ministries-KRG.

As far as academic development and research are concerned, almost all interviewees have positive attitudes. This aspect is supported by the lecturers (103, 51.2%), who have a positive attitude towards academic development and research capacity. Junior Manager 1 has a negative attitude and blamed it on the quality assurance team, which is not capable of following up. This again can be attributed to lack of skill and experiences. He attributed the reason for scanty research potential to lecturers being overloading with teaching and lecturing. Moreover, Junior Manager 2 supported this attitude by expressing that there is no quality in research, just plagiarism: 'We still do not have quality assurance in research. All our researches are "copy and paste"'. None of the interviewees referred to a budget to be allocated for research purposes to encourage competition among universities or lecturers and develop research potential. The lecturers stated that universities have no active research centres (125 lecturers, 62.2%), do not secure extra income through research (175 lecturers, 87.1%), and do not encourage investment through research (159 lecturers, 79.1%).

The reform policy was set to keep higher education sector as an entity of academy and research, away from politics and politicians. Four of the interviewees (Policy Makers 1 and 2, Senior Manager 1, Junior Manager 2) expressed that politics still play a role in higher education, and this attitude was rejected only by Policy Maker 4. The remaining three interviewees did not comment in this regard. According to Junior Manager 2, politicians are still interfering with higher education issues either by sending informal letters or making phone calls to senior managers to ask them to approve an application. This interviewee indicated that such interference is much less than before

the reform process, and rated it to have fallen by 90 per cent. In contrast, 98 lecturers (48.8%) felt that political interference with the higher education sector did not fall and that their political affiliation has an impact on their finding a job (100 lecturers, 49.8%).

The findings show that the interviewees have mostly positive attitudes about the different aspects of the reform process as these findings are presented in the first part of this chapter. The researcher was cautious and precise in asking the right question to the right interviewee taking into consideration the interviewee's experiences, responsibilities, and role in the reform process. Having almost positive attitudes can be attributed to the culture and personalities of the interviewees. It could be the culture that forces human kind to praise oneself and feel proud of whatever activities he does even if such activities are not successful. Sometimes people do not admit their failure because they might feel embarrassed or weaken their personalities. However, this does not mean that the interviewees' perceptions are based totally on exaggeration because there are several aspects of the reform process are still active and progressing.

6.7. Research Question (2): Lecturers' and Students' Perceptions

The data analysis shows that the lecturers have positive attitudes to the teaching and learning process, the role of university, academic achievements and research. In total, the lecturers' questionnaire consists of 72 items. They have positive attitudes concerning 34 items:

- 1) Organization and information of course handbook
- 2) Giving students the opportunity to give feedback on lecturers' performance
- 3) Announcing exam timetable t appropriate time
- 4) Examination is an important measure for students' learning
- 5) Assessment conducted by external assessor is based on academic criteria only
- 6) Satisfaction with the outcome of the external assessor's evaluation
- 7) High quality of university buildings
- 8) Satisfaction with their work office
- 9) Suitable number of students in their classes
- 10) Availability of appropriate resources about their teaching area
- 11) Necessity for an appropriate electronic library
- 12) Maintenance of safety and health conditions in their departments
- 13) Availability of quiet area for students to study on campus
- 14) Give students time to ask questions and discuss inside the class
- 15) Students' preference of lecturers as a method for teaching

- 16) Lecturers' use of power point in the class
- 17) Study programme is important for society's development
- 18) Students' ability to establish social network in society
- 19) Students' ability to contribute to making society cohesive
- 20) Students' ability to contribute to making society tolerant
- 21) Generate active society members by universities
- 22) Improve the quality of teaching in recent years
- 23) Improve the quality of students' learning in recent years
- 24) Good quality of pedagogy training courses
- 25) Encouragement to develop research skills
- 26) Satisfaction with the available 20% range to develop their course content
- 27) High quality of the new PhD system (split-site)
- 28) Keeping on organizing their academic portfolio annually
- 29) Fulfilling requirements of CAD programme
- 30) Considering their academic portfolio for academic promotion purposes
- 31) Thinking lecturers discriminate against students ' gender/religion/ethnicity/politics
- 32) Equal opportunities are available for masters and PhD holders to find jobs
- 33) Believing that their political affiliation has an impact on getting jobs
- 34) Believing there discrimination in recruiting academic staff.

Moreover, they have negative attitudes towards every process of evaluation and feedback, teaching environment, social justice, quality of courses and programmes, quality of Internet and technology services, academic development programmes and training courses, and outcome of the reform process. They have negative attitudes concerning 38 statements:

- 1) Academic programmes prepare students for future employment
- 2) Courses help students to build their academic knowledge
- 3) Courses are designed to give good quality to the programme
- 4) Course handbooks are updated annually
- 5) Students provide accurate feedback on lecturers' performance
- 6) They give helpful feedback on students' learning and outcomes
- 7) They have other measures of students' learning
- 8) Universities to provide facilities for physically disabled staff
- 9) Good quality materials and equipment available in the laboratories
- 10) Copies of books appropriate to their area of interest are available
- 11) Other resources appropriate to their area of interest are available

- 12) Number of lecturers in the department
- 13) Outside noise affects the teaching environment
- 14) Students encouraged to undertake independent study
- 15) Research integrated into teaching
- 16) Learning outcomes reflect course aims
- 17) Appropriate Internet and IT services available
- 18) Learning videos used in teaching
- 19) iPads used in teaching
- 20) Audio approaches used in teaching
- 21) Universities provide training courses on technology programmes and approaches
- 22) Students' skills of discussion and critical thinking have Improved in recent years
- 23) Quality of ICT have Improved in recent years
- 24) Quality and standards of university buildings have improved in recent years
- 25) Research capacity and outputs have improved in recent years
- 26) Opportunities for staff development in research
- 27) Opportunities for staff development in teaching have improved
- 28) Appropriate training on students' assessment available
- 29) Access to online teaching professional development programme
- 30) Opportunity to improve their teaching skills
- 31) Consultancy services obtained on curricula development
- 32) Universities to secure extra income through research
- 33) A research centre in the university
- 34) Universities to encourage investment through research
- 35) Transparency while selecting lecturers for managerial vacancies
- 36) Less interference from political parties within higher education
- 37) Equity while offering jobs
- 38) CAD to be considered in job applications.

Students have a positive attitude to each of the processes of evaluation and feedback, the process of teaching and learning, and the role of the university. They agree with and have a positive attitude to the following 21 items:

- a) Course handbook is helpful to understand what the course is about
- b) Their evaluation of their lecturers is taken into consideration
- c) Having the opportunity to give feedback on their lecturers' performance
- d) Exams are an important measure of their learning

- e) Have appropriate amount of time to prepare and sit exams
- f) High standard quality of university buildings
- g) Quiet area is provided for them to study on campus
- h) Availability of appropriate learning resources to help them with their study
- i) Availability of copies of books appropriate to their study area
- j) Maintenance of safety and health conditions in their department
- k) Necessity of an appropriate electronic library
- l) Encouragement to undertake independent study
- m) Lecturers may discriminate against students because of gender/religion/ethnicity/ politics
- n) Preference for lecturers as an approach of teaching
- o) Having time to ask questions and discuss in class
- p) Importance of their study programme to society development
- q) Ability to contribute to make society cohesive
- r) Ability to contribute to make society tolerant
- s) Ability to establish social network in society
- t) Improving their skills of discussion and critical thinking in recent years
- u) Improving the standard of buildings, offices, and teaching halls in their department in recent years.

In contrast, students have a negative attitude towards the library and study environment, the quality of Internet and technology services, the quality of courses and programmes, and the outcome of the reform process. They do not agree to and have negative attitudes towards 22 items, which are as follows:

- A. Design of courses ensures the programme is of good quality
- B. Courses help them to build their academic knowledge
- C. Study programmes prepare them for future employment
- D. Teaching quality is good in many of the courses
- E. They receive helpful feedback on their learning and outcomes
- F. There are other measures of their learning
- G. University provides facilities to students with learning disabilities
- H. University provides facilities for physically disabled students
- I. Good quality of materials and equipment in laboratories
- J. Other learning resources relating to their study area are available
- K. Outside noise affects the learning environment
- L. Appropriate Internet and IT services are provided

- M. University provides training courses on computer programmes and technology when there is appropriate demand
- N. Lecturers use video recordings for learning
- O. Lecturers use iPads for learning
- P. Lecturers to use audio approaches to learning
- Q. University generates active society members
- R. An improving quality of teaching in recent years
- S. An improved quality of their learning in recent years
- T. An improved quality of ICT in recent years
- U. An improved lecturer performance in recent years
- V. An improved quality of feedback they receive.

Students have a neutral attitude only towards lecturers' use of PowerPoint in their lectures. However, lecturers and students share 41 survey items in their survey. Both lecturers and students have similar attitude to 32 items, and differ in their attitude to only nine items. Among the 32 items, lecturers and students have a positive attitude concerning 16 and a negative attitude to another 16 items. The lecturers have a negative attitude towards the quality of evaluation and feedback. This is consistent with the interviewees' attitudes towards lecturers' resistance to students' feedback about their performance. Some of the interviewees (Policy Maker 4, Senior Manager 2, Junior Managers 1 and 2) expressed that lecturers have a better understanding of and are more familiar with the process, but this goes against lecturers' perception. The analysis shows that the lecturers are still against valuation and feedback.

However, there are more similarities in students' and lecturers' attitudes than differences. This adds reliability and consistency to responses and to the outcome of the reform, because they are in receipt of the process and affected by it. Moreover, they are in a better situation to view the outcomes of the reform process.

6.8. Research Question (3): Relationship between Students' Perception and Background

There are two factors to be taken into account to find out their relationship with students' perception of the quality assurance programme. The first is the type of university. Being in a private or a public university has an effect on students' perception. Students in public universities are more likely than students in private universities to have a negative attitude towards the quality assurance programme. This can be attributed to the following.

The first reason is that the public universities included in this study are old universities and have old buildings and offices. This means that they miss high standards of academic buildings. It is worth mentioning that many departments in these two public universities were used for other purposes before 1990. For example, some departments were the headquarters of the Ba'ath party. Moreover, some of the teaching halls have poor safety arrangements, with power cables in inappropriate positions, an electric water pump near the teaching hall, or a broken inner roof of the hall, as observed by the researcher while conducting fieldwork. Outside noise was confirmed by 354 students (44.2%), while a lack of safety in the environment is confirmed by 301 students (37.6%). Students' negative perception is mostly obvious in their attitude to the facilities provided for students with learning disabilities (706 students, 88.1%) and physical disabilities (567 students, 70.8%). Most of the negative attitudes are expressed by students from PC1 (186 students, 23%).

The second reason is the location of the university buildings. The colleges of the two public universities selected in the study are far apart. Though some of the public universities gained a campus after the reform process, there is no main campus at the public universities in the sample. This distribution of the colleges might make technological networking difficult. In addition, Internet services in the Kurdistan region are generally ineffective. However, technology and e-learning approaches are not integrated with education purposes. It is important to mention that Internet services are provided for lecturers in almost all the colleges, but students have limited Internet access and only for class activities or information technology classes. This means that Internet services are not always there for students for research and independent activity purposes, as indicated by 464 students (57.9%). Moreover, rooms having computers provided with Internet services are usually locked unless there is a class. The reform policy encourages lecturers to present their sessions in a slide-show style. It seems there is slight progress in this regard, as 281 students (35.1%) expressed a neutral attitude.

The second factor is gender. The analysis shows that gender has no effect on students' overall perception. Generally, the analysis shows that females are more likely than males to have a negative attitude towards the quality assurance programme. However, it is significant to mention that the number of females, at 259 (32.3%) is larger than the number of males, at 207 (25.8%) in public universities while it is the reverse in private universities, where there are 298 females (37.2%) and 367 males (45.8%). This can be attributed to male students having more opportunity to work during the day to fund their studies in evening classes. This further explains why a male student would reject an opportunity to study an area not of interest on offer at a public university, depending on his final marks in high school and, if he had the funds would study at a private university. It is necessary to mention that many students in private universities work in the

private sector and in non-governmental organization during the day. The point is that students' interest is significant for their future employment. Many female students accept the subject they are offered at a public university because of their final marks in high school if they have no income, as they have no option and thus have a negative attitude towards the programme.

While conducting the survey, many students told the researcher that lecturers discriminate against students on the basis of gender and nationality. Generally, male lecturers have better relationships with female students and non-Kurdish students. This might have a link to females' positive attitude to the feedback and evaluation process. Again, this discrimination might have an effect on females' perception of the quality of teaching and learning. However, there is only a 3 per cent difference between females' and males' negative attitude to the arrival of change and progress in recent years, and there are more females than males with negative attitudes to this topic.

The analyses show there is difference in the perceptions. Students and lecturers have mostly similar perceptions about the quality assurance programme, while policy makers, and senior and junior managers have perceptions unlike the students' and lecturers'. The next section explains the reasons behind this difference and how a successful educational change can be achieved.

6.9. Unexpected Difference of Perceptions

The data analysis shows that there is an unexpected difference in the attitudes of the survey participants (students and lecturers) and the interview participants (junior managers, senior managers, and policy makers). The survey participants have negative attitudes while the interview participants have positive attitude towards the programme. The Kurdish reform process started in 2009. It was established and run by the same minister for two years. Later, there was cabinet change in the Kurdish government that led to replacing the minister who started the reform process with a new figure. Therefore, the institutional change (Miller and Demir, 2007) in the Ministry and the government led to a slowdown of the reform process, confirmed by Policy Maker 2, Senior Manager (2), and both junior managers, who state that the process was more active and seriously implemented at the time of the first minister.

Fullan (1992) refers to the existence of an 'episodic' (1992, p. 119) relationship between government and educational institutions. Policy Maker 2 stated that the reform process has been supported by top leaders in the government, including the President of the region and the Prime Minister. But, such support and relationship seems to be casual and has led to a negative effect

on the outcome of the process. Taking into consideration the bureaucratic and centralized system of higher education in the region, such 'episodic' relationship leads to a monopoly of the system, because all the radical decisions are made by the government. Therefore, when the government slows down or stops support, then the outcomes will definitely be affected. Matland (1995) refers to the strength of power of the policy maker who can influence the process. The former minister had a strong personal relationship with the Kurdish Prime Minister of the sixth government cabinet, but less power to control and lead the process especially when facing strong and continuous resistance by senior academic leaders. Therefore, when both Prime Minister and the minister left government, the reform process was hindered.

A crucial part of policy design is planning, as Fullan (2007) indicates. The Kurdish reform policy has a weak plan and design. It appears that chaos has been left for the staff concerned to gather together aspects that could lead to better results. The whole process of reforming a complete sector of higher education in the region and within two years only was designed by a single university professor. The vision of the policy was set in only four days. Moreover, there was no written document prior to implementing the policy. The first document presenting the reform policy was issued by the MoHESR-KRG in 2011, while the reform process was initiated at the end of September 2009. This short interval in preparing the document can be attributed to the minister's excitement and the limited time to implement the process. It means that there was no detailed and well organized reform policy document at the beginning of introducing the reform process in 2009. The lack of experience and experts to set the policy agenda are the key elements of making the process ineffective. Moreover, there was no specific budget to fund the process and no plan to find alternatives around the obstacles. Though the Kurdish reform policy follows the top-down approach of implementation, there are pragmatic attempts by junior and senior managers in the universities to work on developing the process. This is noticed by both junior managers and both senior managers. This means that measuring the success or failure of the process is complex, because it is the policy actors at the street-level who try to push the process forward. They try to find solutions to any problems they face through the implementation phase. Therefore, they have expected and unexpected results, and consider positive results as a success of the whole process. Such an approach to measuring the success or failure of a policy is supported by theorists of bottom-up implementation approach, such as Elmore (1979/80).

Oliver and Conole (2002) argue that it is significant to understand the current situation before any educational change. They further state that it is essential to identify 'cultural differences' (Oliver and Conole, 2002, p. 62) before initiating the change. Indeed, the Kurdish higher education system and the Kurdish society are to great extent different from international higher education

system and European societies. One of these differences is the management system of the Kurdish higher education which is characterized as being hierarchy and bureaucratic. Universities have no autonomy in Kurdistan. They are managed, controlled, and funded by the KRG. The other difference is that they do not have their own budget and mainly funded by the government, except the private universities which secure their budget mostly via students' tuition fees. Moreover, almost all the universities have no active research centres and the universities do not make investment via research. This is confirmed by the majority of the lecturers in this study as there are (125 lecturers, 62.2%) state that there is no research centres in their universities and (175 lecturers, 87.1%) state that their universities do not secure extra income through research.

Smith (1973) says that implementation usually turns out to be unsuccessful in bureaucratic organizational systems, because society and government cannot afford the changes and development that new policies bring about. Based on the ten characteristics presented by OFMDFMNI (n.d.), the Kurdish reform policy has the following characteristics:

- 1- The Kurdish reform policy has no time limit. That is to say, it is not looking forward or designed as a long-term plan. This is referred to by Policy Maker 2, who stated that there is no time limit for the process.
- 2- It is difficult to identify the level of the reform, whether national or international. The aim of the reform is to bring international standards of quality to the Kurdish higher education. Put another way, this is to mix international standards with local standards. This might make the process more complicated because the Kurdish higher education system has economic, cultural, political, and social aspects that are entirely different from those in international higher education.
- 3- It lacks flexibility because there is no alternative plan to deal with resistance or solve problems. This characteristic is mentioned by most interviewees, who indicated that the reform process slowed down after the first institutional change and the appointment of a new minister two years after initiating the process.
- 4- The Kurdish reform policy is not based on research, documents, or evidence but rather a former minister's personal experience in a British university, and communication with the Kurdistan higher education sector.
- 5- It is true to say that the Kurdish reform policy comprehends all aspects of the higher education system, briefly, administrative and academic. However, it has not implemented a sequence to secure the implementation of the next stage. For example, draft legislation was not approved by the Kurdish Parliament while other aspects of the reform were being

implemented. A draft law could secure autonomy for all the universities in the region and lead to achieving most parts more effectively.

- 6- When a policy has an ineffective plan, it is not possible to state that the policy has all its components such as a policy process cycle, policy actors, and policy instruments.
- 7- It might be possible to state that the Kurdish reform policy has better achievement in some universities, such as PC1, as this is referred to by Senior Manager (2) and Junior Manager 2. Such dissimilarity in achievements among universities can be attributed to learning from experience. Some universities work hard to develop and implement sections of the policy while other universities just 'play the game'.
- 8- Some universities have effective and continuous communication with the MoHESR-KRG while others do not. This can be attributed either to the geographic location of the university and whether in the same city as the Ministry, or to personal relationships between senior staff in the Ministry and in the universities, or to political reasons. Therefore, communication also has an impact on the success and failure of the policy.
- 9- Most of the interviewees stated that there is regular evaluation of the quality assurance programme in every university and the final decision is made by the Ministry. However, it is important to have accountability after the evaluation process. Two interviewees, Policy Maker 1 and Senior Manager (2), indicated that one of the lecturers did not achieve the required score in the teaching quality assurance programme. As a result, he/she no longer has the right to lecture at the university. The question is, are the regulations applied equally in every academic unit. If so, then there would be effective implementation of the programme. But this is not the case as there 100 lecturers (49.8%) argue that their political affiliation has an impact on getting the job and this means that they might not be qualified academically to lecture in university, and 98 (48.8%) lecturers believe that political parties still interfere with higher education sector, just as before the reform process in 2009. At the same time, 105 (52.2%) lecturers state that their CAD achievements are not considered while applying for a job, and 111 (55.2%) lecturers say that there is no equity in appointments in the higher education sector. Therefore, it is significant to consider accountability and equity after reviewing and evaluating lecturers' academic portfolio.
- 10- There has been no complete evaluation of the reform process. Yet, not all the aspects of the reform policy have been implemented, as referred to by Junior Manager 2. Therefore, it is impossible to have a complete evaluation of the whole policy unless the other aspects are implemented.

6.10. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the findings of the data. There are differences as well as similarities in the findings. In some areas, students and lecturers have similar attitudes, and in other areas they have different attitudes. The same applies to interviewees' attitudes. The interviewees are categorized into policy makers, senior managers, and junior managers. Most of the interviewees have positive attitudes towards the reform policy and consider it as an initial essential step to set minimum standards of quality assurance in higher education in the Kurdistan region. The findings are presented according to each category: students; lecturers; policy makers; senior managers; and junior managers. This chapter has presented answers to the three research questions of this study. There are positive as well as negative attitudes. Some areas of the reform policy have positive effect while others have not led to any considerable changes. It is important to understand that reform cannot be done by students, lecturers, junior managers, senior managers, or policy-makers alone. Yet, it is a responsibility for all concerned actors and it cannot be implemented without the participation of all the concerned actors, as this is stated by Fullan (2007, p. 303): 'Individual classroom teachers cannot opt out of school reform; individual schools cannot opt out of district reform; individual districts cannot opt out of state reform; and individual states cannot opt out of global reform'.

Chapter 7: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions of the Study

7.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the implications of the study. More precisely, it covers policy, practice, and methodological implications of the study. It presents the recommendations for academic leaders, policy makers, senior managers, junior managers, lecturers, and students to assist in developing the reform process in Kurdistan's universities. The chapter ends with conclusions, presented in a simple and brief style.

7.2. Implications of the Study

7.2.1. Policy Implications

As reform policy is considered the major subject of this study, it is significant to know some implications of policy. This study has presented an analysis of the higher education reform policy in the Kurdistan region, a reform based on experience gleaned from international and European higher education. Higher education reform is a world phenomenon. It can be initiated in any system when all components are provided and better quality is sought. The case of the Kurdish higher education reform has been initiated in order to bring about international standards of quality of European higher education within the Kurdish system. This is the first challenge in the reform policy, because the two systems are completely different - especially in terms of higher education management, university autonomy, finance sources, and politics.

The higher education reform policy was initiated by the MoHESR-KRG. This means it is considered as a reform policy at national level to cover all the private and public higher education institutions in the Kurdistan region. Therefore, the Ministry needs to sustain the beneficial and active areas that have already been implemented, while changing other areas that have not been attempted until now (Jowi, 2009). In order for the policy to be successful, it must achieve its objectives. The reform policy has been introduced and partially implemented but, it might make the higher education system worse if the process is stopped half way, because this would create imbalance among the different aspects. It is necessary to evaluate the process regularly if the Ministry seeks effectiveness and high standards in the higher education system.

The bureaucratic and centralized government system imposes restrictions on the policy implementation. In such government, changing or issuing new radical rules and regulations is

undertaken by top senior government officials, who could be the Prime Minister or the President of the Kurdistan Parliament or the President of the region. The support of Kurdistan government is a crucial element to effectively implement the process. This is the significance of identifying actors' roles in the reform policy. As Fullan (2007) emphasizes, every single actor has to perform an active role in the reform process to achieve the objectives of the reform. Therefore, policy makers need to review the policy if the process has not succeeded according to students' and lecturers' perceptions. In addition, this study implies that large-scale reform would almost fail if there were no appropriate funds allocated by the government. Appropriate funding is not the only missing factor, as accountability and effective implementation of regulations and rules are also absent. It is a fact that the Kurdish higher education reform process is initiated, implemented, and partially evaluated by local staff members working at the MoHESR-KRG. Therefore, these employees need professional development programmes to perform effectively. They need to be trained in how to evaluate and monitor the reform process, and how to identify obstacles and find solutions.

Moreover, the reform policy could shake the ground of the higher education system in the Kurdistan region. This study implies that the reform process can build up a national quality assurance programme after improving and developing it. It can be regarded as the first quality assurance programme in the Kurdistan region. Having such a programme will encourage opportunities to establish international quality assurance programmes in the region and implies introducing international higher education services to Kurdistan universities. Gradually, internationalization would play a greater role in Kurdish higher education and Kurdistan universities would be able to compete internationally with world universities. That means Kurdish graduates would have almost equal job opportunities with graduates of the world's high-ranking universities. This is the most successful model of establishing an international quality assurance programme, because 'it provides many opportunities for development and progress to cope with globalization tendencies' (Ali, 2012). However, an international-Kurdish quality assurance programme will remain a dream if the current reform policy has not been reviewed, analysed, assessed, and developed.

The region lacks an effective research centre to provide empirical studies on various areas. Recently in the region, the Middle East Research Institute (MERI) was established. It is an institute mostly concerned with politics and economics. This research centre, and other yet to be founded, can play an important role in developing the reform policy because there can be opportunities to cooperate with international agencies such as UNESCO, the World Bank or through various European councils in the region to allocate financial grants to researchers to conduct studies on the reform.

To the best knowledge of the researcher, this is the first empirical study to analyse the academic and research aspects of the reform based on different categories of participants in five higher education institutions in the region.

7.2.2. Practical Implications

This study has practical implications for lecturers and students in Kurdistan universities. As far as lecturers are concerned, they have been deprived of professional development courses. First, lecturers need to be offered professional development courses on student assessment. Prior to starting a teaching career in Kurdistan universities, academic staff must attend and pass a short pedagogy course focused on methods of teaching, student assessment, and setting exam questions. This study shows that the lecturers have a negative attitude towards this course. Therefore, it needs to be more comprehensive and tailored to lecturers' skills. Moreover, it is the lecturers' responsibility to ask for such courses more frequently if there are an appropriate number of lecturers who need it.

Secondly, lecturers must be required to search out online courses to develop themselves and build up their teaching skill, rather than opposing the existing university services because the courses are still run by professional academics who gleaned their experience in teaching and assessment on their own initiative. Thirdly, lecturers need to make time for research in order to progress. In other words, they need to integrate research into their teaching. This study further implies that there is a relationship between teaching outcomes, teaching environment, and teaching approach (Prosser and Trigwell, 1997). This implies that learning outcomes are affected, because when the teaching environment affects teaching approaches then the teaching outcomes will also be affected and the latter will affect the learning outcomes (Trigwell et al., 1997, 1994). Therefore, organizing professional training courses to develop lecturers' skills of teaching and assessment is vital to improve students' learning and performance.

Students are the main beneficiaries of the process. This study shows that students have an overall negative attitude towards the quality assurance programme. However, they became familiar with new activities introduced by the reform policy such as giving feedback on lecturers' performance, academic debates and critical thinking sessions. Such activities have a significant role in developing students' learning because the feedback helps lecturers to develop their performance and teaching skills, while students learn more self-confidence and build up their skill in academic criticism.

7.2.3. Methodological Implications

The data collection of this study is based on surveys and interviews. Considering participants' knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the quality assurance programme and reform policy, direct sampling of the participants was useful to enrich this study. It was essential to approach students in their final year of study because they have more knowledge about the programme and they can give a better evaluation than students in their early years of study. Moreover, directly approaching expert interviewees with experiences and information about the reform policy was necessary in this study because the aim of the interviews was to find out the interviewees' attitudes based on their personal experience, understanding, contribution, and initiation. They have a direct link with and an active role in the reform process. The interviewees' attitudes are a reflection on the reform policy document, therefore their knowledge helps to reconstruct and build up available information from the reform policy document. However, the research methods used in this study were most effective and provide answers to the research questions.

In addition to sampling and approaching, the campus visits and handling the hard copies of the survey forms at the end of teaching classes played an effective role in collecting a large number of responses to the survey. This was unexpected by the researcher: 801 out of 1131 students and 201 out of 282 lecturers responded. It would be possible to select a sample of students in their first year of study with the same academic background to compare their perceptions to the findings of this study to establish whether there is a difference and any progress in the programme.

7.3. Limitations of the Study

This study introduces an analysis of the Kurdish reform policy of higher education. It is limited to finding out students' and lecturers' perceptions about the quality assurance programme, and junior managers', senior managers', and policy makers' perceptions about the reform policy. It is important to identify the limitations of this study to understand its analysis and findings better. Therefore, the limitations are as follow:

- 1- This study is designed to find out students', lecturers', junior managers', senior managers', and policy makers' attitudes to the Kurdish higher education reform process initiated by the MoHESR-KRG in 2009.
- 2- Regarding surveying students' and lecturers' attitude about the quality assurance programme introduced by the reform process, because the aim is to find out their

understanding and evaluation of the programme, the selected students were in their final year of study apart from two departments; architecture and technical management. The survey covered only two private universities and two public universities, chosen based on their size. As student numbers were greater in some departments than others, the researcher randomly surveyed only one hundred students in the departments where there were more in order to balance the selected departments and to avoid bias in analysing the data.

- 3- In terms of interviewing junior managers, senior managers, and policy makers to find out their attitudes of the reform policy of Kurdish higher education, direct sampling of participants was necessary because their personal experience and role in the reform policy were significant to analysing the policy and answering the research questions.
- 4- This study is limited to the academic and research areas of the reform policy. Therefore, no other areas such as university management and administrative infrastructure are discussed or analysed here.
- 5- The literature is based on European and Western studies on policy studies and quality assurance and accreditation, because of the lack of Kurdish academic studies and research on the reform policy and because it is a recent process initiated only in 2009. Western studies might not be appropriate to interpret and analyse the Kurdish reform policy, but the reform policy is based on the notion of producing high standards of higher education in Kurdistan universities to compete with world universities. At the same time, the researcher designed the survey items and interview questions based on the reform policy document issued by the MoHESR-KRG.

7.4. Recommendations of the Study

The reform policy of the Kurdish higher education system is the first attempt to reform the system. Therefore, there are many aspects that need further research and studies to develop and improve the process. This study covered academic and research aspects of the reform process. A significant recommendation would be identifying the reason of having variant performance of the reform policy. Due to the centralized system of the reform policy, it is the responsibility of the Ministry to find out the reason of such variation and create a more competitive environment among universities. As mentioned by all the interviewees that there are obstacles in the process, it is crucial to identify them then find solutions to improve the process. The reform process needs more assessment and follow up process to develop it and achieve its objectives. One of the main obstacles, though referred to by some of the interviewees, is the lack of motive, especially a

financial motive. Since the hit of economic crisis in 2014 in the region, Kurdistan universities started to privatize most of its services. This helped universities to partially fund themselves. However, decision makers need to think about a plan of how to spend the income of each university and prioritize needs.

The interviewees further mentioned that there were international agencies involved in the reform process. Though it is a move towards implementing international standards of quality and accreditation but, it would be better to depend on local potentials to develop the reform policy due to the economic crisis in the region. Universities yet have the option of collaborating with other universities in the neighbouring countries that have rich experiences and successful programmes of quality assurance and accreditation.

It is encouraged to conduct further research on the quality of management and administrative structure in higher education institutions. This will help to find out whether the reform policy led to changes and progress in the management system of higher education and why some universities adopted the new management structure while other universities still follow the old management structure, despite the centralized and hierarchical system of administration. It is important to investigate the environment and status of the draft legislation for higher education introduced by the reform process in 2009.

This study has covered only two public universities and two private universities in a single city. The reform policy is designed to reform all the universities in the region. Therefore, it is worth finding out students' and lecturers' perceptions at the other universities in the region. Conducting further research in the other universities can be considered as a complete assessment of the academic and research areas of the reform policy. This research will be a resource to which policy makers, senior managers, and junior managers can refer to for analysis and assessment purposes. Taking into consideration the lack of experts and 'think tank' organizations in the region, the MoHESR-KRG can offer research grants to encourage academics and researchers to conduct further research on the reform process. In addition to developing and assessing the reform process, grants for research purposes will develop research potential in the universities. As there is no document that refers to the needs of the labour market or whether there has been any survey or studies in this regard, it is crucial to encourage researchers and academics to conduct studies in this regard. The availability of such studies will help lecturers and directors of curricula design and development to redesign and update current curricula and the academic programmes offered in the Kurdistan universities. Moreover, the process of redesigning curricula and academic

programmes based on the needs of the labour market would lead to changes in human resources capacity, job satisfaction, and society's development.

Further research is still important to investigate the quality and capacity of employment of new graduates. It is indicated in the reform policy that it aims to provide the labour market in the Kurdistan region with active graduates who have updated knowledge, confidence, and think critically. Therefore, further fieldwork is important to know to what extent universities can produce active and knowledgeable graduates who can supply the labour market in future, relying on local skill.

The data of this study are based on two research approaches, survey and interview, to find out students', lecturers', junior managers', senior managers', and policy makers' perceptions about the reform process. However, it is necessary to conduct further studies based on the focus group approach to investigate specific areas in the reform process such as the quality and outcome of English language courses for first-year students, critical thinking and academic debating courses for first-year students, and health and safety. Individual focus group discussions can be fruitful if organized at each college or university and compared later to find out reasons for any differences.

Many of the private universities in the Kurdistan region were kindergartens or primary schools when they were first founded. Due to public demand for educational foundations, they could develop and expand to grow as secondary and high schools. They ended up as private universities that are still running and graduating students in different academic programmes. Some of these universities used to offer taught postgraduate programmes before the reform process in 2009. However, such programmes are no longer available because the MoHESR-KRG believes that these taught postgraduate programmes lack academic and research environments. They will become eligible to offer the same taught postgraduate programmes after meeting the conditions set by the Ministry. The point here is that the reform process has been initiated in a way that could lead to some changes in academic aspects of higher education. The process can be further developed to achieve the policy objectives for which it has been set. As the Ministry is the decision maker and has most of the power, senior staff members at the Ministry can work at setting up regulation to organize the implementation of the process. The reform process lacks regulations on accountability, giving credits and privileges to an over-performing university while taking these away from an under-performing university, a committee or a minister having absolute power to make decisions, and keeping politics out of the higher education sector.

Finally, it could be time to establish a Kurdish agency of quality assurance and accreditation. This agency could either be sponsored by the Ministerial Council of the KRG or the President's Office.

There should be experts and professional academics, and researchers with experience of quality assurance and accreditation. It is highly significant that such agency is supported by the government because of the bureaucratic, centralized and hierarchical management system in the region.

7.5. Contribution to Knowledge

This research can be considered as an academic reference based on empirical data collected from five higher education institutions, including two public and two private institutions, in the Kurdistan region. The MOHESR-KRG can consider this study for evaluation and analysis purposes. As a first step in the evaluation process, the Ministry has the opportunity to compare between the findings of this study and the results of the primary test which the Ministry conducted in the first year of introducing the reform policy. If the result of the comparison lead to more achievements of the policy aims, this means the policy is successful; otherwise, it needs further study to find out obstacles then solutions.

The reform policy was the force behind introducing several criteria into teaching, learning, and research in Kurdistan universities. But, what contribution(s) did the reform policy has within the frame of world higher education? It is significant to consider international criteria if the reform policy aims at internationalizing the Kurdish higher education. More importantly, the MOHESR-KRG has to consider managerial, financial, cultural, and political differences between Kurdistan and world higher education institutions. However, the Ministry could successfully create a competitive environment among Kurdistan higher education universities since introducing the reform policy. For example, a local ranking system has been implemented in 2015. This system aims at arranging the rank of higher education universities in the region. This is a way to encourage universities to have a better performance.

Then, what contribution this study can make to the world research in higher education? This study could explain how a reform process is implemented in a region which is characterized by hierarchy, political, centralized, restraint, and masculine. Implementing international standards of higher education in such a governemtnal system would face many obstacles which could be the main reason of why some reform policies are not successful.

7.6. Conclusion

This study presented an analysis of the reform policy and teaching quality assurance programme initiated by the MoHESR-KRG in the Kurdistan region in 2009. The Kurdistan region had been isolated from world development since 1990, mainly because of war and political turmoil. This isolation destroyed the infrastructure of almost all areas of society, among which was higher education. In 2009, the change in government cabinet urged leaders and politicians to start a reform process for the purpose of development and improvement, to cope mainly with economic development in the region and on-going world development. Therefore, the reform policy initiated by the MoHESR-KRG was the beginning. The reform policy is comprehensive and general, briefly covering all aspects of the system, academic and administration. This study focused only on the academic and research aspects of the reform policy.

In order to improve and develop, reform or change should be undertaken. A successful reform is based on a successful plan, theoretically and practically, that leads to achieving its aim. Besides, all the significant components (actors, instruments, and process cycle) of the reform process should be provided appropriately to keep the process going. Each component of the reform has a significant role that cannot be separated out. However, the components of the reform process cannot be organized and gathered without a well-designed policy. Therefore, policy studies are found to solve society's problems and seek opportunities of improvement. In principle, the Kurdish reform policy is based on European and international standards of higher education. It would undoubtedly be a challenge to reform the complete system of higher education in Kurdistan in accordance with such standards of international and European higher education system.

The higher education sector in the Kurdistan region is centralized and follows a hierarchical system of management. Though there are some universities that make small investments based on collaborative projects with private and public sectors in the region, all the universities receive their annual budget from the KRG. The small income from those projects is insufficient to provide for the needs of the university. Moreover, new presidents of universities are chosen and approved by the Council of Ministers of the KRG. Appointment of other senior managers, such as deans of college, is controlled by the MoHESR-KRG. Therefore, universities in the Kurdistan region have no independence; they are managed and controlled by the MoHESR-KRG and the KRG. This limits opportunities for development and investment. Taking into account the annual budget of universities, Kurdish universities cannot stand as independent entities financially, because they do not have their own source of funding. They can be classified as consumers rather than investors.

Moreover, research potential in the Kurdistan universities is limited. All the universities have research and training centres, but almost with no academic production; this is something most of the lecturers confirmed. Not all the universities have journals to publish their lecturers' research. Most of the universities do, and these are considered as a venue to publish lecturers' research papers, but other lecturers personally work to secure approval for publishing research in international journals. This means that there are individual lecturers who try to introduce Kurdish research to the international research community. Furthermore, publishing academic research in international journals gives the author more credits in the CAD programme than publishing in local journals, and credits are essential for academic promotion.

However, this study indicates that the reform policy could shake the ground of the old system of higher education in the region. It could attract the attention of educational leaders and academics to the importance of having quality assurance programme in the universities. It could make a move towards reform and improvement. Overall, students have negative attitudes towards the teaching quality assurance while lecturers have a neutral attitude. However, there are several sections in the programme on which they express a positive attitude. Besides, students and lecturers share the same attitudes towards some sections of the programme; for instance, they have positive attitudes towards the quality of teaching and learning, and the role of universities. They expressed different attitudes towards the quality of evaluation and feedback, where students expressed positive attitudes while lecturers expressed negative attitudes.

This study further indicates that there is relationship between students' perception and the type of their university, whether it is private or public. There are more students in public universities than private that have negative attitudes. In addition, there is no relationship between students' perception and gender. Comparing students' and lecturers' perception to junior and senior managers' and policy makers' perceptions, this study indicates that there is a difference in their perceptions. Interviewees argued that the reform policy lead to change and could improve many aspects in the system, in contrast to students' and lecturers' attitudes.

However, this study is an academic source focused on analysing the reform process and the quality assurance programme of Kurdish higher education. There is a massive literature on reform and quality assurance in European and Western higher education, but this study can directly contribute to Kurdish research about the higher education system and typically the reform policy of Kurdish higher education. This study is significant and can be referred to for analysis of the reform policy by policy makers, senior managers, and junior managers to review the policy, changing the weak aspects while developing the strong ones. Besides, lecturers can also refer to

this study to understand which aspects of the programme have been developed and which aspects need to be developed. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the findings of this study to previous research as there is none, according to the researcher's best knowledge.

Finally, the reform policy may not completely achieve its aims concerning every single aspect, but it can definitely shake the ground of higher education in the Kurdistan region. It can be a window towards further improvements and developments of the system. It can provide opportunities for international academic projects and bring international standards of higher education to the Kurdish higher education system. Yet, the Kurdish reform policy is set to provide better services to society, because with education, society develops and flourish as Fullan (2007, p. 302) states: 'society will be stronger if education serves to enable people to work together to achieve higher purposes that serve both the individual and the collective good.'

Appendix 1: List of Interview Questions

Questions addressed to head of curricula development:

- 1- What is the purpose of developing curricula?
- 2- Is there any relationship between studying program and employers' needs in private and public sectors? If so, how this relationship is planned for?
- 3- What are the obstacles of developing the curricula?
- 4- What is the difference between 2009 and 2014 with regard to developing studying programs?
- 5- What are the resources you depend on for developing the program?
- 6- There are people who say the reform process is no longer alive. What do you say?
- 7- Have you started your initiatives concerning the quality assurance program in your university? How?

Questions addressed to presidents and vice-presidents:

- 1- What is your view about the reform process after four years?
- 2- What is your evaluation of the plan of the reform?
- 3- Do you work on implementing the objectives of the reform process? if so, how?
- 4- What sections in the reform have you implemented?
- 5- How do you carry out an evaluation process for the outcomes you get from the implementation?
- 6- What are the obstacles you face to implement the reform objectives?
- 7- What resources are available to you?
- 8- Do you think that the reform process could establish a quality assurance program in the universities? How?
- 9- Does your university carry on any kind of performance assessment or accreditation annually? What are the criteria of such assessment?

- 10- What are the methods taken to reward those who meet requirements of the teaching quality assurance program and warn those who do not meet the requirements?
- 11- There are people who say the reform process is no longer alive. What do you say?
- 12- Have you started your initiatives concerning the quality assurance program in your university? How?

Questions addressed to heads of quality assurance and accreditation:

- 1- What are the aims of the quality assurance program?
- 2- Is there a central/independent committee to evaluate teaching quality assurance program annually? How this works in practice?
- 3- To what extent politics has a role in this evaluation?
- 4- What accreditation system do you follow for accrediting a new academic unit? (European, American, British)?
- 5- What obstacles do you face in accreditation process?
- 6- Is there a written document which guides decision-makers and academic staff on how to plan for a new department/college? Do interested people (stakeholders, businessmen, ...) have access to all information and requirements needed to establish a new academic unit?
- 7- Who has a role in making the final decision on approving/rejecting an accreditation application?
- 8- What are the differences between accreditation system for private and public universities?
- 9- Is there a committee to renew accreditation of universities? To what extent this committee makes independent decisions?
- 10- Many lecturers are not satisfied with students' feedback. What do you think about this? What is the reason?
- 11- Does students' feedback adds something or leads to improve lecturers' performance or the quality of teaching?

12- What is your opinion about the quality of building and halls in universities? What is the plan for establishing new buildings; do you follow high standards for building?

13- Is there a difference in teaching quality between 2009 and 2014? In what aspects such difference exists?

14- What plans the ministry has to develop lecturers' skills in teaching and research?

15- How do you reward those lecturers who meet Continuous Academic Development (CAD) requirements? How do you warn those who don't meet them?

Questions addressed to the policy-makers:

1- What are the objectives of the reform process of 2009?

2- Was there a written document of the reform policy before submitting it to the Council of Ministers? Who organized the agenda of the policy?

3- Was there a committee/organization to set the policy agenda in 2009 or earlier?

4- How the reform process has been introduced to universities?

5- Who are the policy actors and have they been consulted while forming the policy?

6- Was there a complete draft of the policy before submitting it to the Council of Minister to get it approved?

7- Do you have any plans to evaluate the reform process? Do you think it is time to conduct evaluation process on the national level? And do you think there is experienced staff to do the evaluation process?

8- The Ministry had plans to get kind of international accreditation from some international agencies like the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). Would you comment on the progress of such accreditation programs?

9- What were the obstacles when the reform process was introduced? And how do you planned to face and solve these obstacles?

10- Are there any areas in the reform policy which have priorities to be implemented?

11- There are people who say the reform process is no longer alive. What do you say?

12- Have you started your initiatives concerning the quality assurance program in your university? How?

Appendix 2: A Sample of Students' Questionnaire Data

Student's Information:

University:

College: *Languages*

Department:

Gender: *F* Age: *20*

Please answer the following questions by ticking only one box which best reflects your viewpoint:

First: Courses and Programs:

Note: Course is a unit in the program (e.g. English literature, English Grammar, Novel, and Short Story are courses of English Language Program)

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Courses are designed to make the program have good quality.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
2.	Courses help to build up my academic knowledge.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
3.	My program prepares me for future employment.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
4.	My course handbook helps me understand what the course is about.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
5.	Many of the courses have good teaching quality.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Second: Evaluation and Feedback

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	My evaluation of my lecturer is taken into consideration.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
2.	I have the opportunity to give feedback on my lecturer's performance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
3.	Exams are important measure of my learning.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
4.	I have enough time to prepare and do exams required from me.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5.	I receive helpful feedback on my learning and outcomes.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

6.	There are other measures of my learning (assignment, group work, research,...)		✓			
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Third: Library and Studying Environment

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	School/department building has a high standard quality.		✓			
2.	There is quiet area provided for me to study while on campus.		✓			
3.	The university provides facilities to students with learning disabilities.					✓
4.	The university provides facilities to physically disabled students.					✓
5.	There are appropriate learning resources available to help me with my study (e.g. books, journals, and library).		✓			
6.	There are good quality materials and equipment in laboratories.		✓			
7.	There are appropriate copies of books in my study area.		✓			
8.	There are other appropriate resources related to my study area (e.g. journals, newspapers, magazine,...etc).		✓			
9.	An appropriate electronic library is essential.	✓				
10.	There are outdoor noises affect learning environment.				✓	
11.	Safety and health conditions are maintained in my department.		✓			

Fourth: Teaching and Learning:

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I'm encouraged to undertake independent study (e.g. assignment, research)	✓				
2.	My lecturer gives me time to discuss and ask questions inside the class.	✓				
3.	I like lectures better than other forms of teaching (e.g. seminar discussion, working groups)	✓				
4.	Lecturers sometimes discriminate students because of their gender, religion, ethnicity or political opinions		✓			

Fifth: Use of Technology

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Appropriate Internet and IT services are provided.					✓
2.	Lecturers use: Power point		✓			
	Learning video tape					✓
	iPad					✓
	Audio approaches		✓			
3.	The university provides training on computer programs and technology if there are appropriate demands				✓	

Sixth: Role of University

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	My program is important for society development.	✓				
2.	I will be able to establish social network in society.	✓				

3.	I will be able to contribute to make society cohesive.	✓				
4.	I will be able to contribute to make society tolerant.	✓				
5.	Universities are for generating active society members	✓				

Seventh: Change and Progress over the Last Years

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	In the recent years, the quality of teaching in my department has improved.		✓			
2.	In recent years, the quality of student learning in my department has improved.		✓			
3.	In recent years, the quality of ICT has improved.				✓	
4.	In recent years, the quality of feedback I receive has improved.			✓		
5.	In recent years, lecturer's performance in my department has improved				✓	
6.	In recent years, buildings, offices and classrooms of my department have improved.		✓			
7.	In recent years, students' skills of discussion and critical thinking in my department have improved.		✓			

Eighth: Please write down any other information you would like to add concerned with the above sections.

Appendix 3: English Version of Students' Questionnaire

Student's Information:

University:

College:

Department:

Gender:

Age:

Please answer the following questions by ticking only one box which best reflects your viewpoint:

First: Courses and Programs:

Note: Course is a unit in the program (e.g. English literature, English Grammar, Novel, and Short Story are courses of English Language Program)

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Courses are designed to make the program have good quality.					
2.	Courses help to build up my academic knowledge.					
3.	My program prepares me for future employment.					
4.	My course handbook helps me understand what the course is about.					
5.	Many of the courses have good teaching quality.					

Second: Evaluation and Feedback

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	My evaluation of my lecturer is taken into consideration.					
2.	I have the opportunity to give feedback on my lecturer's performance.					
3.	Exams are important measure of my learning.					
4.	I have enough time to prepare and					

	do exams required from me.					
5.	I receive helpful feedback on my learning and outcomes.					
6.	There are other measures of my learning (assignment, group work, research,...)					

Third: Library and Studying Environment

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	School/department building has a high standard quality.					
2.	There is quiet area provided for me to study while on campus.					
3.	The university provides facilities to students with learning disabilities.					
4.	The university provides facilities to physically disabled students.					
5.	There are appropriate learning resources available to help me with my study (e.g. books, journals, and library).					
6.	There are good quality materials and equipment in laboratories.					
7.	There are appropriate copies of books in my study area.					
8.	There are other appropriate resources related to my study area (e.g. journals, newspapers, magazine,...etc).					
9.	An appropriate electronic library is essential.					
10.	There are outdoor noises affect learning environment.					
11.	Safety and health conditions are maintained in my department.					

Fourth: Teaching and Learning:

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I'm encouraged to undertake independent study (e.g. assignment, research)					
2.	My lecturer gives me time to discuss and ask questions inside the class.					
3.	I like lectures better than other forms of teaching (e.g. seminar discussion, working groups)					
4.	Lecturers sometimes discriminate students because of their gender, religion, ethnicity or political opinions					

Fifth: Use of Technology

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Appropriate Internet and IT services are provided.					
2.	Lecturers use: Power Point					
	Learning videos					
	iPad					
	Audio approaches					
3.	The university provides training on computer programs and technology if there are appropriate demands					

Sixth: Role of University

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	My program is important for society development.					
2.	I will be able to establish social network in society.					
3.	I will be able to contribute to make society cohesive.					

4.	I will be able to contribute to make society tolerant.					
5.	Universities are for generating active society members					

Seventh: Change and Progress over the Last Years

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	In the recent years, the quality of teaching in my department has improved.					
2.	In recent years, the quality of student learning in my department has improved.					
3.	In recent years, the quality of ICT has improved.					
4.	In recent years, the quality of feedback I receive has improved.					
5.	In recent years, lecturer's performance in my department has improved					
6.	In recent years, buildings, offices and classrooms of my department have improved.					
7.	In recent years, students' skills of discussion and critical thinking in my department have improved.					

Eighth: Please write down any other information you would like to add concerned with the above sections.

Appendix 4: Kurdish Version of Students' Questionnaire

زانباری دهرباره قوتابی

ناوی زانکۆ: کۆلیژ:

بەش: رەگەز: تەمەن:

تکایه وهلامی گونجاو به پێی تیگه‌یشتن و بۆچوونی خۆت دەست نیشان بکە:

یه‌کەم: کۆرس و پرۆگرامی خۆپێندن:

تێبینی: کۆرس یه‌که‌کانی پرۆگرامه (مادده یان وحده) به‌لام پرۆگرام بواری خۆپێندنه ، بۆ نموونه : پرۆگرامی زمانی ئینگلیزی پیکهاتوو له کۆرسه‌کانی ئەدەبی ئینگلیزی ، رێزمانی ئینگلیزی ، رۆمان ، کورتە چیرۆک.

ژ	پرسیار	زۆر په‌سه‌نده	په‌سه‌نده	مام ناوه‌ند	ناپازیم	ته‌واو ناپازیم
1	کۆرسه‌کان ئاماده‌ کران به‌ شیوازیك بۆ ئەوه‌ی کوالیتیه‌کی باش بدات به‌ پرۆگرامه‌که‌.					
2	کۆرسه‌کان بارمه‌تیده‌رن بۆ بنیاتنانی زانیاری ئەکادیمی.					
3	پرۆگرامی خۆپێندنم ئاماده‌م ده‌کات بۆ کارکردن له‌ داهااتوودا.					
4	رێبه‌ری کۆرسه‌که‌م هاوکاره‌ بۆ ئەوه‌ی بزانم کۆرسه‌که‌ باسی چی ده‌کات.					
5	زۆربه‌ی کۆرسه‌کان کوالیتیه‌کی فێرکردنی باشیان هه‌یه‌.					

دووه‌م: هه‌لسه‌نگاندن و فیدباک

ژ	پرسیار	زۆر په‌سه‌نده	په‌سه‌نده	مام ناوه‌ند	ناپازیم	ته‌واو ناپازیم
1	هه‌لسه‌نگاندم (فیدباک) دهرباره‌ی ماموستاکه‌م هه‌ژمار ده‌کریت.					
2	من ده‌رفه‌تم هه‌یه‌ بۆ پێدانی فیدباک دهرباره‌ی ماموستاکه‌م					
3	تاقیکردنه‌وه‌کان پێوه‌ری گرتگن بۆ فیزیوونم.					
4	کاتی گونجاوم هه‌یه‌ بۆ خۆئاماده‌کردن و ئەنجامدانی ئەو تاقیکردنه‌وانه‌ی لێم داواکراوه‌.					

					5	فیدباکی یارمه تیدهر وهرده گرم سه بارهت به فیژیوونم و ئه و کارانه ی که ئه نجامی ددهم.
					6	ماموستا هندی پیوهری تر به کار دینی بو فیژیوونم وهکو (ئاماده کردنی راپورت ، توئینه وه ، کارکردن وهکو گروپ ، ...)

سپیه م: کتیبخانه و ژینگه ی خویندن

ژ	پرسیار	زۆر په سه نده	په سه نده	مام ناوه ند	نارازیم	ته واو نارازیم
1	باله خانه ی کۆلیژ له ئاستی کوالیتییه کی به رزه .					
2	له کۆلیژه کهم شوینی ئارامی تایبهت هه یه بو خویندن.					
3	زانکۆ ئاسانکاری ئاماده دهکات بو ئه و قوتابیانیه که خاوه ن پیداو یستی فیژیوونی تایبهتن.					
4	زانکۆ ئاسانکاری ئاماده دهکات بو ئه و قوتابیانیه که خاوه ن پیداو یستی جهسته یی تایبهتن.					
5	سه چاوه ی فیژیوونی گونجاو هه یه بو یارمه تیدانم له خویندن (وهکو: کتیب ، گوڤار ، کتیبخانه)					
6	که رهسته و ئامیری تاقیگه کان کوالیتییه کی باشیان هه یه .					
7	ژماره ی گونجاو هه یه له کۆپی ئه و کتیبانیه که تایبهتن به پروگرامی خویندنم.					
8	سه چاوه ی گونجاوی تر هه یه که په یوه ندی هه یه به بواری خویندنم (وهکو: رۆژنامه ، گوڤار ، ..)					
9	کتیبخانه یه کی ئه لیکترونی گونجاو پنیو یسته هه بیته .					
10	ژاوه ژاوی دهره کی هه یه که کار دهکاته سه ر پرۆسه ی فیژیوون.					
11	مه رجه کانی ته ندروستی و سه لامه تی له به رچا و گیراوه له به شه که م					

چوا ره م: فیژکردن و فیژیوون

ژ	پرسیار	زۆر په سه نده	په سه نده	مام ناوه ند	نارازیم	ته واو نارازیم

					1	من ھاندەدرىم بۇ ئەۋەى توۋىنەنەۋە/راپۇرت بە تەنبا ئەنجام بەدەم.
					2	مامۇستاكەم كاتم دەداتى بۇ گەتوگۇكردن و پارسباركردن لە ناو پۇل
					3	من شىۋازى وانە ووتتەۋەى مامۇستام پىم باشتەرە لە شىۋازەكانى تر (گەتوگۇكردن لە سىمىنار ، كاركردن ۋەكو گروپ).
					4	ھەندىك جار مامۇستاكەن جىۋاۋزى دەكەن لە نىۋان قوتاببان بە ھۋى رەگەز ، ئايىن ، ناسنامەى نەتەۋەىى ، راي سىياسى.

پىنچەم: بەكارھىتئانى تەكنەلۇژىيا

تەۋاۋ نارازىم	مام ناۋەند	پەسەندە	زۇر پەسەندە	پارسبار	ژ	
					1	خزمەتگوزارى ئىنتەرنىت و تەكنەلۇژىياى زانىبارى گونجاۋ دابىن كراۋە.
					2	مامۇستاكەن ئەمە بەكار ئەھىنن: پاۋەر پۋىنت ئاي پاد (iPad) فىلمى قىدىۋ بۇ فىرېۋون ئامپىرى دەنگ
					3	زانكۇ كۇرسى راھىتئانى تايىبەت بە پروگرامەكانى كومپىوتەر و تەكنەلۇژىيا دابىن دەكات ئەكەر داۋاكارى پىۋىستى لەسەر بىت.

شەشەم: رۇلى زانكۇ

تەۋاۋ نارازىم	مام ناۋەند	پەسەندە	زۇر پەسەندە	پارسبار	ژ	
					1	پروگرامى خويىندەم گىنگە بۇ پىشكەۋوتنى كۇمەلگا.
					2	توانام دەبىت تۇرى كۇمەلآيەتى دروست بكم لە كۇمەلگا.
					3	توانام دەبىت بۇ بەشدارىكردن لە دروستكردنى كۇمەلگايەكى يەكگرتوو.
					4	توانام دەبىت بۇ بەشدارىكردن لە دروستكردنى كۇمەلگايەكى لىخۇشەبەر.
					5	زانكۇ ئەركى ۋەبەرھىتئانى ئەندامانى چالاكى ھەيە لە كۇمەلگا.

ھەوتەم: گۇۋاھكارى و پېشكەوتن لە ماوەى سالانى راپردوو

تەواو ناپازىم	تەواو ناپازىم	مام ناوھند	پەسەندە	زۆر پەسەندە	پرسىيار	ژ
					لە چەند سالى راپردوودا ، جۆرى (كوالىتى) فېركردن باشتر بووھ لە بەشەكەم.	1
					لە چەند سالى راپردوودا ، جۆرى (كوالىتى) فېربوونى قوتابيان باشتر بووھ لە بەشەكەم.	2
					لە چەند سالى راپردوودا ، جۆرى (كوالىتى) تەكنەلۇژىيە زانىيارى و پەيوھندىكردن باشتر بووھ لە بەشەكەم.	3
					لە چەند سالى راپردوودا ، جۆرى (كوالىتى) فېدباك كە وھرىدەگرم باشتر بووھ.	4
					لە چەند سالى راپردوودا ، ئەدائى مامۇستا باشتر بووھ لە بەشەكەم.	5
					لە چەند سالى راپردوودا ، جۆرى (كوالىتى) ھۆلى خویندن و بېنا و ژوورەكان باشتر بووھ لە بەشەكەم.	6
					لە چەند سالى راپردوودا ، تواناى قوتابيان لە ئالوگۇرکردن و رەخنەگرتنى ئەكادىمى باشتر بووھ لە بەشەكەم.	7

ھەشتەم: ئەگەر ھەر زانىيارىيەكى تىرت ھەيە لەسەر ئەو خالانەى سەرھوھ ، تىكايە لېرە بېنووسە.

Appendix 5: A Sample of Lecturers' Questionnaire Data

Lecturers' Information:

University: _____ College: *Engineering*
 Department: _____ Gender: *Male* Age: *50*
 Year you started teaching in higher education: *1990*

Please answer the following questions by ticking only one box which best reflects your viewpoint:

First: Teaching Quality Assurance Program.

A. Course and Program

Note: Course is a unit in the program (e.g. English literature, English Grammar, Novel, and Short Story are courses of English Language Program)

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Academic programs prepare students for future employment.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
2.	Courses help students to build up their academic knowledge.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
3.	Courses are designed to make the program have good quality.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
4.	I update my course handbook annually.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
5.	Course handbook is informative and organized.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

B. Evaluation and Feedback

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Students provide accurate feedback on my performance.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2.	I give students the opportunity to give feedback on my performance		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
3.	I announce exams timetable on appropriate time.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
4.	Examination is an important measure for students' learning.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
5.	I give my students helpful feedback on their learning and outcomes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
6.	There are other measure of students' learning (assignment, group work, research)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
7.	External assessor's assessment is based on academic criteria only.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

8.	I'm satisfied with the outcome of the external assessor's evaluation of my academic portfolio.		✓			
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C. Library and Teaching Environment

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	School/department building has a high standard quality.				✓	
2.	I am satisfied with my work office.				✓	
3.	My class size has suitable number of students.		✓			
4.	The university provides facilities to physically disabled staff.					✓
5.	There are appropriate available resources about my teaching area (e.g. books, journals, and library).		✓			
6.	There are good quality materials and equipment in laboratories.				✓	
7.	There are appropriate copies of books about my area of interest.				✓	
8.	There are other appropriate resources related to my area of interest (e.g. journals, newspapers, magazine,...etc.		✓			
9.	An appropriate electronic library is essential.	✓				
10.	Number of lecturers exceeds the needs of the department.				✓	
11.	There are outdoor noises affect teaching environment.				✓	
12.	Safety and health conditions are maintained in my department.		✓			
13.	There is quiet area provided for students to study while on campus.		✓			

D. Teaching and Learning:

No	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I encourage students to undertake independent study (e.g. assignments, research)		✓			
2.	I give my students some time to ask questions and discuss inside the class.		✓			
3.	Students like lectures better than other forms of teaching (e.g. seminar discussion, working groups.		✓			
4.	I integrate research into teaching		✓			
5.	Learning outcomes reflect course aims.		✓			

E. Use of Technology:

No	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Appropriate Internet and IT services are provided.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
2.	Lecturers use: Power point Learning video tape iPad Audio approaches	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
3.	The university provides training on computer programs and technology if there are appropriate demands				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Second: Role of University

No	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Studying programs are important for society development.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
2.	Students are able to establish social network in society.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
3.	Students are able to contribute to make society cohesive.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
4.	Students are able to contribute to make society tolerant.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
5.	Universities are for generating active society members		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

Third: Establishing Continuous Development Program for Lecturers

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Pedagogy training course has good quality.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2.	Appropriate training on students' assessment is available.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3.	I'm encouraged to develop my research skills.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4.	I have access to online teaching professional development program.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5.	I have opportunity to improve my teaching skills.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.	I can get consultancy service on curricula development.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.	The available %20 range for course content development is appropriate		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

Fourth: Academic Development and Investment through Research

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The split-site PhD program has higher			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

	quality than the old system of PhD program.					
2.	I keen on organizing my academic portfolio every year.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
3.	My academic portfolio is considered for academic promotion.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4.	I fulfill requirements of the continuous academic development (CAD) program.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
5.	The university has a research centre.					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.	The university encourages investment through research.					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.	The university secures extra income through research.					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Fifth: Social Justice

NO	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Lecturers' selection for managerial vacancies is a transparent process.					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Political parties have less interference within higher education institutions after the reform process.					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	There is equity in the process of job offering in higher education sector.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4.	Continuous academic development program (CAD) is a criterion considered while selecting candidates for a job.					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.	My political affiliation has an impact on getting a job.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
6.	There is discrimination in recruiting academic staff.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
7.	Master's and PhD holders have equal opportunities in getting a job.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
8.	I think that lecturers sometimes discriminate students because of their gender, religion, ethnicity or political opinions.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

Sixth: Change and Progress in the Recent Years

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	In the recent years, the quality of teaching in my department has improved.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2.	In recent years, the quality of student learning in my department has improved.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3.	In recent years, opportunities for academic staff development in teaching have improved.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4.	In recent years, the quality of ICT has					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	improved.					
5.	In recent years, buildings, offices and classrooms for my department have improved.				✓	
6.	In recent years, research capacity and output in my department has improved				✓	
7.	In recent years, opportunities for staff development in research have improved.				✓	
8.	In recent years, students' skills of discussion and critical thinking in my department have improved.		✓			

Seventh: Please write down below any other information/suggestions you would like to add concerning the above six sections.

✓

Appendix 6: English Version of Lecturers' Questionnaire

Lecturers' Information:

University:

College:

Department:

Gender:

Age:

Year you started teaching in higher education:

Please answer the following questions by ticking only one box which best reflects your viewpoint:

First: Teaching Quality Assurance Program and curricula development.

A.Course and Program

Note: Course is a unit in the program (e.g. English literature, English Grammar, Novel, and Short Story are courses of English Language Program)

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Academic programs prepare students for future employment.					
2.	Courses help students to build up their academic knowledge.					
3.	Courses are designed to make the program have good quality.					
4.	I update my course handbook annually.					
5.	Course handbook is informative and organized.					

B. Evaluation and Feedback

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Students provide accurate feedback on my performance.					
2.	I give students the opportunity to give feedback on my performance					
3.	I announce exams timetable on appropriate time.					
4.	Examination is an important measure for students' learning.					
5.	I give my students helpful feedback on their learning and outcomes					
6.	There are other measure of students' learning (assignment, group work, research)					
7.	External assessor's assessment is based on academic criteria only.					
8.	I'm satisfied with the outcome of the external assessor's evaluation of my academic portfolio.					

C. Library and Teaching Environment

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	School/department building has a high standard quality.					
2.	I am satisfied with my work office.					

3.	My class size has suitable number of students.					
4.	The university provides facilities to physically disabled staff.					
5.	There are appropriate available resources about my teaching area (e.g. books, journals, and library).					
6.	There are good quality materials and equipment in laboratories.					
7.	There are appropriate copies of books about my area of interest.					
8.	There are other appropriate resources related to my area of interest (e.g. journals, newspapers, magazine,...etc.					
9.	An appropriate electronic library is essential.					
10.	Number of lecturers exceeds the needs of the department.					
11.	There are outdoor noises affect teaching environment.					
12.	Safety and health conditions are maintained in my department.					
13.	There is quiet area provided for students to study while on campus.					

D. Teaching and Learning:

No	Questions	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
----	-----------	----------	-------	---------	----------	----------

		Agree				Disagree
1.	I encourage students to undertake independent study (e.g. assignments, research)					
2.	I give my students some time to ask questions and discuss inside the class.					
3.	Students like lectures better than other forms of teaching (e.g. seminar discussion, working groups).					
4.	I integrate research into teaching					
5.	Learning outcomes reflect course aims.					

E. Use of Technology:

No	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Appropriate Internet and IT services are provided.					
2.	Lecturers use: Power Point					
	Learning videos					
	iPad					
	Audio approaches					
3.	The university provides training on computer programs and technology if there are appropriate demands					

Second: Role of University

No	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Studying programs are important for society development.					
2.	Students are able to establish social network in society.					
3.	Students are able to contribute to make society cohesive.					
4.	Students are able to contribute to make society tolerant.					
5.	Universities are for generating active society members					

Third: Establishing Academicians' Continuous Development Program

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Pedagogy training course has good quality.					
2.	Appropriate training on students' assessment is available.					
3.	I'm encouraged to develop my research skills.					
4.	I have access to online teaching professional development program.					
5.	I have opportunity to improve my teaching skills.					

6.	I can get consultancy service on curricula development.					
7.	The available %20 range for course content development is appropriate					

Fourth: Academic Development and Investment through Research

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The split-site PhD program has higher quality than the old system of PhD program.					
2.	I keen on organizing my academic portfolio every year.					
3.	My academic portfolio is considered for academic promotion.					
4.	I fulfill requirements of the continuous academic development (CAD) program.					
5.	The university has a research centre.					
6.	The university encourages investment through research.					
7.	The university secures extra income through research.					

Fifth: Social Justice

NO	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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1.	Lecturers' selection for managerial vacancies is a transparent process.					
2.	Political parties have less interference within higher education institutions after the reform process.					
3.	There is equity in the process of job offering in higher education sector.					
4.	Continuous academic development program (CAD) is a criterion considered while selecting candidates for a job.					
5.	My political affiliation has an impact on getting a job.					
6.	There is discrimination in recruiting academic staff.					
7.	Master's and PhD holders have equal opportunities in getting a job.					
8.	I think that lecturers sometimes discriminate students because of their gender, religion, ethnicity or political opinions.					

Sixth: Change and Progress in the Recent Years

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	In the recent years, the quality of teaching in my department has improved.					

2.	In recent years, the quality of student learning in my department has improved.					
3.	In recent years, opportunities for academic staff development in teaching have improved.					
4.	In recent years, the quality of ICT has improved.					
5.	In recent years, buildings, offices and classrooms for my department have improved.					
6.	In recent years, research capacity and output in my department has improved					
7.	In recent years, opportunities for staff development in research have improved.					
8.	In recent years, students' skills of discussion and critical thinking in my department have improved.					

Seventh: Please write down below any other information/suggestions you would like to add concerning the above six sections.

Appendix 7: Kurdish Version of Lecturers' Questionnaire

زانباری دهرباره‌ی ماموستا

ناوی زانکۆ:

کۆلیژ:

پەش:

رەگەز:

تەمەن:

سالی دەست پێکردنت بە وانه ووتنه‌وه له خویندنی بالا:

تکایه وه‌لامی گونجاو به پێی تیگه‌یشتن و بۆچوونی خۆت دەست نیشان بکه:

یه‌که‌م: پرۆگرامی د‌نیای چۆری فێکردن

أ. کۆرس و پرۆگرامی خویندن:

تنبینی: کۆرس یه‌که‌کانی پرۆگرامه (ماده یان وحده) به‌لام پرۆگرام بواری خویندنه، بۆ نموونه: پرۆگرامی زمانی ئینگلیزی پیکهاتوو له کۆرسه‌کانی ئەدهبی ئینگلیزی، ر‌یزمانی ئینگلیزی، ر‌ومان، کورته‌چیرۆک.

ژ	پرسیار	زۆر په‌سه‌نده	په‌سه‌نده	مام ناوه‌ند	نارازیم	ته‌واو نارازیم
1	کۆرسه‌کان ناماده‌ کران به‌ شینوازیك بۆ ئەوه‌ی کوالیته‌یی‌ه‌کی باش بدات به‌ پرۆگرامه‌که‌.					
2	کۆرسه‌کان هاوکاری قوتابیان ده‌که‌ن بۆ بنیاتنانی زانیاری ئەکادیمی.					
3	پرۆگرامی خویندنه‌م قوتابی ناماده‌ ده‌کات بۆ کارکردن له‌ داها‌توودا.					
4	سالانه‌ ر‌یبه‌ری کۆرسه‌که‌م نوێ ده‌که‌مه‌وه‌					
5	ر‌یبه‌ری کۆرسه‌که‌ زانیاری به‌خشه‌ و به‌ باشی ر‌یکخواه‌.					

ب. هه‌له‌سه‌نگاندن و فیدب‌اک

ژ	پرسیار	زۆر په‌سه‌نده	په‌سه‌نده	مام ناوه‌ند	نارازیم	ته‌واو نارازیم
1	قوتابیان هه‌له‌سه‌نگاندی (فیدب‌اک) راسته‌قیینه‌ ده‌ده‌ن دهرباره‌ی ئەدائمه‌.					
2	ده‌رفه‌ت ده‌ده‌مه‌ قوتابیان بۆ ئەوه‌ی فیدب‌اک‌ی خۆیان بده‌ن دهرباره‌ی ئەدائمه‌.					

					3	تاقیکردنه وهکان پیوهی گرنگن بو فیروونی قوتابیان.
					4	خشته ی تاقیکردنه وهکان پیش کاتیکی گونجاو راده گه به نم.
					5	فیدباکی یارمه تیده ر ددهم به قوتابیان سه بارهت به فیروونیان و نهو کارانه ی که نه نجامی ددهن.
					6	هه ندی پیوهی تر به کاری دینم بو فیروونی قوتابیان وهکو (ئاماده کردنی راپورت ، توپزینه وه ، کارکردن وهکو گروپ ، ...)
					7	هه لسه نگانندی هه لسه نگیه ری (موقه ییم) ی دهره کی ته نها له سه ر لایه نی نه کادیمی بونیات تراوه.
					8	من رازیم به نه نجامی هه لسه نگانندی هه لسه نگیه ری (موقه ییم) ی دهره کی دهره ی فایلی نه کادیمیم.

پ. کتیبخانه و ژینگه ی فیرکردن

ته واو نازیم	مام ناوه ند	په سه نده	زۆر په سه نده	پرسیار	ژ	
					1	باله خانه ی کۆلیژ له ئاستی کوالیتییه کی به رزه.
					2	له کۆلیژه کهم شوینی ئارام هه به تایبهت به خویندنی قوتابیان.
					3	من رازیم به ژوووری (ئوفیس) کارکرنم
					4	زانکو ئاسانکاری ئاماده دهکات بو نهو ماموستایانه ی که خاوه ن پینداویستی جهسته یی تایبهتن.
					5	سه رچاوه ی گونجاو هه به تایبهت به بواری خۆم (وهکو: کتیب ، گۆفار ، کتیبخانه)
					6	که رهسته و ئامیری تاقیگه کان کوالیتییه کی باشیان هه به.
					7	ژماره ی گونجاو هه به له کۆپی نهو کتیبانه ی که تایبهتن به بواری خۆم.
					8	سه رچاوه ی تری گونجاو هه به که په یوه ندی هه به به بواره که مه وه (وهکو: رۆژنامه ، گۆفار ، ..)
					9	کتیبخانه به کی نه لیکترونی گونجاو پیویسته هه بییت.

					10	ژاوه ژاوى دهره كى هه به كار دهكات ه سهر پرؤسه ي فيركردن.
					11	له به شه كه م مه رجه كانى ته ندروستى و سه لامه تى له به رچاو گيراوه
					12	ژماره ي قوتابيان له هؤلى خوښندن گونجاوه.
					13	ژماره ي ماموستاكان له وه زياتره كه به ش پښويستى پى هه به.

ت. فيركردن و فيربوون

ته واو نارازيم	نارازيم	مام ناوهند	په سه نده	زور په سه نده	پرسيار	ژ
					من قوتابيه كانم هانده دم بو نه وهى توښينه وه/راپورت به ته نيا نه نجام بدن.	1
					من كات دده مه قوتابيه كانم بو گفتوگوكردن و پرسياركردن له ناو پول	2
					قوتابيان شيوازى وانه ووتنه وهى ماموستايان پى باشته له شيوازه كانى تر (گفتوگوكردن له سيمينار ، كاركردن وهكو گروپ).	3
					من كارى فيركردن به توښينه وه ده به ستمه وه.	4
					به ره مې فيربوون په يوه ندى به ئامانجه كانى كورسه كه وه هه به.	5

د. به كاره پښانې ته كنه لوزيا

ته واو نارازيم	نارازيم	مام ناوهند	په سه نده	زور په سه نده	پرسيار	ژ
					خزمه تگوزارى ئينته رنيت و ته كنه لوزياى زانيارى گونجاو دابين كراوه	1
					ماموستاكان نه مه به كار نه هينن: پاوه ر پوينت	2
					ئاي پاد (iPad)	
					فيلمى فيديو بو فيربوون	

					ئامبىرى دەنگ	
					3 زانكۆ كۆرسى راھىننى تايىبەت بە پروگراممەكانى كومپيوتەر و تەكشۈرۈش دابىن دەكات ئەكەر داواكارى پىئوستى لەسەر بىت.	

دووم: رۇلى زانكۆ

تەواو ناراۋىم	ناراۋىم	مام ناوہند	پەسەندە	زۇر پەسەندە	پرسىار	ژ
					پروگراممى خويىندىن گىرنگە بۇ پىشكەوتنى كۆمەلگا.	1
					قوتايىيان توانايان دەبىت تۇرى كۆمەلایەتى دروست بكنە لە كۆمەلگا.	2
					قوتايىيان توانايان دەبىت بۇ بەشدارىكردن لە دروستكردى كۆمەلگایەكى يەكگرتوو.	3
					قوتايىيان توانايان دەبىت بۇ بەشدارىكردن لە دروستكردى كۆمەلگایەكى لىخوشبەر.	4
					زانكۆ ئەركى و بەرھىننى ئەندامانى چالاكى ھەيە بۇ كۆمەلگا.	5

سېيەم: بەرنامەى پىشكەوتنى بەردەوام بۇ مامۇستايان

تەواو ناراۋىم	ناراۋىم	مام ناوہند	پەسەندە	زۇر پەسەندە	پرسىار	ژ
					كۆرسى رېنگاكانى وانە وتنەو كوالىتېيەكى باشى ھەيە	1
					كۆرسى راھىننى گونجاو ھەيە تايىبەت بە ھەلسەنگاندنى قوتايىيان.	2
					من ھاندەدرىم بۇ پىشخستنى تواناكانم لە تويۇزىنەو	3
					پروگراممى تايىبەت بە فىركردنى پىشكەوتوو (پوفىشنەل) ئامادە كراوہ بۇم.	4
					من دەرفەتم ھەيە بۇ پىشخستنى تواناكانم لە فىركردن.	5
					من دەتوانم خزمەتگوزارى راويۇزكردى تايىبەت بە پىشكەوتنى	6

					پروگرامى خويىندىن (مەنھەج) وەرىگرم.
					7 رېژەى 20% كە دانراوۋە بۇ گۆرپىنى ناوۋەرۈكى كۆرسى خويىندىن رېژەىبەكى گونجاوۋە.

چوارەم: پېشكەوتنى ئەكادىمىي وەبەرھىنان لە رېگەى تويىنەوۋە

تەواو نارازىم	مام ناوۋەند	پەسەندە	زۆر پەسەندە	پرسىيار	ژ
				سىستەمى نوپى خويىندى دكتورا (Split-site) كوالىتېبەكى بەرزترى ھەبە لە سىستەمى كۆنى خويىندى دكتورا.	1
				من سالانە ھەگبەى (پروفابىل) ئەكادىمىم رېك دەخەم.	2
				ھەگبەى ئەكادىمىم ھەژمار دەكرېت لە كاتى تەرقىبەى ئەكادىمى.	3
				من داواكارىبەكانى پروگرامى پېشكەوتنى ئەكادىمى بەردەوام (CAD) بە جى دەگەبەنم.	4
				زانكۆ سەنتەرى تويىنەوۋەى ھەبە.	5
				زانكۆ ھانى وەبەرھىنان لە رېگەى تويىنەوۋە دەدات.	6
				زانكۆ گەرەنتى داھاتى تر دەكات لە رېگەى تويىنەوۋە.	7

پېنچەم: يەكسانى كۆمەلەپەتى

تەواو نارازىم	مام ناوۋەند	پەسەندە	زۆر پەسەندە	پرسىيار	ژ
				ھەلبۇاردنى مامۇستايان بۇ پۇستى كارگېرى پروسەبەكى شەفافە.	1
				دواى پروسەى گۆرانكارى (Reform) ، پارتە حىزبىكان كەمتر دەستىوۋەردانى دەزگاكانى خويىندىن بالاً دەكەن.	2
				يەكسانى ھەبە لە پروسەى پېدانى كار لە كەرتى خويىندىن بالاً.	3
				پروگرامى پېشكەوتنى ئەكادىمى بەردەوام (CAD) خالىكە ھەژماردەكرېت لە كاتى ھەلبۇاردنى كاندىدەكان بۇ پۇستىكى كار.	4

					5	لايه نكيري سياسيم كاريگهري ههيه له سهر وهرگرتني پۇستى كار.
					6	فهرق و جياوازى ههيه له دامه زراندى ستافى ئەكادىمى.
					7	هه لگرائى برونامه ي ماجستىر و دكتورا دهر فته يه كسانيان ههيه بۇ پيشكه شكردن بۇ كار كردن
					8	وابزانم هه ندىك جار مامۇستاكان فهرق و جياوازى ده كهن له نيوان قوتابيان به هوى رهگهز و ئايين و راوبۇچوونى سياسى.

شه شه م: گوزانكارى و پيشكه وتن له ماوهى سالانى رابردوو

ته واو نارازيم	نارازيم	مام ناوه ند	په سه نده	زور په سه نده	پرسيار	ژ
					له چهن د سالى رابردودا، جورى (كواليتى) فيركردن باشتو بووه له به شه كه م.	1
					له چهن د سالى رابردودا، جورى (كواليتى) فيربوونى قوتابيان باشتر بووه له به شه كه م.	2
					له چهن د سالى رابردودا، جورى (كواليتى) ته كنه لوزباي زانبارى و په يوه نديكردن باشتر بووه له به شه كه م.	3
					له چهن د سالى رابردودا، هه لى پيشكه وتن له فيركردن بۇ ستافى ئه كادىمى باشتر بووه.	4
					له چهن د سالى رابردودا، توانست و به ره مى توپزينه وه له به شه كه م باشتر بووه.	5
					له چهن د سالى رابردودا، جورى (كواليتى) هولى خويندن و بينا و ژوره كان باشتر بووه له به شه كه م.	6
					له چهن د سالى رابردودا، تواناى قوتابيان له ئالوگوز كردن و ره خنه گرتنى ئەكادىمى باشتر بووه له به شه كه م.	7
					له چهن د سالى رابردودا، هه لى پيشكه وتن له توپزينه وه باشتر بووه له به شه كه م.	8

حه وته م: ئەگه ر هه ر زانباريه كى ترت هه يه له سهر ئەو خالانه ي سه ره وه ، تكايه ليژه بينووسه .

Appendix 8: Deductive and Inductive Coding of Interview Data

The deductive codes of interview data are based on themes derived from the literature of policy studies, quality assurance, and accreditation. More specifically, literature of policy actors (Jann and Wegrich, 2007), policy instruments (Howlett and Rayner, 2007; Howlett, 2000; Sorrell et al, 2003), policy process cycle (May, 1991; Jann and Wegrich, 2007; Rasch and Tsebelis, 2009; Pressman and wildavsky, 1984; Elmore, 1997/80; Premfors, 1984; Garner, 2013; Wollmann, 2007) have been used. Other literature of change or reform (Fullan, 2007), quality (Harvey and Green, 1993), accreditation (Hämäläinen et al., 2001; Sywelem and Witte, 2009) have been adopted too to select the themes. Other themes like international cooperation, academic development and research are derived from the reform policy document issued by the MOHESR-KRG. Thus, the themes of change, policy process cycle, policy actors, policy instruments, international cooperation, academic development and research, and accreditation are deductively coded. However, there are themes which are not referred to in the literature but mentioned by the interviewees. Themes like obstacles, politics, and market and future career are inductively coded. Below is the coding of interview data of interviewing senior manager 1:

Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•"The only obstacle, I think, is the evaluation of the students. Sometimes, their evaluation is not objective. They are giving good marks to the lecturer who, he or she does not care about students' attendance or the lecturer who give good marks to the students without presenting good lecture and information."
Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•"See, till now, they say that not giving the permission to the private universities is not related to the policy of the private universities. It is related to the political decision."

Figure 11: Inductive coding of interview data while interviewing senior manager 1.

Reform

- "It didn't reform all the universities in the region."

Policy Process Cycle

- Objective: We need to develop our university."
- Plan: I have no idea about the background of the planning of the reform because it just established in 2008.
- Implementation: We apply good standards of building and safety condition. We also work on implementing the TQA programme. "
- Assessment: "We have two questionnaire per year. One is for students to evaluate lecturers' and administrative staff performance. second one is for lecturers to evaluate administrative staff performance."

Policy Actors

- "Usually, council and the Minister of Higher Education, heads of QA, and senior officials in the university are involved in the process."

Policy Instruments

- "The tools are coming from the Ministry of Higher Education and we implement these tools in our staff handbook. The objectives and the rights of the lecturers and all administrative staff in the university are in that book. So, it is our resource."

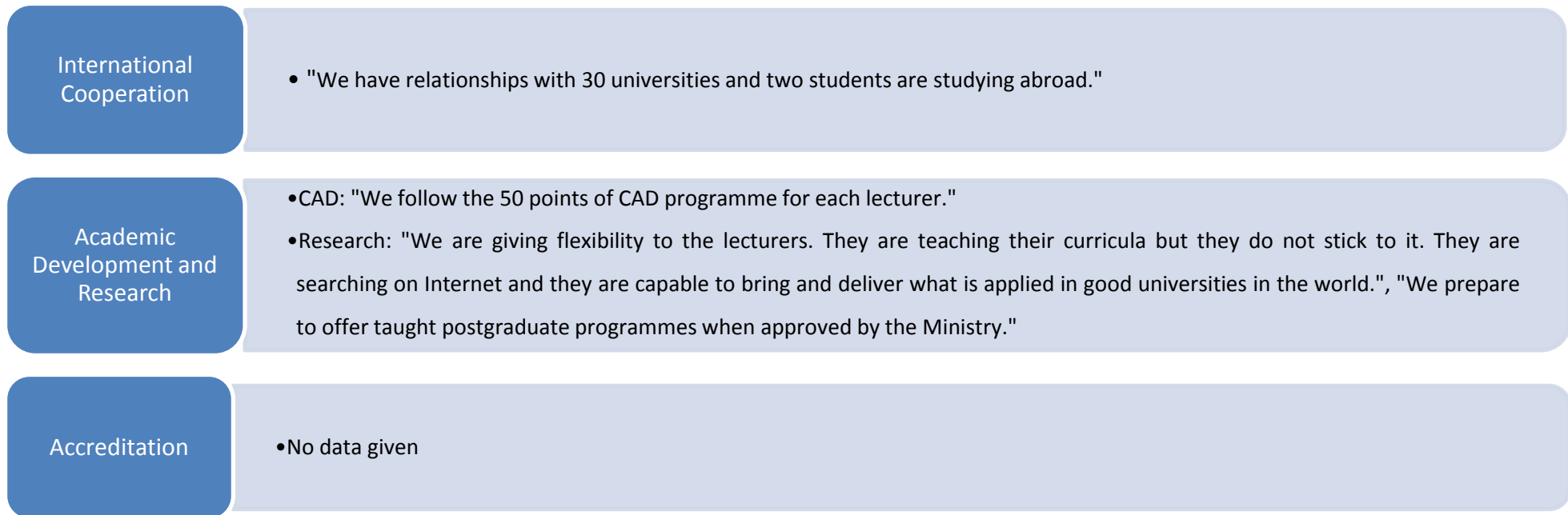


Figure 12: Deductive coding of interview data while interviewing senior manager 1.

Appendix 9: A Sample of an Interview Transcript

(R) refers to The Researcher while (PM2) refers to Policy Maker 2.

R: Can you please tell me about the objectives of the processes started in 2009?

PM2: The objective was to raise quality and standards of education in Kurdistan. Ultimately this is to bring out a new generation of future professional leaders who would take part in the process of nation building and supporting the economic wealth and help Kurdistan to develop in a healthy way.

R: Yeah.

PM2: so the objective was quality.

R: Was there a completed document of the reform policy before submitting it to the council of ministers?

PM2: Was there a completed document of the reform policy before submitting it to the council of ministers?

R: Mmm

PM2: We, before submitting the admission document, the cabinet. There was no file, no old file readymade policy. So, we had to sit down and put a document together. They decide the current state of HE where we are, what we have targeted and where we want to take it. So there was no previous study or document. I had to come up with these documents- to lay down the vision, strategy and the road map – the reform of the system of HE.

R: Was there any committee or organization, maybe started by the ministry or someone else to see the..((interrupted)

PM2: Tell me your first question – one is, say, what are the objectives. I mentioned the objectives, the key objective. Another key objective was to transform the system from the old centralized, state-run system where universities had not been independent and had not had much of an impact on the society, governments, policy and on science. But we needed to bring

the system out of the old era and putting it in touch and on parallel with the rest of the world and bring a mechanism by which universities remain productive with the highest possible standards. Anyway, back to your question...was there a committee or organization set the policy agenda in 2009.

R: Yes.

PM2: We joined the government of the 6 cabinets. Let's start again. The 6 cabinets were formed on the 28th o 2009 and within, within 10 days days of that, I set up the vision document for the cabinet and the cabinet needed a month to endorse. So, we really didn't have time to form committees, organizations to set up the policy agenda. So, I had to compensate and do much of the work myself. That said, I benefited from the years of interaction with the ministry of HE and my insights into the system of governments was my experience in the United Kingdom. I shared the document with a couple of colleagues within the ministry and decided not to wait for study of the detail which will off shoot for months to come up with a vision document or a policy strategy. So we decided to submit a brief document and lay out the tender and help us draw a road map. And ideally, in the ideal world, they would've liked to have the opportunity to initiate a study, invite experts and design a policy document based on fundamental research as well as a space for the sessions. However, unfortunately in Keyarge and rest of Iraq, there was simply no such mechanisms that in short space of time can give that accuracy or would make us to form such a study. So, there was no such tradition, culture, mechanism and the system was just not there to support that kind of study and we just didn't have time. We needed to get on with the reform process and we had to be pragmatic and use our instincts and insight. Ok?

R: Can I know the timeframe for the reform process that you have planned for?

PM2: What do you mean by that?

R: I mean, for example, how many years you have planned for this reform to be implemented. For example, I know something about the Iraqi national strategy for education, HE. The plan for that strategy to be implemented for the next 10 years, from 2011 to 2020, did you have any time scope for the reform process?

PM2: The, as we set out in the vision document, we considered reform and a new strategy as a long term process an on-going process that should evolve with time, evolve with pilot studies, with segmentation, with learning, with achievements, with milestones. Every time we introduce new change, we need to review it, reflect on it, improve on it and in our opinion, the condition of HE in Kurdistan and Iraq will need decades change and that's why we need to say that we need to make this the on-going process that each government for decades to come will need to work on until they bring it to position and maturation. So, clearly, we did not have a specific time deadline but we should say it will take generations not months or years of work.

R: And how the reform process came to be introduced to universities, to university presidents. How was the reaction towards this plan? And if they made any suggestions and alternatives, how was the reaction?

PM2: For the introduction, was not difficult in the sense that it was sound like the rest of Iraq .Universities are managed by ministry, heads of universities, members of the ministry council and the ministry council has the first authority over the university affairs. So to introduce a reform, I first needed the backing of the government and the decision makers and needed the support of the ministry council. I had to make a meeting with the members of the ministry council and push on the power sticks. I engaged the staff, the university staff in the vision, mission as well as the academic leaders. Engage them directly and indirectly. The introduction was from different directions, different dimensions. And that required a sustained campaign of publicizing, training of staff, holding workshop, conferences and so on.

R: Can you tell us about policy makers have been involved in consulting while reforming the policy?

PM2: The, basically Kurdistan lacks many such comprehensive body, you might call policy making body but there are individuals who are important in policy making, important in decision making on a regular basis. For me, it was important to make sure that the ultimate decision makers who are the critical leaders to be engaged from the ruling party, especially. I also got people from the opposition engaged and they are the people who would be there to support you or not. But in terms of policy making, I had to rely more heavily on the ministry council members to enrich the debates, shape the policy, and shape the strategy documents

and more importantly, possibility of implementation. That's really all I had at my disposal, in terms of mechanisms and administrative.

R: Ok, so shall we go to another question which is focusing on the policy tools/instrument available to you. You mentioned something about the conferences and work, training to introduce this reform policy. Were there any other tools available except of these?

PM2: In Kurdistan and Iraq, we never have the suggestion or the institution of policy research and policy making. So, you have to, we have to improvise, we have to design a plan of our own and mobilize the various platforms and various tools available. So, we had to work within the structure, the management structure of the ministry, to influence the university. We had to hold workshops and conferences. We had to engage media and also personally I had to go around and lecture in every university, inviting every teacher, every staff member to have a view and listen to the strategy, to be informed of what's going to amend, invite their criticism and suggestions. But we do not have the machinery to help us do that. We have to make one.

R: And do you think it's the time now for the ministry to carry out, to evaluate the process? And do you think that this evaluation can be done by some experts or skilled people made available to do that?

PM2: For the first question- the first part was?

R: Is it time to do an evaluation process, a total evaluation process on the level of the region?

PM2: Indeed, it is time to do that. We introduced a brand to evaluate pace and progress of reform on annual basis and we did this effectively while I was there. Since then there has been no regular evaluation. But it is a good time now because we're in the process of having a new government formed and it's quite clear that the government policy is to enable reform. So it is time have such a look back, an evaluation of success and progress. And I think experts, national and international experts play a major role in achieving that, in taking part in that.

R: ahha, people mostly talk about teaching QA, they don't talk about the total reform process. Why do you think this or do you think that this section, is the only maybe active section in the reform process?

PM2: No, I think people are. Just some people talk about different things. But the overarching priority was teaching QA and if you were involved, there are several components. For instance, the way that the lectures are delivered now they're heavily monitored. Students' feedback is taken, evaluated and analysed. Teachers have to participate in the university academic development process and that is evaluated. For example development and introducing new language and IT tools and raising capacity. Reforming the contents of lectures. All of these come under one banner. When people talk about QA where everything we used it comprises, we call it QA, we even introduced reforms in monitoring the environment, introduced health and safety measures, making the place more suitable for study, ensuring gender equality, making it more women friendly. All of this is for teaching quality confirms people talk about teaching quality, they refer to the whole process of reform. We even considered reforming the management structure of the same thing. We had to promote that. It is the publicizing terminology. Of- course, there are elements, you know, that come under teaching QA that happens, accomplished or fail. No matter what else is there in the policy or reform, but most people believe that all of these come under QA. For example, one of the rules of accreditation of university and departments for private and public, again that came under QA.

R: At the time you introduced the reform process, you started involving some international agencies for accreditation like WASK and ABET. Do you think it was the right time to start involving these international agencies at the time we were starting to have a national accreditation program?

PM2: The answer is yes. We were not going to speak accreditation over night. We however sought the introduction of a process that will tell us where we are and our set our potential to where we want today. In other words, we needed people like WASK and ABET and other international agencies to visit Kurdistan and assess some model universities and tell us where the gaps and the holes are, how would you fill them and how we can then reach a standard to seek accreditation from various agencies. This tradition, this culture of institutional assessment and self assessment process and quality and accreditation, international accreditation, it never existed in Iraq. So we had to bring an independent body, somebody who knows how to instrument such a process. We wanted them to come early, but more importantly to make the Kurdistan university leaders to be internationally aware and work

towards a target that will then eventually help them to reach those standards that we want to achieve. So it's never too late, never too early to bring in international accreditation institutes.

R: And was this accreditation of the level of the program or the institution as a whole?

PM2: We simply facilitated the process but we let the universities to the members or partners for approached build the missions that we simple finance, we paid for the mission but we left it to the universities to engage them.

R: If you come to the obstacles you had when introducing the process. Can you tell us about the obstacles you faced and what strategies you had to solve these obstacles?

PM2: well, for any reform or change in system, there are limited time and numerous obstacles. For example, the institution, the way they are designed, the way the government relates to universities, had..would. let me rephrase it, let me start again. Obstacles for change are ad predicted...Let me start again. I want to give it in proper sentences. In any premises of change and structural reform, were you would change the way of life, the rules of the game, you expect obstacles. The obstacles can be cultural, legislative, administrative, political, social as well as economical. These will be predicted before we start a reform process,, face them and we have to tackle them. In terms of legislation, the biggest obstacle of all was the fact that we were.. one of our university holding to a law based on (Kurdish words – cannot understand) Iraqi law that was formed in 1988 under Saddam, while Saddam when Iraq was in war with Iran. The Kurdistan legislation which was approved or endorsed, was met, in 2010, there's actually a copy of the Iraq 1988 law, when Iraqi law was based on typical legislation, centralized, authoritarian government rules which themselves were raised on centralized, authoritarian, communist systems of the Soviet Union at that time. So, we can see that we were running Kurdistan based on such centralized structures which were built by hermits, at the same time, we were inspired by democracy..not by inspired by democracy, we were aspiring to becoming a democracy. We were looking into supporting the free markets, investing in higher education. We were reforming to run a democratic system. Coz the key to compatibility between our Kurdish dreams and aspiration and system of governance were obvious and the gap was too big. So, a lot of the time when we want to introduce the new system, say, for teaching QA we were always coming up against the legislative obstacles where the law would not allow you to do certain things. So, that would provide a good excuse to a lot

of people to stop the, to create barriers and slow the process of reform down. Another is also system, also barriers where people have always been doing certain things in certain ways. Have been brought up under a system that has been isolated from the rest of the world. When you talk about quality, there are international standards that they have never been trained in, they have never had any clear understanding of. The cultural obstacle that's to have a generation, a whole generation in Kurdistan who have been brought up, over the years under the old system. And getting them to do new things, teaching them new things or making them do new things needs time, energy and learning a whole new world is not an easy thing. So we have to prepare a reform with that information whereby there is respect. The barrier that is greater than that. The greatest barrier is that in any system there are networks of interest, multiple networks of interest that are formed over the years. That exploit the whole system that was full of legislative holes, where people have been taking advantage of the weakness of the system and they, their interest is deeply entrenched and we see conflict with the ..with the quality, conflict with the standards of academia, as well as in conflict with the public interest. Because the private interests and public interests were at odds all the time. In introducing a reform, one of the biggest things to do is to establish, introduce new good governance system, social justice, rural goal – all of these means you will be hitting the interests of a large number of elites who are taking full advantage of the system. Of course these people can mobilize. The politicians can mobilize, the media- they can mobilize, the parliament and the public opinion – they would influence opinion against you. And of course there is the political atmosphere in Kurdistan where every government is a coalition government, and there's also opposition and media and different people have different reasons to exploit the various barriers and importantly there various people who are in support or against reform which are chosen by their political objectives. So, you can see that we have the obstacle of, economical obstacle where the budget for the he was not sufficient enough especially to allow us to do things a little more effectively and underpin the process in a sustainable way. So, as you can see, all of these are barriers. But what we did- we had to tackle each on it's own, trace them down and use various channels of communication to win the decision makers on board, to get funding to do this reform, to get the persons who are in charge to engage the friends and foes in debates which show the public our engagement and in many cases we just had to tackle the interest groups head on And we had to tolerate their attack, physical and verbal, let say, physical and political. Though, if you want to reform the system, you have to accept it's a fight between the

old and the new, between interest groups, between the the reformers and those who want to stay where they are. Does that answer your question?

R: Thank you. Did you have any prioritized section in the reform agenda to be implemented first? For example, looking for the autonomy of the universities first or looking to update the curriculum first. Did you have any priorities in the reform process?

PM2: The whole system of education is so complex, so inter related, so inter connected. We realized that it's virtually impossible to complete the reform of any one component without having the right either dragging it and slowing the progress or ...let me differently start again. The system of higher education is too complex and intertwined to be tackled in piecemeal as one component at one time. It has to be approached from different angle, so each step, each item of reform or each component of reform and its success can be sustained or each component can be underpinned by the rest of the system. So, we realized that we have to tackle it from different angles. And the angles which shows the teaching resource, management, international relations investing in new capacity, the environments, the finance, they had to change the system from numerous angles.

R: if we look at the administration, if we look at the administration system of universities, we see that many of the universities have changed the structure of the university, for example, some of them adapted to university faculty and schools. Other universities still keep the old structure of the university, which is university college department. Why do you think there are varieties in implementing the structure?

D: Well, this was part of the ...it's the reflection of the barriers to progress that we said. There was a greater political and social as well as administrative resistances in [X city] compared to the rest. With interests groups that I described, where people benefit from the old system, and had access to the decision makers and access to the central power who were not focused in Adeal, and political power in Adeal is most delicate and more complex than other cities like [Y, Z]. So, as a result of the on going struggle between the [names of political parties], while the occurrence of tensions in February, when the government is distracted heavily by the demonstration, mainly university demonstrations to turn down the head on. In consequence, the pace of reform in [X city] slowed down significantly and the government change meant we did not have the time to finish the reform process completed in Adeal. So basically what was

need to be achieved by the local leaders, local academic and leaders in other cities, the leaders, academic leaders and university leaders in Adeal , they did not cross the milestones because the interest groups and the lobby, the country reform lobby was slowed down. And we..so far I think, we're reaching them more or less.

R: There are people who say, the reform process is no longer alive or even active. It was more active when Dr. Dilawer was the minister. What do you say about this?

PM2: I think they have a point. The reform process is still on going in the background but it is not actively as before but actually I don't believe when they say that it's no longer alive. If you grasp very nicely, look at the model in the whole of [A university]. It is not the same picture, not the same pace as it used to be.

R: What factors, according to you that could make the process more successful? What was missing?

PM2: In my day, there were two things missing. One was the factor of time. Government, our government was a coalition government where close to swap cabinets – both governments after two years. So, it's very difficult for any government to introduce such a massive reform in two years and we didn't even have the two years because 15months after we started , the struggle of 17th of Feb, that was started. For a reform like this, you need four years to launch it and the subsequent government to sustain it. So what was lacking was time. The other thing lacking is the determination, the will and the determination of the leadership to keep it on going. So there was no pressure of performance on the leaders, on the academic or political leaders to sustain it. So, the decision to introduce reform was, the push to direct and the decision not to sustain the reform by the subsequent leaders was there. So essentially what is the overarching will and determination as well as accountability to the people- to the locals, politicians and public office holders will be under greater pressure of performance – they would be expected to reform the system to achieve a social justice and this will be coming but at that time, it was lacking, so, in the absence there was pressure on the leaders, we found ourselves on our own, not entirely were supported by other departments and other governments. So you could say that time and environment.

R: I remember, at that time in previous interviews with you in local media, Kurdish local media, you mentioned that you had support from the political leaders, specifically president of region

and even the president of the Republic of Iraq and also the Kurdish Prime Minister, do you mean that this support has been decreased by the passage of time or..

PM2: No, the support that I had to secure and enjoy from these leaders. They're there and are still there but that is not enough. That is not enough to initiate, sustain, consolidate and keep the momentum of reform. You need a lot more than that. You need to win the support of the middle rank, the local leaders and you also need sometimes, the top leaders to appear publicly supportingly, to come out – back the process but because of the distraction of the crisis, government crisis internally. Internal political leaders may not necessarily respond to your notification as priority. And at different time, they are basically – the top leaders are still convinced that we need to change the system but they also find it is a big problem, techniques, not see it a priority. And their support was not enough to keep the momentum going and after the change of government it was quite clear that the reform was not a top priority in HE and the ball in the court of the ministry and it was up to the ministry and the university leaders to I repeat, momentary or slow down.

R: Now, if you look at the level of performance of universities, we see there are different levels, specially concerning the QA program. Don't you think it is the responsibility of the ministry as they have a central office to evaluate the QA program annually? Why, for example, the ministry is not imposing tough regulations if that obliged to say the universities to follow the regulations. What there are differences, varieties in the performance of universities?

PM2: Well, think to keep and sustain reform and then to keep it going, it need a higher level of energy, determination, maintenance, requires the leaders of the administrative leaders to throw their weight behind it and given the system of government in Kurdistan, designed in such a way that people cannot. It does not automatically sustain itself. There's no pressure of performance with anybody. It's all done to the individual's choice, individual's willingness to put up a fight or achieve such milestones. All ministries and all institutions performance is subject to leaders decisions. For a fact that things were not maintained is because there was no commitment, determination to perform, to sustain it. Otherwise there is nothing easier than keeping reform going in Kurdistan because all the HE authorities are required, are available to them.

R: If I go back to the Iraqi strategy of education and HE which was introduced in 2011, I read in the strategy that there was an on going collaboration and consultation between the 4 ministries of education and HE in Bagdad and Kurdistan. So, was your reform process a part of that strategy or what's the status of...

PM2: No, back then, the strategy document was formed by Baghdad and its political KRG representatives – advisors were present. But these things started before us.

R: yes, it was in 2008.

PM2: Yeah, and we did not play any role other than occasionally, my predecessor had sent advisors and so on. And Bagdad was not in any way – Bagdad government, Bagdad ministry did not show any interest in the reform process even though we offered help, our experience to help them shape the future. And having said that, most of the Iraqi universities, university leaders had shown keen interest in the reform process and they always wanted to come, be engaged and to learn from us. So, the strategy document of Bagdad, when it was formulated, we had no say in it, no significant role in this. We just were –our representatives attended their meetings, proposal was given an Iraqi framework. I'm afraid I have to go now but I hope it was useful. If there are any important questions, I'm happy to answer but otherwise Selar, I may have to go.

R: Do you have time for one last question please? That's about the draft law of HE

PM2: Well, basically I told you about the problem of time as well as the commitment of the people after me. Both..that makes a big difference maybe. This legislation was a product of the pilot studies that the we introduced, we experimented with the reform process and whatever we learnt, we embedded in, we put it in the draft legislation. But the draft legislation had to go from us to the cabinet, from the cabinet to the forum. We did not have time to put the rules away because the government changed before we managed to push it to the parliament. Within the ministry and the cabinet, this gap, this road proved to be a very long road because there was a lot of anti reform campaigners who wanted, desperately wanted to keep the old process going. They locked path and didn't allow elements within the cabinet to delay before the government came – this is what happened. And after that they succeeded in aborting the mission. So, this is reality. I'm being very frank on it.

R: There are people who want to activate the draft law. This is what I heard in my last visit. There are people who are waiting for the new cabinet to start and some people are trying to submit this law again and maybe reform it again. Do you have any idea about this?

PM2: Yeah, but I ...yeah I hear this kind of news and I believe that they are genuine. Here will be a time when people want to revisit. It does not necessarily have to be exact copy but it will be reform legislation because what is currently in existence is not good enough. So yes, I agree.

R: Thank you so much for your time.

PM2: I wish you all the best in your studies.

Appendix 10: ERGO Approval No.1-Ethics Committee of the University of Southampton

From: ERGO [DoNotReply@ERGO.soton.ac.uk]

Sent: 28 September 2012 11:00

To: Ali S.O.

Subject: Your Ethics Submission (Ethics ID:3456) has been reviewed and approved

Submission Number: 3456

Submission Name: QA Field Work

This is email is to let you know your submission was approved by the Ethics Committee.

You can begin your research unless you are still awaiting specific Health and Safety approval (e.g. for a Genetic or Biological Materials Risk Assessment)

Comments

1.I am happy to approve this submission. You have added the version number and date on the heading of the consent form, but you need to also put the version number and date of the information sheet into the brackets on the first statement of the consent form- where directed. As indicated on your risk assessments, there are obviously some elements of risk involved in the context in which the research is being carried out. These are beyond ethical issues and are for RGO to judge.

2.I would like to reiterate the other reviewer's comments. As indicated on your risk assessments, there are obviously some elements of risk involved in the context in which the research is being carried out. These are beyond ethical issues and are for RGO to judge.

Click here to view your submission<<http://www.ergo.soton.ac.uk>>

ERGO : Ethics and Research Governance Online

<http://www.ergo.soton.ac.uk>

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL

Appendix 11: ERGO Approval No.2-Ethics Committee of the University of Southampton

From: ERGO [ergo@soton.ac.uk]

Sent: 23 March 2014 14:56

To: Ali S.O.

Subject: Your Ethics Submission (Ethics ID:9179) has been reviewed and approved

Submission Number: 9179

Submission Name: Reform Policy in Kurdistan Higher Education

This is email is to let you know your submission was approved by the Ethics Committee.

You can begin your research unless you are still awaiting specific Health and Safety approval (e.g. for a Genetic or Biological Materials Risk Assessment)

Comments

1.Thank you for the amends. It's clear now why you put this in one document and will forward this comment. Your answer to the comment raised with Q29 was clear. I can approve.

Click here to view your submission-<<http://www.ergo.soton.ac.uk>>

ERGO : Ethics and Research Governance Online

<http://www.ergo.soton.ac.uk>

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL

Appendix 12: Approval of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research-Kurdistan Region Government

<p>اقليم كوردستان - العراق مجلس الوزراء وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي مكتب الوزير</p>	 <p>Kurdistan Region - Iraq Council of Ministers Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research</p>	<p>حكومهتی ههريمی كوردستان - عيراق سهروكايهتی نه نجومهنی وهزيران وهزارهتی خویندنی بالا و تویژینهوهی زانستی نووسینگهی وهزیر</p>
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No. : _____
Date : _____

ژماره : نووسینگه / ٤-٥

بایهت / هاوکاری

سلاو و ریز

خاتوو (سهلار عثمان علی) کارمهندی سهروکایهتی زانکۆی پۆلیتهکنیکی ههولێره وه له ئیستادا کاندیدی بهرنامهی تواناسازیه بۆ خویندنی دکتۆرا له بواری دنیایی جۆری و گۆرینی سیستمی خویندنی بالا له ههريمی كوردستان، له سالی كۆتایی خویندنهكهیدا به مهیهستی كۆردنهوهی داتا بۆ نامهی دکتۆراکهی پێویستی به نهجامدانی (چاوپێکهوتن) و (سێرڤهی) ههیه .
بۆ زانین و هاوکاریکردنی ناویراوی نووسراومان .
لهگهڵ ریزدا...

دکتۆر علی سعید محمد
وهزیری خویندنی بالا و تویژینهوهی زانستی

وێنهیهك بۆ :-
* نووسینگهی بهریژ جهنابی وهزیر / نامازه به بهراویژتان له (٢٠٢٤/٣/٣٠) / لهگهڵ ریزدا .

Appendix 13: English Version of Student's Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS (version 0.1 March 2014)

Study title: "Reform Policy of Quality Assurance in Kurdistan Higher Education Organization: Perceptions and Analysis".

Researcher name: Selar Othman Ali

Ethics reference: 9179

Please initial the box (es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (dated March. 2014 version 0.1) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

Appendix 14: Kurdish Version of Student's Consent Form

فۆرمی لاری نه بوونی قوتابی (ژماره 0.1 له ئازاری 2014)

ناوی دیراسه ته که: سیاسه تی ریفورمی دلنای جۆری له ده زگا کانی خویندنی بالای کوردستان: بوچوون و شیکاری.

ناوی توێژه ر: سه لار عثمان علی

کوډی نه خلاقیاتى توێژینه وه: 9179

تکابه ئه مانه ی خواره وه نیشان بکه ئه گه ر لاریت نییه:

من لاپه په ی زانیاریم (ژماره 0.1 له ئازاری 2014) خوینده وه و تیگیگه یستم و ده رفه تی پرسیارکردنم هه بوو

سه باره ت به توێژینه وه که .

من لاریم نییه به شداری بکه م له م پروژه توێژینه وه یه و رازیم که ئه م زانیاریانه به کاربه یتریت بو ئه م توێژینه وه یه

من تیده گه م که به شداریکردنم خو به خشانه یه و له وانه یه بکشیمه وه له به شداریکردن به بی ئه وه ی کاریگه ر بکاته

سه ر مافه یاساییه کانم.

زانیا ری پارێزدا و

من تیده گه م که ئه م زانیاریانه ی کو ده کریته وه ده رباره ی به شداریکردنم له م توێژینه وه یه خه زن ده کریت له ناو کو مپیوته ریک که به پاسوورد

ده کریته وه و ته نها بو مه به سته ی ئه م توێژینه وه یه به کار ده یتریت. هه روه ها هه ر فایلیک که زانیاری تایبه تی تیدا بیته ئه وه ئه شاردریته وه .

ئیمزا:

پیکه وت:

Appendix 15: English Version of Lecturer's Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR LECTURERS (version 0.1 March 2014)

Study title: "Reform Policy of Quality Assurance in Kurdistan Higher Education Organization: Perceptions and Analysis".

Researcher name: Selar Othman Ali

Ethics reference: 9179

Please initial the box (es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (dated March. 2014 version 0.1) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

Appendix 16: Kurdish Version of Lecturer's Consent Form

فۆرمی لاری نه بوونی ماموستا (ژماره 0.1 له ئازاری 2014)

ناوی دیراسه ته که: سیاسه تی ریفورمی دلنیا ی جوړی له ده زگا کانی خویندنی بالای کوردستان: بوچوون و شیکاری.

ناوی توپژهر: سه لار عثمان علی

کوډی نه خلاقیا تی توپژینه وه: 9179

تکایه نه مانه ی خواره وه نیشان بکه نه گهر لاریت نییه:

من لاپه پهی زانیاریم (ژماره 0.1 له ئازاری 2014) خوینده وه و تییگه یشتم و دهره تی پرسیارکردنم هه بوو

سه باره ت به توپژینه وه که.

من لاریم نییه به شداری بکه م له م پروژه توپژینه وه یه و رازیم که نه م زانیاریانه به کاربهینریت بو نه م توپژینه وه یه

من تیده گم که به شداریکردنم خۆبه خشانه یه و له وانه یه بکشیمه وه له به شداریکردن به بی نه وه ی کاریگهر بکاته

سه مافه یاساییه کانم.

زانیا ری پارینداو

من تیده گم که نه م زانیاریانه ی کو ده کریتته وه دهریا ره ی به شداریکردنم له م توپژینه وه یه خه زن ده کریت له ناو کو مپیوتنه ریک که به پاسوورد

ده کریتته وه و ته نها بو مه به سستی نه م توپژینه وه یه به کار ده هینریت. هه روه ها هه ر فایلیک که زانیاری تاییه تی تیدا بیت نه وه نه شاردریتته وه.

نیمزا:

پیکه وت:

Appendix 17: English Version of Interviewee's Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR POLICY MAKERS AND SENIOR AND JUNIOR MANAGERS (version 0.2 March 2014)

Study title: "Reform Policy of Quality Assurance in Kurdistan Higher Education Organization: Perceptions and Analysis".

Researcher name: Selar Othman Ali

Ethics reference: 9179

Please initial the box (es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (dated March. 2014 version 0.2) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected

I agree that the interview to be tape-recorded

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Name of participant

Signature of participant..... Date:.....

Appendix 18: Kurdish Version of Interviewee's Consent Form

فۆرمی لاری نه بوون (ژماره 0.2 له ئازاری 2014)

ناوی دیراسه ته که: سیاسه تی ریفورمی دلنای جۆری له ده زگا کانی خویندنی بالای کوردستان: بوچوون و شیکاری.

ناوی توێژه ر: سه لار عثمان علی

کوډی نه خلاقیاتى توێژینه وه: 9179

تکایه نه مانه ی خواره وه نیشان بکه نه گه ر لاریت نییه:

من لاپه په ی زانیاریم (ژماره 0.2 له ئازاری 2014) خوینده وه و تیگیگه یستم و دهره تی پرسیارکردنم هه بوو

سه باره ت به توێژینه وه که.

من لاریم نییه به شداری بکه م له م پروژه توێژینه وه یه و رازیم که نه م زانیاریانه به کارهینریت بو نه م توێژینه وه یه

من تیده گه م که به شداریکردنم خو به خشانه یه و له وانه یه بکشیمه وه له به شداریکردن به بی نه وه ی کاریگه ر بکاته

سه ر مافه یاساییه کانم.

من لاریم نییه نه م چاوپیکه وتنه ریکۆرد بکریت.

زانیا ری پارێزداو

من تیده گه م که نه م زانیاریانه ی کو ده کریته وه دهرباره ی به شداریکردنم له م توێژینه وه یه خه زن ده کریت له ناو کو مپیوتهریک که به پاسوورد

ده کریته وه و ته نها بو مه به سته ی نه م توێژینه وه یه به کار ده هینریت. هه روه ها هه ر فایلیک که زانیاری تایبه تی تیدا بیت نه وه نه شاردریته وه.

ناوی به شداریبوو:

ئیمزا:

پیکه وت:

Appendix 19: English Version of Student's Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet for Students (version 0.1 March 2014)

Study Title: “Reform Policy of Quality Assurance in Kurdistan Higher Education Organization: Perceptions and Analysis”.

Researcher: Selar Othman Ali

Ethics number: 9179

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This research is part of my PhD degree in the University of Southampton in the UK. My research focuses on finding out the success/failure of the reform policy of Kurdistan higher education sector. The information and data will be gathered through your participation in a survey. All the information given in this study will be used for the research purposes only. Your participation is very important to gather useful data for the research and to be used for analysing and evaluating the status of the policy. This study will help to find out methods for finding alternatives to make the policy more successful or at least finding the obstacles with suggestion of solutions.

Why have I been chosen?

Your selection is based on your experiences and knowledge about the reform process. You are more experienced than students in their early years of study. Besides, you are part of this reform policy and affected by it.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Upon approval to participate, you will be given a hard copy of questionnaire which includes several questions to be answered. They are short and simple questions and needs only one tick on the appropriate answer according to your perception. Answering all the questions will take around ten minutes or less.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

This study will be an important source for evaluating the reform policy of Kurdish higher education. The purpose of this reform is to bring high standards of quality into the Kurdish higher education sector. Therefore, it will be an academic reference based on research on the recent reform and quality assurance strategies. Besides, quality assurance is an important issue in all the universities in the region nowadays. Thus, universities, academics, and staff who work on this area can get benefit from this study.

Are there any risks involved?

There is no any risk for the participants to contribute to this study.

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes. You don't have to write your name on the questionnaire's copy if you don't want to. This is optional. However, your entire personal information will be kept confidential and reported anonymously. All the data given by you will be saved on a password-protected computer and only the researcher and both supervisors will have access to it, if necessary. The data will be destroyed when there is no need to keep it anymore.

What happens if I change my mind?

Nothing will happen. Each participant has the right to withdraw without any penalty as stated in the consent form.

What happens if something goes wrong?

For more confidence and any queries regarding the participant's participation in research, the participant can contact Dr Martina Prude, Head of Research Governance in the University of Southampton (mad4@soton.ac.uk).

Where can I get more information?

You can get more information from the researcher or her supervisors:

Selar Othman Ali (soa1a10@soton.ac.uk)

Profossor Jurgen Enders (j.enders@soton.ac.uk)

Dr. Antonia Kupfer (a.kupfer@soton.ac.uk)

Appendix 20: Kurdish Version of Student's Information Sheet

لاپه‌ره‌ی زانیاری بۆ قوتابی: (ژماره 0.1 له ئازاری 2014)

ناوی دیراسه‌ته‌که: سیاسه‌تی ریفورم و دلتیای جو‌ری له ده‌زگا‌کانی خویندنی بالای کوردستان: بۆچوون و شیکاری.

ناوی توێژه‌ر: سه‌لار عثمان علی

کو‌دی نه‌خلاقیات‌ی توێژینه‌وه: 9179

تکایه به ووردی ئەم زانیاریانه بخوینه‌وه پیش ئەوه‌ی بپاری بده‌ی که به‌شداری بکە‌ی. ئە‌گەر بپاریت دا به‌شداری بکە‌ی له‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه ئە‌وه پێویسته فۆرمی لاری نه‌بوون پریکه‌یته‌وه.

ئە‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه ده‌رباره‌ی چییه‌؟

ئە‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه به‌شیکه له خویندنی دکتۆراکه‌م له زانکۆ‌ی ساوثامپتن له به‌ریتانیا. ئە‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه جه‌خت ده‌کاته سه‌ر دۆزینه‌وه‌ی ئاستی سه‌رکه‌وتن/ناسه‌رکه‌وتنی پرۆسه‌ی گو‌رپنی (ریفورمی) که‌رتی خویندنی بالای کوردستان. زانیارییه‌کان و داتا‌کان کۆ ده‌کریته‌وه له رینگه‌ی به‌شداریکردنت له سه‌رفه‌ی ئاماده‌کراو بۆ ئە‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه. هه‌موو زانیارییه‌کان ته‌نها بۆ ئە‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه به‌کارده‌یت. به‌شداریکردنت له‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه زۆر گرنگه بۆ کو‌کردنه‌وه‌ی زانیاری به‌سه‌ود و گرنگ بۆ شیکردنه‌وه و هه‌لسه‌نگاندنی ئاستی ئە‌م پرۆسه‌یه. هه‌روه‌ها ئە‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه گرنگه بۆ دۆزینه‌وه‌ی رینگای به‌دیل بۆ سه‌رخستن و پێشخستنی ئە‌م پرۆسه‌یه یان به‌ لایه‌نی که‌مه‌وه دۆزینه‌وه‌ی به‌ربه‌سته‌کان و پێشنيارکردنی چاره‌سه‌ری گونجاو.

بۆچی من هه‌لبژێردراوم؟

هه‌لبژاردنی تۆ بونیاتنراوه له‌سه‌ر زانیاریت و ئە‌زموونت له پرۆسه‌ی ریفورم. هه‌روه‌ها تۆ ئە‌زموونی باشترت هه‌یه له‌ و قوتابیانه‌ی که له سه‌ره‌تای خویندنیان له زانکۆ‌جگه له‌مه، تۆ رو‌لت هه‌یه له‌م پرۆسه‌یه و گاریگه‌ری هه‌یه له‌سه‌رت.

چی پوو نه‌دات ئە‌گەر به‌شداری بکە‌م؟

دوای ئە‌وه‌ی بپاریت دا که به‌شداری بکە‌ی، کو‌پیه‌ک له سه‌رفه‌ی که پیکهاتوه له چه‌ندین پرسیار ئە‌دریته ده‌ستت. پرسیاره‌کان هه‌مووی کورت و ئاسانن و ته‌نها پێویسته وه‌لامی گونجاو هه‌لبژێرت به پێی تیگه‌یشتن و بۆچوونی خۆت. وه‌لامدانه‌وه‌ی هه‌موو پرسیاره‌کان ته‌نها ده‌ خوله‌ک یان که‌مه‌تر ده‌خایه‌نیت.

پ. یورگن ئیندەرز (j.enders@soton.ac.uk)

د. ئەنتونیا کوپەر (a.kupfer@soton.ac.uk)

Appendix 21: English Version of Lecturer's Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet for Lecturers (version 0.1 March 2014)

Study Title: "Reform Policy of Quality Assurance in Kurdistan Higher Education Organization: Perceptions and Analysis".

Researcher: Selar Othman Ali

Ethics number: 9179

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This research is part of my PhD degree in the University of Southampton in the UK. My research focuses on finding out the success/failure of the reform policy of Kurdistan higher education sector. The information and data will be gathered through your participation in a survey. All the information given in this study will be used for the research purposes only. Your participation is very important to gather useful data for the research and to be used for analysing and evaluating the status of the policy. This study will help to find out methods for finding alternatives to make the policy more successful or at least finding the obstacles with suggestion of solutions.

Why have I been chosen?

Your selection is based on your experiences and knowledge about the reform process. Lecturers play great role in the reform process and you can have an effect on the whole process by expressing your perceptions and making useful suggestion. Besides, you are affected by the reform policy.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Upon approval to participate, you will be given a hard copy of questionnaire which includes several questions to be answered. They are short and simple questions and needs only one tick on the appropriate answer according to your perception. Answering all the questions will take around ten minutes or less.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

This study will be an important source for evaluating the reform policy of Kurdish higher education. The purpose of this reform is to bring high standards of quality into the Kurdish higher education sector. Therefore, it will be an academic reference based on research on the recent

reform and quality assurance strategies. Besides, quality assurance is an important issue in all the universities and institutions in the region nowadays. Thus, universities, institutions, academics, and staff who work on this area can get benefit from this study.

Are there any risks involved?

There is no any risk for the participants to contribute to this study.

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes. You don't have to write your name on the questionnaire's copy if you don't want to. This is optional. However, your entire personal information will be kept confidential and reported anonymously. All the data given by you will be saved on a password-protected computer and only the researcher and both supervisors will have access to it, if necessary. The data will be destroyed when there is no need to keep it anymore.

What happens if I change my mind?

Nothing will happen. Each participant has the right to withdraw without any penalty as stated in the consent form.

What happens if something goes wrong?

For more confidence and any queries regarding the participant's participation in research, the participant can contact Dr Martina Prude, Head of Research Governance in the University of Southampton on (0044 2380 595058, mad4@soton.ac.uk).

Where can I get more information?

You can get more information from the researcher or her supervisors:

Selar Othman Ali (soa1a10@soton.ac.uk)

Profossor Jurgen Enders (j.enders@soton.ac.uk)

Dr. Antonia Kupfer (a.kupfer@soton.ac.uk)

Appendix 22: Kurdish Version of Lecturer's Information Sheet

لایه‌په‌ری زانیاری بو ماموستا: (ژماره 0.1 له ئازاری 2014)

ناوی دیراسه‌ته‌که: سیاسه‌تی ریفورم و دلتیای جو‌ری له ده‌زگاکانی خویندنی بالای کوردستان: بو‌چوون و شیکاری.

ناوی تو‌پژهر: سه‌لار عثمان علی

کو‌دی نه‌خلاقیات‌ی تو‌پژینه‌وه: 9179

تکایه به ووردی نه‌م زانیاریانه بخوینه‌وه پیش نه‌وه‌ی بریار بده‌ی که به‌شداری بکه‌ی. نه‌گه‌ر بریاره‌ت دا به‌شداری بکه‌ی له‌م تو‌پژینه‌وه‌یه نه‌وه پینویسته فۆرمی لاری نه‌بوون پرپیکه‌یته‌وه.

نه‌م تو‌پژینه‌وه‌یه ده‌رباره‌ی چییه؟

نه‌م تو‌پژینه‌وه‌یه به‌شیکه له خویندنی دکتۆراکه‌م له زانکۆی ساوثامپتن له به‌ریتانیا. نه‌م تو‌پژینه‌وه‌یه جه‌خت ده‌کاته سه‌ر دۆزینه‌وه‌ی ئاستی سه‌رکه‌وتن/ناسه‌رکه‌وتنی پرۆسه‌ی گو‌پینی (ریفۆرمی) که‌رتی خویندنی بالای کوردستان. زانیارییه‌کان و داتا‌کان کو‌ ده‌کرپته‌وه له رینگه‌ی به‌شداریکردن له سه‌رفه‌ی ئاماده‌کراو بو نه‌م تو‌پژینه‌وه‌یه. هه‌موو زانیارییه‌کان ته‌نها بو نه‌م تو‌پژینه‌وه‌یه به‌کاردیت. به‌شداریکردن له‌م تو‌پژینه‌وه‌یه زۆر گرنگه بو کو‌کردنه‌وه‌ی زانیاری به‌سوود و گرنگ بو شیکردنه‌وه و هه‌لسه‌نگاندنی ئاستی نه‌م پرۆسه‌یه. هه‌روه‌ها نه‌م تو‌پژینه‌وه‌یه گرنگه بو دۆزینه‌وه‌ی رینگه‌ی به‌دیل بو سه‌رخستن و پیشخستن نه‌م پرۆسه‌یه یان به‌ لایه‌نی که‌مه‌وه دۆزینه‌وه‌ی به‌ربه‌سته‌کان و پینشیارکردنی چاره‌سه‌ری گونجاو.

بو‌چی من هه‌لبژێردراوم؟

هه‌لبژاردنی تو‌ بونیاتناوه‌ له سه‌ر زانیاریت و نه‌زموونت له پرۆسه‌ی ریفۆرم. هه‌روه‌ها تو‌ نه‌زموونی باشت‌ت هه‌یه له و قوتابیان‌ه‌ی که له سه‌ره‌تای خویندنیان له زانکۆ. جگه له‌مه، تو‌ رۆلت هه‌یه له‌م پرۆسه‌یه و گاریگه‌ری هه‌یه له‌سه‌رت.

چی پوو نه‌دات نه‌گه‌ر به‌شداری بکه‌م؟

دوای نه‌وه‌ی بریاره‌ت دا که به‌شداری بکه‌ی، کو‌پیه‌ک له سه‌رفه‌ی که پیکهاتوه له چه‌ندین پرسیار نه‌درپته ده‌ستت. پرسیاره‌کان هه‌مووی کورت و ئاسانن و ته‌نها پینویسته وه‌لامی گونجاو هه‌لبژێرت به پینی تیگه‌بشتن و بو‌چوونی خۆت. وه‌لامدانه‌وه‌ی هه‌موو پرسیاره‌کان ته‌نها ده‌ خوله‌ک یان که‌مه‌تر ده‌خایه‌نیت.

ئایا بەشداریکردن چ سوودیکی ههیه؟

ئەم تووژینهوهیه دەبیتە سەرچاوهیهکی گرنگ بو ههلسهنگاندنی سیاسهتی ریفۆرم له کهرتی خویندنی بالای کوردستان. ئامانجی پرۆسهی ریفۆرم پیکهاتوه له بونیاتنانی ئاستیکی بهرزى کوالیتی له کهرتی خویندنی بالای کوردستان. بۆیه ئەم تووژینهوهیه دەبیتە سەرچاوهیهکی ئەکادیمی بونیاتنراو لهسەر تووژینهوهی تایبەت به پرۆسهی ریفۆرم و ستراتییجیهکانی دلتیای جۆری. ههروهها له ئیستادا ، دلتیای جۆری بابەتیکى گرنگه له ههموو زانکۆکانی ههڕیم. بۆیه ، زانکۆکان و ئەکادیمییهکان و ئەو فهڕمانبهڕانهی که کار دهکەن لهسەر ئەم بابەته دهتوانن سوود وەرگرن له م تووژینهوهیه.

ئایا ههچ مهترسییهک ههیه؟

ههچ مهترسییهک نییه له بهشداریکردن له م تووژینهوهیه.

ئایا بهشداریکردن نهیئى دهبیت؟

بهآی. دهتوانیت ناوی خووت نه نووسیت لهسەر سێرفهیهکه ئەگەر ئارهزوت نییه بینوووسی. ئەمه ئیختیاریه. ههموو زانیارییه تایبهتییهکانی خووت به نهیئى ئەمینهتیهوه و به ههچ شیهوهیهک ئاماژه به ناوت ناکریت. ههموو ئەو داتا یا نهی که دهیدهیت لهکۆمپیوتەرێک خهزن دهکریت و به پاسوێرد دهکریتیهوه و تهنها تووژهر و ههردوو سهڕهپرشتیار دهتوانن ببینن، ئەگەر پێویست بێت. ههموو داتا کان دهرسپێنرهوه دواى ئەوهی چیتر پێویستی پێ ناکریت.

چی پوو دهات ئەگەر بهشدارى نهکەم؟

ههچ پوو نادات. تو مافی خوکشانهوهت ههیه له بهشداریکردن به بێ ههچ کێشهیهک وهکو ئەوهی له فۆرمی لاری نهبوون نووسراوه.

چی پوو دهات ئەگەر شتیک به ههلهدا رۆیشت؟

بو متمانه و زانیاری زیاتر سهبارهت به بهشداریکردن له تووژینهوه ، دهتوانیت پهیوهندی بکهی به سهروکی کۆنترۆلکردنی تووژینهوه ، د. مارتینا پرود له زانکۆی ساوثامپتن (mad4@soton.ac.uk).

له کوی دهتوانم زانیاری زیاتر وەرگرم؟

دهتوانی زانیاری زیاتر وەرگرت له تووژهرهکه و سهڕهپرشتیارهکانی:

سهلار عثمان علی (soa1a10@soton.ac.uk)

پ. یۆرگن ئیندەرز (j.enders@soton.ac.uk)

د. ئەنتونیا کوپەر (a.kupfer@soton.ac.uk)

Appendix 23: English Version of Interviewee's Information Sheet

**Participant Information Sheet for Policy Makers and Senior and junior Managers (version 0.2
March 2014)**

Study Title: “Reform Policy of Quality Assurance in Kurdistan Higher Education Organization: Perceptions and Analysis”.

Researcher: Selar Othman Ali

Ethics number: 9179

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This research is part of my PhD degree in the University of Southampton in the UK. My research focuses on finding out the success/failure of the reform policy of Kurdistan higher education sector. The information and data will be gathered through your participation in a tape-recorded interview. All the information given in this study will be used for the research purposes only. Your participation is very important to gather useful data for the research and to be used for analysing and evaluating the status of the policy. This study will help to find out methods for finding alternatives to make the policy more successful or at least finding the obstacles with suggestion of solutions.

Why have I been chosen?

Your selection is based on your experiences, skills, and knowledge in the research area. You are more experienced than other staff members. Besides, you are part of this reform policy and play a role in it.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Upon approval to participate, your participation will be tape-interviewed and addressed several questions and will be given enough time to answer and discuss. However, each interview will take nearly one hour and can be finished in one visit though it could be more/less than one visit or more/less than one hour depending on you. The interview will be conducted in your workplace during working hours.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

This study will be an important source for evaluating the reform policy of Kurdish higher education. The purpose of this reform is to bring high standards of quality into the Kurdish higher

education sector. Therefore, it will be an academic reference based on research on the recent reform and quality assurance strategies. Besides, quality assurance is an important issue in all the universities and institutions in the region nowadays. Thus, universities, academics, and staff who work on this area can get benefit from this study.

Are there any risks involved?

There is no any risk for the participants to contribute to this study.

Will my participation be confidential?

Though a complete confidentiality can't be guaranteed due to having face-to-face interview, your entire personal information will be kept confidential and reported anonymously. All the data given by you will be saved on a password-protected computer and only the researcher and both supervisors will have access to it, if necessary. The data will be destroyed when there is no need to keep it anymore.

What happens if I change my mind?

Nothing will happen. Each participant has the right to withdraw without any penalty as stated in the consent form.

What happens if something goes wrong?

For more confidence and any queries regarding the participant's participation in research, the participant can contact Dr Martina Prude, Head of Research Governance in the University of Southampton on (0044 2380 595058, mad4@soton.ac.uk).

Where can I get more information?

You can get more information from the researcher or her supervisors:

Selar Othman Ali (soa1a10@soton.ac.uk)

Profossor Jurgen Enders (j.enders@soton.ac.uk)

Dr. Antonia Kupfer (a.kupfer@soton.ac.uk)

Appendix 24: Kurdish Version of Interviewee's Information Sheet

لایە پەڕە زانیاری بۆ خاوەن بێیار و سەرکەدە: (ژمارە 0.2 لە ئازاری 2014)

ناوی دیراسەتەکە: سیاسەتی ریفۆرم و دانیای جووری لە دەزگاکانی خویندنی بالای کوردستان: بۆچوون و شیکاری.

ناوی توێژەر: سەلار عثمان علی

کۆدی ئەخلاقایاتی توێژینەوه: 9179

تکایە بە ووردی ئەم زانیاریانە بخوینەوه پیش ئەوهی بێیار بەدی کە بەشداری بکە. ئەگەر بێیار دا بەشداری بکە لە م توێژینەوهی ئەوه پێویستە فۆرمی لاری نەبوون پڕیکەیتەوه.

ئەم توێژینەوهی دەربارە چییە؟

ئەم توێژینەوهی بەشیکە لە خویندنی دکتۆراکەم لە زانکۆی ساونامپتن لە بەریتانیا. ئەم توێژینەوهی جەخت دەکاتە سەر دۆزینەوهی ئاستی سەرکەوتن/ناسەرکەوتنی پڕۆسەی گۆڕینی (ریفۆرمی) کەرتی خویندنی بالای کوردستان. زانیارییەکان و داتاگان کۆ دەکەیتەوه لە ڕینگە بەشداریکردن لە چاوپێکەوتنیکە و تێک کە ریکۆرد دەکەیت. هەموو زانیارییەکان تەنها بۆ ئەم توێژینەوهی بەکار دێت. بەشداریکردن لە م توێژینەوهی زۆر گرنگە بۆ کۆکردنەوهی زانیاری بەسوود و گرنگ بۆ شیکردنەوه و هەلسەنگاندنی ئاستی ئەم پڕۆسەیه. هەرۆه ئەم توێژینەوهی گرنگە بۆ دۆزینەوهی ڕینگای بەدیل بۆ سەرخستن و پیشخستنی ئەم پڕۆسەیه یان بە لایەنی کەمەوه دۆزینەوهی بەرەستەکان و پیشنیارکردنی چارهەسەری گونجاو.

بۆچی من هەلبژێردراوم؟

هەلبژاردنی بەپێزتان بونیاتنراوه لەسەر زانیاریت و ئەزموونت لە پڕۆسەی ریفۆرم. هەرۆه ئەزموونی باشتەت هەیه لە کەسانی تر. جگە لەمە، بەپێزتان بەشیکن لەم ریفۆرمە و رۆلتان هەیه لەم پڕۆسەیه.

چی پوو ئەدات ئەگەر بەشداری بکەم؟

دوای ئه وهی پریارت دا که به شداری بکە، هه ندی پرسپارت لێ ئه کریت و ریکۆرد ئه کریت. چاوپیکه وتنه که نزیکه ی یه کاتژمێر ده خایه نیت و له یه ک چاوپیکه وتن ته واو ده بییت و له وانه شه له یه ک کاتژمێر زیاتر بخایه نیت و له یه ک سهردان زیاتر به ریت و ئه مش له سه ر به ریتان راده وه ستیت. چاوپیکه وتنه که له ئۆفیس ی به ریتان ئه نجام ده دریت و له کاتی ده وامی فرمی.

ئایا به شداریکردن چ سوودیکی ههیه؟

ئه م توێژینه وهیه ده بیته سه رچاوه یه کی گرنگ بو هه لسه نگانندی سیاسه تی ریفۆرم له که رتی خویندنی بالای کوردستان. ئامانجی پرۆسه ی ریفۆرم پیکهاتوه له بونیاتنانی ئاستیکی به رزی کوالیتی له که رتی خویندنی بالای کوردستان. بویه ئه م توێژینه وهیه ده بیته سه رچاوه یه کی ئه کادیمی بونیاتنراو له سه ر توێژینه وهی تایبه ت به پرۆسه ی ریفۆرم و ستراتجییه کانی دلنای جۆری. هه روه ها له ئیستادا ، دلنای جۆری بابه تیکی گرنگه له هه موو زانکۆکانی هه ریم. بویه ، زانکۆکان و ئه کادیمییه کان و ئه و فره مانبه رانه ی که کار ده کهن له سه ر ئه م بابه ته ده توانن سوود وه رگرن له م توێژینه وهیه .

ئایا ههچ مه ترسییه ک ههیه؟

ههچ مه ترسییه ک نییه له به شداریکردن له م توێژینه وهیه .

ئایا به شداریکردن نهینێ ده بییت؟

هه رچه نده ناتوانریت نهینیه کی ته واو گه ره نتی بکریت چونکه چاوپیکه وتنه که پوو به روو ئه نجام ده دریت ، هه موو زانیارییه تایبه تیه کانی خۆت به نهینێ ئه مینته وه و به ههچ شیوه یه ک ئاماژه به ناوت ناکریت. هه موو ئه و داتا یانه ی که دهیده یه له کۆمپیوته ریک خه زن ده کریت و به پاسویزد ده کریت وه و ته نها توێژه ر و هه ردوو سه ره رشتیار ده توانن ببینن، ئه گه ر پێویست بیته . هه موو داتا کان ده سپرنه وه دوای ئه وه ی چیتر پێویستی پی ناکریت.

چی پوو ده دات ئه گه ر به شداری نه که م؟

ههچ پوو نادات. تو مافی خۆکشانه وه ت ههیه له به شداریکردن به بی ههچ کێشه یه ک وه کو ئه وه ی له فۆرمی لاری نه بوون نووسراوه .

چی پوو ده دات ئه گه ر شتیک به هه له دا رویشته؟

بو متمانه و زانیاری زیاتر سه باره ت به به شداریکردن له توێژینه وه ، ده توانیت په یوه ندی بکە به سه روکی کۆنترۆلکردنی توێژینه وه ، د. مارتینا پرۆد له زانکۆی ساوٹامپتن (mad4@soton.ac.uk) .

له كوی ده توانم زانیاری زیاتر وهرگرم؟

ده توانی زانیاری زیاتر وهرگیت له توږذهره که و سه رپه رشتیاره کانی:

سه لار عثمان علی (soa1a10@soton.ac.uk)

پ. یورگن یندهرز (j.enders@soton.ac.uk)

د. ټوتوتیا کوپهر (a.kupfer@soton.ac.uk)

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