

**Actual and desired factors of effective organisation and management of teaching and learning practices: A case study amongst lecturers and middle-leaders at a Higher Education Institution in Oman.**

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**Andrew George Thomas**

**School of Education  
University of Leicester**

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**Actual and desired factors of effective organisation and management of teaching and learning practices: A case study amongst lecturers and middle-leaders at a Higher Education Institution in Oman.**

Andrew Thomas

**Abstract**

This thesis explores the degree to which perceptions of lecturers and middle-leaders about the actual and desired organisational characteristics of a Higher Education Institution in Oman converge and/ or diverge with regard to the effective operation of teaching and learning processes within the institution. Using a card sort of 32 criteria derived from 16 factors of effectiveness drawn from the literature, it analyses the data quantitatively to arrive at participants' perceptions of the factors currently operating in the organisation and those desired for the future, and therefore which factors enable or hinder operational processes. Findings show that at the characteristic level, divergence is significantly greater between lecturers and middle-leaders, irrespective of faculty, than between lecturers from different faculties, or middle-leaders from different faculties. Current lecturer perceptions of organisational effectiveness/ ineffectiveness converge most strongly on factors of Collaboration and Professional Development. Middle-leader perceptions of current organisational effectiveness/ ineffectiveness converge most strongly on factors of Expectations of Success, Accountability, Professional Development, Environment, and Focus. At the more-desired/ less-desired level convergence is strongest between lecturers and middle-leaders on the factors of Expectations of Success, Collaboration and Professional Development. The study concludes that at the current level, there is a gulf between lecturers and middle-leaders that needs to be bridged if the organisation is to effectively organise the management of teaching and learning practices.

The findings extend effectiveness into Higher Education in Oman and support the use of factors of effectiveness in educational research. Findings also demonstrate the usefulness of focus groups, card sorts and a quantitative analysis of data as starting points for organisational self-evaluation and review. Recommendations encompass further research as to how organisational members conceptualise and measure 'success', 'collaboration' and 'development'; and investigation of other stakeholder perceptions of effectiveness.

**Key words:** Effectiveness, Oman, Higher Education, quantitative.

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# **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

## Overview

This chapter contextualises the research by providing background information on education in Oman and details of the case study site. It moves on to identify the research problem to be addressed, associated questions, and the significance of the work. Finally, it will give an overview of the other chapters.

## **1. BACKGROUND TO THE WORK**

### 1.1 Oman

Located in the Arabian Gulf, the Sultanate of Oman has an ancient history, but its modern period dates only from 1970 when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to the throne. The period following his ascension is commonly termed the 'renaissance' as it is recognised as a period of continuous development and growth in all areas of life, especially education. In 1970 there were only three schools in the whole country, serving 900 boys at primary level (Oman Ministry of Education, 2004), though the numbers have now risen to over 1000 primary schools serving over 576,472 primary students in 2003/ 4 (Oman Ministry of Information, 2007). Traditionally, the Omani government has provided free education to all and continues to sponsor large numbers of students though private fee-paying institutions now exist. The first state university, Sultan Qaboos, was established in Oman in 1986 and offers government funded education to students finishing in the top 10% of secondary school tests. However, as increased numbers of students have passed through the primary and secondary school systems, so large numbers of applicants have outstripped the capacities of the state university and higher education institutes to accommodate them and in 2004/ 5 only 2,500 students or 4% of total secondary school graduates could be admitted to Sultan Qaboos University (Al-Lamki, 2006, Oman Ministry of National Economy, 2007). Recognising that the public sector could not meet demand for places, the Omani government issued a Royal Decree in 1994 to promote

the development of private higher education in the country. Muscat University College (the research site) opened in 1995 and was the first private college in Muscat and Oman, though the sector has now numbers over forty private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Oman Quality Network, 2009), a growth rate no doubt boosted by substantial grants and subsidies towards construction and equipping of new colleges (Al-Lamki, 2006). As a result, for the year 2006/7 total enrolments into tertiary education topped 17,000 with over 6,000 (35.7%) entering private universities and colleges (Carroll, 2007). Nevertheless, capacity to accommodate demand for higher education places remains a challenge (Carroll et al., 2009).

Private colleges in Oman offer a variety of vocational and academic subjects from dentistry to business, IT to nursing, and range from two-year colleges offering diplomas to four-year colleges offering Bachelors degrees. In addition to Oman's own diploma and degree programmes, these private education institutes have affiliations with international universities (Al-Lamki, 2006) and over 200 diploma and degree programmes are now available and sourced from over a dozen countries (Carroll et al., 2009). Though the vast majority of students attending these programmes are Omani, there is also some enrolment from other Gulf countries and beyond in more specialised courses such as Fire Safety, or Well-Engineering. Nevertheless, for Omanis, entry into the colleges is dependent on successful completion of the secondary school system and the medium of instruction in the colleges is generally English. In order to be able to cope with this medium most students (88%) will pass through a Foundation year (Carroll, 2007) where the aim is to develop linguistic and cognitive competencies in preparation for diploma and degree programmes. Despite rapid expansion of the sector, it is claimed that tertiary provision not only falls far short of meeting demand but has also encountered problems in financing, quality, access and equity (Al-Lamki, 2006) and is perceived as lacking a mature perspective on quality assurance and academic excellence (Al-Bandary, 2005).

Al-Lamki (2006: 65), describing private higher education in Oman, observes that 'the government needs to take a strong stance in ensuring that each and every private college and university ..... is professionally accredited to international practice and standards'. In response to such concerns, the Omani government has initiated a number of key reforms in

primary and secondary education which are aimed at providing students with a learning experience that ‘follows international best practice and is relevant to the rapidly changing world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (Oman Ministry of Education, 2004:15).

Within tertiary education, a perceived lack of unified standards across the sector led to the government to found the Oman Accreditation Council (OAC) in 2001. The OAC is mandated to audit and accredit HEIs in both the private and public sectors in Oman. The process of accreditation involves both the licensing of the institution by the Ministry of Higher Education and assessment by the OAC of programmes against national standards (Oman Accreditation Council, 2009) with all institutions expected to have completed the process by 2011. A shared aim of the OAC and the Ministry of Higher Education is to establish minimum requirements for the development of a comprehensive quality management system designed specifically for Oman, centralised through government and its agencies, yet forming part of an international community (Carroll, 2006:13-14). Within organisations it is recognised that there is a need for continuous professional development and sharing of best practice (Carroll, 2006: 48). This involves up-grading the knowledge, skills, competencies, and qualifications of teachers; the knowledge, skills and practices of school administrators and inspectors (UNESCO, 2000: 8) and those in ministries and local authorities (Oman Ministry of Education, 2004:10). There is also a need to ensure adequate infrastructure and a suitable environment in which learning can take place (Carroll, 2006, Oman Ministry of Education, 2004) as well as peer review of programmes (Carroll, 2006).

Inherently tied up with issues of quality in teaching and learning is the recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Due to a lack of indigenous teachers, most HEIs in Oman have multinational workforces resulting in a high ratio of expatriate staff (Western, Asian, and Arab) to Omanis in teaching positions in higher education (Al-Lamki, 2006, Gulf Cooperation Council, 2006, Oman Ministry of Information, 2007) with the bulk of those expatriates being drawn from the Indian sub-continent (Al-Lamki, 2006). However, there is increased competition between colleges for staff as the sector has rapidly expanded to over 40 colleges in less than fifteen years, competition which has intensified more recently as

higher qualified and/ or more experienced staff move to better paying institutions in other regions of the Gulf.

### 1.2 Muscat University College (The research site)

The following information is drawn from the Muscat University College Handbook. Muscat University College (MUC) opened in 1995 and, financed by local Omani companies through the Oman Chamber of Commerce, was the first private college in the Sultanate of Oman. It is one of the largest private HEIs in Oman with over 1700 registered students in 2008. Under the current Dean there has been a refurbishment programme with new classrooms, a learning resource centre and a library opened but some of the buildings, rooms and facilities remain old and in need of renovation or renewal.

There are three faculties: Arts, Business, and Information Technology (IT). In the Arts Faculty, students can take either a BA (Hons) or Dip HE in English Language as well as MA TESOL. Business offers BA Hons degrees in Accounting, Business Management, E-Business, Finance, and Marketing and an MBA, whilst the IT Faculty runs BSc degrees in Computer and Internet Applications, and Networking. As with all private higher education institutions in Oman, the college is affiliated with an international institution. In this case, MUC operates in partnership with two UK universities, one at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and one supporting and validating the MA TESOL. Further courses lead to qualifications from the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), CISCO Certified Network Associate (CCNA); and a continuing education programme for those already in employment. The management structure of the College consists of a Dean, Assistant Dean and Heads of Faculty for Arts, Business and Accounting, and Information Technology. Aside from lecturing staff there is a Quality Assurance Officer and Programme Managers for each Faculty. Additionally, Information Technology is aided by a Support Manager, two Network Administrators and a Project Coordinator. The Faculty of Arts also contains a Foundation Semester Coordinator.

In the year in which the research was carried out (2006/ 7) MUC had a total academic and academic management staff of 56 serving over 1500 students and drawn from 11 different nationalities though the bulk of these are from the Indian sub-continent (see Methodology

Chapter for further details). This is typical of the sector; for example, the Foundation Programme at the International College of Engineering (another private college) serves 500 students through an academic staff of 23 drawn from 12 different nationalities whilst the Foundation Programme at Sultan Qaboos University (the state university) has 16 nationalities serving 2000 students.

The normal entry route into the College is via the Foundation Certificate programme. The majority of students are Omani and the Foundation programme acts as a bridge between secondary school and degree or diploma level studies and is a typical route for students entering tertiary education in Oman (Carroll, 2007) where academic and cognitive skills are generally low compared to Western undergraduate levels. The foundation programme at MUC is conducted in English and successful students can gain either a Foundation Certificate or entry to level one of the HND or degree programmes. The College's undergraduate programmes and quality assurance systems are designed to comply with the affiliate university's academic regulations and requirements and it is recognised as an Associate College of this university. According to the college's vision statement, it strives to be a first-rate institution, offering education of the highest international standard in an environment that fosters knowledge, values and sustainable employment skills. The mission of the college is to:

- Build a knowledge based learning organization
- Strive for excellence in learning, teaching and research
- Equip its students to make effective contributions to society and the economy.
- Develop the creative potential of all its staff members

Overall, MUC is in many ways typical of private sector HEIs currently operating in Oman in that:

- Institutions offer degree programmes sourced through foreign universities to largely Omani students.

- Around 88% of those students will have to pass through a foundation year programme in order to raise linguistic and cognitive competencies to a level sufficient to embark on a foreign degree programme.
- Academic staff are drawn from a wide range of national and ethnic backgrounds with associated concerns from internal and external stakeholders for consistency and transparency in qualifications, training, language and values concerning educational practice and how such practice may best be organised and by whom.
- Despite paying well for the sector, recruitment and retention of staff is problematic as Oman has to compete with significantly higher standards of pay in other Gulf countries as well as domestic competition.
- The organisation has to deal with the tensions caused by the push and shove of multiple and often competing demands and beliefs of stakeholders such as mono-cultural students and multi-cultural staff, the affiliating (and foreign) universities, the national standards of the Oman Accreditation Council, the interests of shareholders and sponsoring companies, and the social, economic and cultural demands of the Omani government and people. All these elements will in various ways and to various degrees impact on the core practices of teaching and learning and their outputs; the human, physical and financial resourcing of these practices; and the structuring of the organisation to best carry out the distribution of resources and the delivery of teaching.

The site was chosen not only because it was felt to be reasonably characteristic of higher education providers in Oman, but also because it was willing to host the research.

## **2. IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED.**

One consequence of the diversity of staff populations in HEIs is that differences may arise between individuals or groups of staff; between staff and the institutional goals; or between staff and the desired outcomes of accreditors or affiliated universities with ideological fault lines opening up over how teaching and learning may best be structured and carried out

within an organisational framework. These fault lines may manifest themselves at individual and group levels as organisational members try to make sense of multiple and possibly competing cultural, political, and pedagogical inputs at classroom, staffroom, institutional, and societal levels. Indeed, with such varied inputs and perspectives it is highly probable that conflicts will arise as to what constitutes education, who it is for and how it is to be enacted (Begley, 2002), with a subsequent impact on organisational effectiveness. Further, contemporary initiatives to reform institutions through quality audits and the evaluation of a wide range of factors within the institutions such as classroom practice, fiscal governance, professional development, or student feedback, add to the views that must be accounted for within educational organisations. Such external pressures to change and conform may clash or meld with the organisation's own internal processes of evaluation, reform and development and it is possible that the individual voices of staff go unheard amongst the maelstrom of accrediting bodies, government ministries, shareholders, affiliated universities and employers seeking change and compliance with quality initiatives and accountability. Nevertheless, because of the enormous diversity of staff backgrounds within HEIs in Oman, it is fundamental that schools explore the extent to which differences may arise between the mission of the institution and the degree to which staff perceive it as being effective in achieving that mission. By uncovering, exploring and targeting areas of difference, the school may achieve greater unity of purpose in achieving its mission, enhancing learner outcomes, accepting difference and managing change. An inability to do so may lead to failure, resentment, conflict or even charges of cultural hegemony. Investigating perceptions of what are effective or ineffective approaches to organising people in ways that enhance the managing of teaching and learning processes, may lead to the organisation achieving its goals more fully and successfully in the future.

### **3. RESEARCH AIMS**

It is my belief that the nature of HEIs in Oman presents unique challenges to leaders and administrators seeking to unite staff around a common vision of educational practice. Differing perceptions of the purposes and organisation of education may lead to a mismatch

between the college's organizational culture and the aspirations of the participants that make sustained improvement hard to achieve. Therefore, the aims of the research are:

- Provide data on the degree to which perceptions of lecturers and middle-leaders about the actual and desired organisational characteristics of a Higher Education Institution in Oman converge and/ or diverge with regard to the effective operation of teaching and learning processes within the institution.
- Provide a methodological tool that other organisations might use to investigate staff perceptions of the organisation as a precursor to building commitment to a shared vision of effective practice.

To achieve these aims it is necessary to ask the following research questions:

1. What putative characteristics of effective organisations (as suggested by the literature) do lecturers say are currently in evidence in Muscat University College (MUC)?
2. Which putative characteristics of effective organisations do lecturers wish the organisation to aspire to?
3. What putative characteristics of effective organisations (as suggested by the literature) do middle-leaders say are currently in evidence in MUC?
4. Which putative characteristics of effective organisations do middle-leaders wish the organisation to aspire to?
5. To what extent do the perceptions of lecturers from three different faculties (Arts, Business, and Information Technology) converge or diverge with regard to the current and desired organisational characteristics?
6. To what extent do the perceptions of middle-leaders from three different faculties (Arts, Business, and Information Technology) converge or diverge with regard to the current and desired organisational characteristics?
7. To what extent do the perceptions of lecturers and middle-leaders in those three faculties converge and/ or diverge with regard to the current and desired organisational characteristics?

By examining the perceptions of what is and is not effective amongst middle-leaders and lecturers across three faculties at characteristic and desired levels, it is expected that greater understanding will be gained of how the organisation is a) constructed and perceived, b) the degree of convergence and/ or divergence that exists within and across lecturers and middle-leader groups in terms of how the organisation is currently viewed and where it should be.

#### **4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH.**

Within the Arabian Gulf countries, there is a dearth of research as to how educational organisations are organised and whether such organisation can in some ways be considered effective or successful. This is despite the continuing high numbers of non-natives in the educational sector as well as governmental and institutional drives to develop educational practice within the region and make it more accountable (World Bank, 2008).

The importance and originality of this study is that it explores the perceptions amongst multi-national teachers and middle-leaders within a single organisation as to which factors of effective schooling hold the potential to advance or hinder the organisation. As far as this researcher is aware, this is unique. The study is centred on two particular populations; lecturers and middle-leaders across three different faculties. This too is unique in that such broad based research (across 36 members of the organisation) has not taken place before in Oman to my knowledge. The research tool is drawn out of the literature on effective schools and organisational theory and findings extend research on effectiveness and organisational culture in these fields into the Gulf region. The effectiveness literature is limited to an engagement with outcomes but this research also links factors of effectiveness to the creation and maintenance of multi-cultural educational cultures. It explores how cultures, sub-cultures and values indicate a reciprocal relationship with factors of effectiveness and the processes of culture creation. The results of such a study may help organisational members to develop strategies that will clarify how members within the institutions work together. By doing so, the research itself becomes part of the self-evaluation and review process that is integral to the current climate of accreditation. Though the locus of this study is Oman and in particular the localised context of Muscat University College, it is hoped the research process and

instrument, if not the findings, may be of use to other HEIs in the Gulf region that have similar staff diversity. A paucity of research on aspects of Higher Education in Oman and a more general dearth of regional investigation into organisational cultures and the extent to which education in the region can be considered effective necessitates the research being framed by largely 'western' perspectives. Contemporary Omani Higher Education is in itself heavily influenced by 'western' values and practices from the setting of curriculum to the input of affiliate universities and the oversight of quality agencies so 'western' literature is an appropriate starting point. However, as far as possible, an international research base has been drawn on so that no single contextual perspective dominates. Thus, research into Asian educational cultures, such as the work of Cheng and Wong (1996) and Cheng (2000) has been consulted, as well as work in developing countries by, for example Fertig (2000). Thus, an international frame of reference is necessary because of a lack of indigenous frames of reference and because of its direct impact on the local context.

## **5. OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS.**

Chapter 2 examines the literature across two broad areas; educational organisations and their cultures; and the effective schooling movement. Organisations and their cultures is divided into two major themes; firstly, the extent to which people participate and are involved in organisational life and how power and role may affect this participation and involvement and secondly, how cultures are created, sustained or undermined within organisations with particular reference to strong cultures and sub-cultures. This exploration of the literature on culture and subcultures links the processes of education with the outcomes of the effectiveness literature. Therefore, the second part of the chapter connects concepts of organisational culture with particular views of what factors and criteria potentially enable educational cultures to be more effective. A review of the effectiveness literature leads to the identification of key, generic elements of effectiveness, which, after consideration of the local context through piloting, lead to the creation of the research instrument and a framework created for exploring effectiveness within the given organisation. The chapter ends with comment on the rationale for the research and the extant research in the field relevant to the geographical.

Chapter 3 draws on the literature review and conceptual framework to identify the research strategy, design and methods. This work is a quantitative case study of how lecturers and middle-leaders from three faculties in a private Higher Education Institution in Oman perceive factors of effectiveness as potentially enabling or hindering the organisation of people in ways that enhance the management of teaching and learning processes. The chapter further explores how and why focus groups and card-sorts are used to collect data and the quantitative methods used to analyse the data. Chapter 4 analyses the data gathered and addresses each of the research questions in turn. Finally, in Chapter 5, conclusions are drawn, limitations addressed, significance reviewed and recommendations for further action highlighted.

## CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

The belief stated above is that HEIs in Oman present unique challenges to leaders and administrators attempting to build consensus amongst multi-national staff on the purposes, practices, outcomes and organisation of teaching and learning in higher education in Oman. Different perceptions of how people within an institution should be organised and empowered may lead to disjuncture between current practice and aspirations, leading to disaffection, sub-cultures and obstruction.

This thesis is a case study of how lecturers and middle-leaders from diverse backgrounds, working in an Omani HEI, perceive factors of effectiveness as potentially enabling or hindering the organisation's work. In order to understand why such views are critical to the health of an organisation it is necessary to explore three key elements. Firstly, what different models of organisations exist in the literature, especially for educational contexts, and how do these models reflect different ways of organising people? Secondly, within these organisations, how do varying patterns of power distribution and expectations of power distribution affect how people work together and carry out the tasks of the organisation? As appropriate for this study, particular emphasis is laid on the positioning of lecturers and middle-leaders within the frameworks of power. Thirdly, the nature of strong or weak cultures is explored with a view to understanding how strong, effective educational cultures are derived from a unity of vision and purpose amongst members. In contrast, organisations whose members hold disparate or conflicting expectations of behaviour and power distribution may lead to fragmentation, the rise of sub-cultures for example, at role, subject, social, political or religious levels, and consequent ineffectiveness as an educational institution.

Having established the importance of a unified educational culture, especially in organisations where there is a diversity of social and professional viewpoints represented, the chapter moves on to explore what is meant by 'effective' educational practice. Drawing on the

literature for effective schools, four dimensions of effectiveness are identified, namely, a) Developing Organisational Structure, b) Developing Community (Staff), c) Developing Community (Students), and d) Developing Community (External). Drawing on both the international literature and the locally contextualised pilot study, overlapping and interconnected factors are associated with these dimensions - such as Leadership, Planning, and Collaboration. Criteria are then given that exemplify the characteristics and values associated with them. The chapter explores how such dimensions and factors can be formed into a contextually sensitive tool that organisations can use to start a process of self-evaluation amongst staff that will expose not only areas of unity and consensus but also conceptual fault-lines concerning the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the organisation. It is acknowledged that, although values are present in the literature review and the research instrument, the research design does not allow these values to be explored in any depth. The chapter ends with an examination of the research conducted in the region.

## **1. EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR CULTURES**

Schein (2004) identified three broad organisational typologies, though this discussion will focus only on the first two as being salient to this work. The first brings together ways in which people are organised whilst the second characterises an organisation through its corporate character and culture. The third, not discussed here, views organisations from the perspective of membership tasks and relationships and the traditional (Western) distinction between management and labour.

### **1.1 People and Organisations**

How people believe they should be organised to work (and how they believe they should be able to organise others) impacts on their perspectives of the organisation they work for and its effectiveness in carrying out its purpose. Schein (2004:191) drawing on the work of Etzioni (1964) categorised assumptions about member participation and involvement in organisations as either a) coercive, in that individuals are caught within the organisation for physical or economic reasons and therefore obey whatever rules are laid down; b) utilitarian, in which individuals follow rules which are essential but often develop sub-cultural norms to

protect themselves; and c) normative, in which individuals offer commitment because the goals of the organisation match their own; they are thus morally involved in the organisation. Scott (1987, cited in Bennet 2005: 99) distinguishes between systems that are 'rational', 'natural', and 'open'. Rational systems are goal oriented and have a highly formalised social structure. This formal structure of rules and hierarchies seems to gel with Schein's coercive model and Scheerens (2000:23) gives an example of a rational goal as levels of student achievement. Natural systems are characterised by members sharing a common interest in perpetuating the system and engaging in collective activities, informally structured to achieve this end (Bennet, 2005). Again this may link into Schein's utilitarian model through the formation of informal groups or sub-cultures that pursue their own ends within the overall organisational structure. Scheerens (2000), preferring the term 'organic' over 'natural', describes these systems as interacting openly with their environment, showing flexibility and adaptability in securing resources. Thus, an organisation's effectiveness may be measured in terms of student intake or a sub-culture's goals may centre on gaining resources, members, and power for the group. Open or 'human relations' (Scheerens, 2000:25) systems are influenced by the environment in which they operate and consist of shifting coalitions and interest groups who develop goals by negotiation. There is an emphasis on the well-being of the individuals within the organisation and the importance of consensus, collegial relationships, motivation and human resource development.

An emphasis on human relations and the development of people within the organisation and suggests that educational institutions may be seen as communities, linking to Schein's normative model in which individuals see themselves as having a vested interest in the organisation. Sergiovanni (1994b) suggests people find the shared values and commitments that enable a school to become a community in thought, belief and action. In contrast to the rational or rational/ open models, Habermas (1990) describes organizations as moral communities where consensus can be arrived at through communication and discourse. Milley (2002:58) analysing the work of Habermas claims that schools or universities should be seen as moral communities where 'the only legitimate 'force' participants can rely upon to establish prescriptive norms or values is the force of the better argument, agreed to by all affected'. Thus, one way to look at an educational organisation is in the degree to which it is

viewed as a community in which people work together to shape the identity, structure and direction of the organisation and its outcomes. This subjectivist approach seems to suggest that cultural differences can be expressed and accounted for in an organization instead of fitting, perhaps awkwardly into a strategically imposed order such as offered in coercive or rational models. However, the extent to which formal structure can be overthrown in favour of community and individual and cultural difference accounted for must in part be limited by the wider context in which the institution is located (Hall, 1976, Hofstede, 1997).

The call for schools to develop internal communities, shaped by their membership, is matched by the desire for them to extend into the wider community beyond the school gates (Dimmock and Walker, 2004, Finnan and Levin, 2000, Ribbins and Gunter, 2002, Sergiovanni, 1994a) though most of the literature supporting this is Western in origin, and therefore such aims may not be compatible with other cultural contexts. Cameron and Tschirhart (1992), investigating organisational effectiveness in four-year colleges and universities in the United States, claim that a key element of an organisation's effectiveness is the inclusion not only of students, faculty and administrators in organisational development but also satisfying 'the outside constituency and community expectations' (Cameron and Tschirhart, 1992:93), thus linking it tentatively to concepts of learning communities. Thus, a second way to look at an organisation is by examining the extent to which the community is tightly located within the formal organisational structure or extends across more porous boundaries into the external community. If educational institutions are located in community and embedded in society, then an understanding of context is seen as fundamental to the processes and outcomes of school development at both theoretical and practical levels regardless of setting (Creemers and Reezigt, 2005, Fertig, 2000, Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Sun et al., 2007, Wikeley et al., 2005). However, enthusiasm for community building must be tempered by an understanding that who is admitted into a community or what the powers of a community and its constituent members may be, are culturally influenced; leading to 'potential for a mismatch between the community's traditional beliefs and customs on the one hand and the ideas of 'modernity' and a specified overt curriculum associated with schooling on the other (Fertig, 2000: 398). This may be particularly salient in developing countries such as Oman where external experts influence the local and national contexts. For example, the

Oman Accreditation Council, with its internationally derived quality assurance processes, or the standards and processes of affiliated foreign universities, will all impact on local HEIs such as MUC. Such mismatches may also be extended to the micro-level of an individual's beliefs and customs, brought in from outside the local context, and set against the overt curriculum of the individual school for which he or she works.

In arguing for the creation of a 'harmonious whole' in organisations with many autonomous units such as colleges or departments, Scheerens (2000: 25), again writing from a Western perspective, advocates the human relations or open system described above, as it allows for social interaction and the development of a professional and personal self. However, he also claims that this may be coupled with a bureaucratic model whereby harmony is created through members having formal positions and duties. From this angle, certainty and continuity of the organisational structure are embedded in the culture of the organisation and are the yardsticks of its effectiveness. Bennet (2005:99) appears to support this when claiming that effective schools should rest on a rational-open systems model, i.e. schools are not only goal oriented with formal power structures but additionally focused on resource utilisation and the structural interrelationship of parts of the organisation such as different departments or teachers and managers. However, the degree to which one can blend the differing models may again be culturally dependent. Nevertheless, a third theme in the examination of educational organisations concerns the structural framework of the organisation within which hierarchy and power are located.

It seems then, that there is no one-size-fits-all organisational model. On the one hand, it is possible to see an ideal organisation as one in which members structure themselves through the moral force of suasion and agreement without resorting to controlling forces or frameworks such as formal power hierarchies and roles. On the other hand, there is a more pragmatic view that sees 'soft' development of relationships between people, and associated development of personal and professional selfhoods, as happening most effectively within a 'hard' framework of power, organisational goals, units and roles. The pragmatism of organising people in formal ways is tempered by the realisation that the human or 'soft' developmental parts of the organisation are likely, sooner or later to come up against the

'hard' structures of organisational life such as line management, design and implementation of policies and procedures, goals, standards, budgets, and the management of members as 'human resources'. In reality, individuals are likely to be part of both the soft and hard elements of the organisation to different degrees at any one time. A lecturer may be an enforcer of policy when carrying out exam invigilation and marking duties yet at the same time may resist a policy seen as restrictive to personal and professional autonomy, such as classroom observations carried out by line managers. It is an investigation of these positions and the extent to which they are characteristic and desired that lies at the heart of this thesis. Within and across the core themes of educational organisations described above, namely, a) how members shape an organisation; b) the boundaries of the organisation; and c) the structural framework of the organisation; rest notions of power and power distribution. These are explored in the next section.

### *1.1.1 Organisations and Power Distribution*

For Hobby (2004:12), a critical element in meeting the internal challenges of how people work together, resolve arguments and conflicts, assign work, reward each other, accept new members or remove existing members is establishing the hierarchy and power relationships. In Oman, the multi-national membership of many HEIs may give rise to multi-variate perspectives on, for example, who should have authority and on what basis e.g. age, merit, length of service, qualification; as well as who should be rewarded for what and how, the extent to which risk and initiative are encouraged, and the extent to which institutional members are permitted to join in decision-making processes. These outlooks will determine the degree to which the organisation is deemed to be effective in meeting the needs of teachers and learners and may even shape the goals themselves if individuals or groups are powerful enough. In addition, the individual perspective of the researcher also helps to shape the research questions and specifically in this work influences the decision to target lecturers and middle-leaders as the sources of data (discussed below).

Schein (2004:192) describes six patterns of authority within an organisation:

1. autocratic

2. paternalistic
3. consultative or democratic
4. participative and power sharing
5. delegative, and
6. abdicative (in the sense that not only are tasks and responsibilities delegated but also power and controls)

The extent to which a particular pattern of power is exercised and desired amongst leaders and followers may derive from the wider values of the social and political context in which the institution is located, the traits of an individual leader such as Dean, Head of Department, subject specialist, lecturer, or dominant groups within the organisation. This differentiation may be exacerbated when the different values and beliefs held amongst members of various ethnicities, faiths, experiences, qualifications and backgrounds come into play in multi-national organisations such as MUC. As a consequence of varying and possibly competing perspectives the organisation may fragment. This fragmentation is encapsulated in a political model of organisations which sees departments, individual workers and management using official duties and goals to achieve blatant and hidden agendas (Scheerens, 2000:26). These agendas are driven by values and beliefs about education and social order (Busher, 2005a:75) and people look to others to help their views and beliefs gain ascendancy. Thus, schools are political arenas and the rational, natural and open models of organisations described above overlook the constructed and unequal nature of the relationships and the consequent complex web of socio-political dynamics of implementing or resisting change. For Busher (2005a: 77) 'the shaping and modifying of a school's culture, as well as of the subcultures of subject areas ..... is a political act to assert power inequitably in favour of a particular set of values and beliefs held by the most formally powerful people.' Thus, definitions of effectiveness are politically constructed and ontologically located in particular ideologies.

This thesis draws on the perspectives of lecturers and middle leaders and views them as key agents in the shaping and performance of organisations (Gronn, 2002, Harris, 2003, Muijs and Harris, 2007, Muijs et al., 2004, Yukl, 2002). It is therefore worth briefly exploring

these roles in terms of their formal or informal influences on an organisation. The idea that teachers are something more than simply tools for implementing or operating curricula in the classroom has become well established in both the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Canada (Muijs and Harris, 2003, 2007) and is gaining ground in UK (Harris, 2003). In these contexts, teachers have been identified as taking on the roles of leadership and, in particular, a model of leadership identified as ‘distributed’ (Harris, 2003, Lumby, 2003, Muijs and Harris, 2007, Spillane et al., 2001) which emphasises shared focus on group activity, social distribution of leadership power and interdependency ‘embracing how leaders of various kinds and in various roles share responsibility’ (Harris, 2003: 317) and influence each other.

Though the idea of teachers acting with some form of leadership or influence seems natural given their classroom role as educators, exactly how such influence in and beyond the classroom is defined is problematic. In part, this is a problem of construct as ‘dispersed leadership’ is often used as ‘a catch-all phrase for any type of devolved, shared or dispersed leadership practice in schools’ (Harris, 2007:315). More importantly, formal power hierarchies and/ or dominant perceptions of the roles of teaching staff may prevent power distribution (Harris, 2003) and this in turn may influence the degree to which teachers view the organisation as successful or effective in meeting its espoused aims or the aspirations of the staff member. Briggs (2005:41) notes for the English further education sector that though the size and complexity of colleges require dispersed leadership, colleges in which transactional or coercive cultures predominate stifle this process. Thus, even where it does exist, the ability of teachers to influence or motivate others, to voice opinion, or realistically shape policy and practice as advocated in human relations models described above, may be constrained by more formal power hierarchies and coercive cultures. Further, the ability of teachers to engage more fully in organisation life may further be undermined by the rise of audit cultures in education, whereby professionals are subject to internal and external accountability mechanisms and a continuous regime of performance and quality auditing (Biesta, 2004, Deem, 2007, Zepke, 2007). Finally, even when some degree of distributed decision-making is achieved within an organisation, it is paradoxically often achieved only through strong formal leadership from a principal or dean (Bush and Jackson, 2002, Harris, 2007, Muijs and Harris, 2007). Consequently, teachers may see the dispersal of leadership to themselves as simply

delegation of tasks by management; a way to utilise teachers when not teaching; or a cost-effective means of developing policy and practice without bringing in expensive managers or consultants. Though teachers may be seen as key influences on the organisation and its effectiveness (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Reynolds, 2005), the constraints that are applied to the exercise of such influence, real or imagined, will impact on how effective they view the organisation in carrying out its purpose and in meeting individual or group aspirations.

In contrast to teachers, ‘middle-leaders’ (Busher, 2003, 2005b) are those who hold formal leadership roles ranging from subject coordinator, to head of department, programme, subject or year, though other terms such as ‘middle managers’ (Briggs, 2005, Clegg and McAuley, 2005, Lumby, 2003) and ‘manager-academics’ (Deem, 2007) have been used. Middle-leaders hold pivotal roles between the strategic interests of senior management and the ‘local knowledge’ of the classroom teacher (Clegg and McAuley, 2005:21). They are seen as exerting considerable power, transmitting core strategic values in the role of mentor, coach, guide (Clegg and McAuley, 2005:21) and wise organisational manager (McAuley, 2003) and translating ‘the purpose and vision of the college into practical activity and outcome’ (Briggs, 2005:27). Pounder (2001b) argues that promotion to academic leadership positions is often based on research output rather than leadership competence. As such, it is unique to universities and not found in commercial organisations. This uniqueness may express itself through academic middle-leaders locating themselves as holders of core academic values rather than organisational values; with loyalty more to subject areas than strategic concerns (Clegg and McAuley, 2005) with the possible consequence that organisational effectiveness is perceived differently within each subject area. Like teachers, middle-leaders may rely more on collegial consent from, and negotiation with, their subject peers than formal exercise of managerial power. However, as with teachers, is also noted that different organisational cultures and leadership styles may encourage or suppress different aspects of the management role (Briggs, 2005) and loyalty to a department or subject may create or enhance sub-cultures.

It is probable that middle-leaders juggle the two aspects of their work; managerial and academic, uneasily caught as they are between the classroom and the boardroom, between delegation and distribution, between the ability to make their own decisions and the demands

of those above them in the hierarchy (Lumby, 2003: 287). As such, middle-leaders may position themselves along a transformational/ transactional continuum (Pounder, 2001b). Transactional leadership seeks stability through goal setting in return for economic and social exchanges, whereas transformational leadership promotes change by encouraging followers to move beyond self-interest for the good of the whole (Lussier and Achua, 2004). This positioning echoes the work of Scheerens (2000) described earlier who advocates the creation of a harmonious whole from multiple sub-units such as departments not only through the transformational effects of social interaction and the development of a personal and professional self but also through the transactional effects of a bureaucracy that organises members by dividing up positions and duties. Indeed, aspects of transactional and transformational leadership are seen as co-requisite for colleges 'to cohere and prosper' (Briggs, 2005:47) despite the dichotomous positions this infers.

In view of the above discussion, when analysing the research data, it is necessary to consider the extent to which teachers and middle-leaders perceive the current organisation as being able to balance the soft, natural or organic development of personal and professional selfhoods and relationships with the hard development of bureaucratic or managerial structures and the extent and degree to which it is desired. In part, this may involve the degree to which teachers and middle-leaders are involved in hierarchies of power and are capable or desirous of power being distributed across the organisation; but in part it also reflects perspectives of where one model ends and another begins, where contractual obligations end and goodwill and communal service begin, where dialogue finishes and commands have to be obeyed, whether one's loyalty is to the organisation or the department, the subject or the cross-subject curricula as well as the wider societal values that members bring with them to the workplace.

## 1.2 Organisational Culture

Schein's (2004) second typology views an organisation through its corporate character and culture. Though various competing and overlapping frameworks exist for culture, in essence it is:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems' (Schein, 2004:17)

In short, it is 'what works around here'. Thus, an organisation could be measured on how members share vision and goals, the extent to which they band together, and the extent to which such goals and banding are predicated on hierarchy, reward, community or other value positions. The goals that organisational members hold and share and the extent to which they are preferred over others may be measured and therefore, the extent to which an organisation is considered effective by those surveyed ascertained.

Finnan and Levin (2000:89-90) draw a distinction between, on the one hand, macro levels of societal culture and associated beliefs in the 'culture of schooling', and, on the other hand, the unique culture of each school at a local level which they term 'school culture'. The culture of schooling perpetuates a set of basic beliefs and assumptions that include: what schools should teach; how children should learn; who should learn what; who should be teaching; how schools should be run and organized; how students should be sorted; and a school's role in addressing broader social issues. In contrast, 'school culture' is shaped by the 'unique and shared experiences of participants', including leaders, which are in turn influenced by individual experience, ethnicity, gender, community and so on. However, such separation ignores the complex interdependence and interrelationship between the two whereby the culture of the institution may be constantly evolving as its members filter and construct internal and external perceptions of education whilst simultaneously constructing for themselves how the members should organise effectively in relation to internal and external environments at superficial and deeper levels (Cheng, 2000:209). As a result, there is a need for strategies that investigate broad surface level perceptions across a wide sample, and deep but narrow investigations that target the underlying sources of such beliefs and perceptions within small samples or individuals. Both approaches are of use in trying to understand organisational cultures and how they are created and sustained. Indeed, it is argued that broad

examinations of perceptions (such as undertaken here) and values across the various levels may be the best way to disentangle complexities of educational institutions (Lee, 2007).

### *1.2.1. Strong cultures*

Organisational cultures in which members share core values and purpose and comply with clearly defined norms of behaviour are viewed as ‘integrated’ (Martin, 2002), having ‘climate strength’ (Luria, 2008) or ‘strong’ in education and wider fields (Busher, 2005c, Cheng, 2000, Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Lussier and Achua, 2004, Tierney, 1988, van Rekom et al., 2006). However, the depth and extent of this strength may vary within and across organisational levels (Cheng, 2000). Moreover, strong cultures do not automatically preclude negativity; organisational members may be united in perceptions of what is effective actual and desired policy, but such outlooks may drive the organisation towards obsolescence, ineffective practice or clashes with watchdogs, government or society.

A strong culture may in part derive from homogeneity of values, outlook and norms brought into the organisation through recruitment or as a reflection of the external society. Shared values may also be derived from socialisation and a focus on the building of vision and mission once a person has entered the organisation. For Luria (2008) climate strength comes from agreement within a unit or group about the importance of a ‘facet’ or goal. A facet (referred to as a factor in this thesis) is an item linked to ‘policies, procedures, practices, routines and rewards’ (Luria, 2008:42) and the standardisation of facets or factors through handbooks containing procedures and criteria for measuring operations, quality control and evaluation leads to a stress on roles and managerial/ bureaucratic control rather over individual expression and relationship building (Handy, 1993). However, shared beliefs and values may also be embedded and owned by members through demographic, social and cultural assumptions (Cheng, 2000, Lussier and Achua, 2004) and this once again raises issues of how soft and hard structures coexist within an organisation. Busher (2005b) sees the ability of an organisation to subsume cultural diversity and eschew mono-cultural perspectives as the true test as to whether an organisation may be viewed as either strong or weak. However, this rational interpretation of culture building between employee and organisation may be obscured by processes that are ‘deep-seated; largely unconscious; intimately connected to the development of identity; and have emotional content’ (Carr, 1999: 580). In other words,

culture building and identification is not just a rational process but also an emotional one and may not be easily articulated.

As discussed earlier, the ability to take on cultural diversity may in part be affected by formal and informal power distribution within the organisation that determines whether some values or perceptions come to dominate over others. A hierarchical organisational structure in which leaders pass down and articulate organisational values is likely to be viewed as having a strong organisational culture, and strong cultures have been identified with organisational success and effectiveness (Deal and Kennedy, 1983). However, Hobby (2004:8) contests this in observing that ‘growth and responsiveness in culture begins at the individual level - with individuals questioning and breaking with tradition through an act of leadership. Thus, too strong a culture..... can damage an organisation’s ability to learn and respond.’ Luria (2008:43) supports this in noting that organisational climate strength ‘maintains consistent implementation of management’s policies’, thus allowing little room for innovation. Valid though these points appear, it is also argued that an organisation where core values remain poorly envisioned or power is diffused across a flatter organisational structure, may be regarded as having a weak culture in that ambiguity is high and people who do not have similar perceptions may have ‘inconsistent or even non-existent expectations about appropriate behavior’ (Luria, 2008:43). Such weak or fragmented cultures have been associated with ineffective schools (Reynolds, 1998).

Once again, it seems that organisations at the macro-level may reflect the tensions and conflicts that are faced by individuals at the micro-organisational level. An organisational culture that imposes structure and control in a desire to harmonise or homogenise into a ‘strong’ culture may stifle individual voices and therefore the desire or ability of individuals to share in the goals of the organisation leaving it fragmented and divided. On the other hand, the multi-variate outlooks of individuals and groups within a single organisational shell may, without a framework of control and hierarchy of power, leave the organisation equally fragmented as different groups work to gain resources and power for their own ends. Thus, harmony is more likely to be about balance between the competing spheres of corporate and individual, control and freedom, leading and following, transaction and transformation, and

crucially, the management of boundaries between the individual and the group, the internal and external environments, and equally how such management is perceived. These issues have been touched on at the macros (organisational) and micro (individual level). The next section examines the meso or sub-cultural level of organisations.

### *1.2.2. Sub-cultures*

Organisational cultures evolve and are neither monolithic nor static (Helms and Stern, 2001, Hofstede et al., 1990, Schein, 2004). Within an organisation, the shifting eddies of change and politics may give rise to a wide range of sub-cultures or subgroups. In educational contexts, a key intersection of sub-cultures exists at the boundary between two broader cultures; the institution and the discipline (Lee, 2007), and ties in to the earlier discussion on the possibly competing roles of middle-leaders as enforcers of the strategic interests, mission and purpose of the organisation yet defender of academic values. Sub-cultures can therefore form around department or subject areas as well as around ethnic, religious, gender, or age variables or cut across all. Sub-cultures are also fluid, changing across time through interaction of members and the socio-political context or through the stages or organisational development (Schein, 2004, Smart et al., 1997).

The internal culture of the organisation must be influenced partly by the cognitive and emotional frameworks that employees hold and have developed through experience with the outside world and bring to the organisation. External values may in time conflict with internal organisational values and with the rules, rituals and ceremonies that express and reinforce consensual organisational values and help to acculturate or socialise members (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, Hofstede, 1997, Schein, 2004, Tierney, 1988). Such conflict may be heightened when membership is drawn from a wide range of educational and professional experiences, fields of expertise, or a wide range of differing value systems (Adler, 1997, Dedoussis, 2004, Hofstede et al., 1990), or when people with specific skills or outlooks are drawn into a department. Further, it is also claimed that the emotional aspects of individual character can also impact on organisational culture (Carr, 1999, Vakola et al., 2004). As a consequence, members or groups may pull in different directions at different times within and across organisational structures for example classroom, department or institution (Cheng, 2000, Lee, 2007).

The discussion above demonstrates that organisational culture is ‘a broad, diffuse and potentially contradictory body of shared understandings about what is and what ought to be’ (Metz, 1983: 237). Different models of how educational institutions should be organised range along a continuum from bureaucratic hierarchies to moral orders and communities. Any middle-ground is likely to be an uneasy alliance as human demands and needs comes up against the rigidity of organisational structure, policy and procedure and vice versa. The degree to which the two boundaries are perceived as being managed and balanced to individual and/ or group satisfaction may impact on the extent to which an organisational can be considered strong and effective or weak and ineffective. Teachers and middle-leaders occupy central ground in this debate and are therefore key sources when investigating the degree to which an organisation’s practices may be considered effective or not and agents in the formation of a harmonious whole (Scheerens, 2000).

The culture of the organisation consists of individuals who through ‘external adaptation and internal integration’ (Schein, 2004:17) form in-groups and alliances with people who share similar outlooks, beliefs, patterns of interpretation and experience (Detert et al., 2000, Helms and Stern, 2001, House et al., 2004, Lee, 2007, O’Reilly and Chatman, 1996, Smart et al., 1997). Thus, organizational culture is a collective phenomena, socially constructed (Detert et al., 2000, Heck, 1996, Hofstede, 1997, Smircich, 1983, Tierney, 1988) and politically motivated (Busher, 2005a).

The discussion of the extent to which understandings are shared can be framed within three key areas, namely a) how members shape an organisation; b) the boundaries of the organisation; and, c) the structural framework of the organisation. Surrounding these are issues of how power is distributed, to whom and for what purpose. These key elements help to identify what an organisation is and should be to different individuals and groups. The next chapter explores the effectiveness literature in order to provide a conceptual framework for the investigation of effectiveness within the research setting. In doing so, the key themes explored above remain close to the surface and are reflected in the dimensions, factors and criteria that emerge from the literature and which are subsequently used to measure effectiveness as perceived by lecturers and middle-leaders.

## **2. EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING**

Since the 1980s there has been growing interest in the areas of school and higher educational effectiveness and improvement in response to government demands for more accountability (MacBeath et al., 1995). Consequently, researchers and practitioners have sought to answer questions of firstly, what effective educational institutions look like, and secondly, how these institutions can improve in order to become effective. This section explores the literature on effectiveness and the criticisms against it. Though reference is made to the effectiveness literature concerning higher education throughout (e.g. Cameron and Tschirhart, 1992, Pounder, 2001a, Smart et al., 1997), it is the secondary school effectiveness literature that has been drawn on more deeply. The reason for this is that despite MUC being located within higher education in Oman, the sector overall is seen as less mature than that in more developed countries (such as UK, US and northern Europe) from which most of the effectiveness literature emanates. This immaturity can be inferred from the country's continuing attempts to build further basic capacity through private and governmental measures (Al-Lamki, 2006); the perceived lack of quality assurance, academic excellence and equity, (Al-Bandary, 2005, Al-Lamki, 2006); the need for the newly-formed Oman Accreditation Council to monitor professional standards and development (Carroll, 2006); the lack of sufficient indigenous teachers, and the inherent instability in the retention of qualified staff. In addition, 88% of students (including those at MUC) pass through a Foundation course which may take students up to an exit level of IELTS or IELTS equivalent of 4.5/ 5 before entry to undergraduate programmes, a level that is generally lower than accepted for entry to UK universities (International English Language Testing System, 2009). Also associated with HEI intake are questions of maturity in terms of the behavioural and cognitive abilities of students. The social context of Omani higher education is such that students are away from parents, relatives and neighbours for the first time, often in a mixed-sex campus and classroom environment, and in urban centres. Though this is not true of all students, especially privately-sponsored ones, it is especially true of the large number of government-sponsored students from the conservative interior of the country. Again, a traditional and conservative system of primary and secondary education has left many students lacking sufficient study/ life skills to cope with higher education e.g. punctuality, information literacy, communication skills, individual and collective responsibility, autonomous learning, and a sense of their own rights

as students. In other words, the sector may more purposefully be engaged with issues of effectiveness in secondary schools than with those of higher education though there is undoubtedly degree of synergy between the two.

The effective schools 'movement' (Fidler, 2005, Parkes and Thomas, 2007) is directed at 'what works in education' (Creemers and Reezigt, 2005, Scheerens, 2000) and is seen as focusing on the outcomes of schooling and the factors or variables that enhance learning in all schools and thus make them 'effective' (Fidler, 2005, Harris, 2005). Although the ability and family backgrounds of students are major determinants of achievement levels, effective schools have been identified as those which can achieve very different levels of educational progress in similar social circumstances (Sammons et al., 1994). The early focus on academic achievement has since widened to include social and affective outcomes such as attendance, attitudes and behaviour, as well as cognitive development. Effectiveness research demonstrates broad consensus in three key areas (MacBeath et al., 1995): that schools are primarily places of learning; that they support the personal and social development of young people; and that they are places where teachers learn to teach. Successful schools can therefore be viewed as those that allow these things to happen. Bottery (2005:149) interpreting the work of Reynolds (2005) sees the school effectiveness movement resting on four propositions. Firstly, there is the belief that schools affect student outcomes independent of contextual variation. In other words, families and student background are not the sole determinants of a child's educational development, though they remain relevant (Harris, 2005). Secondly, the effects on students can be engineered; and thirdly, that this engineering can be achieved through management systems, rewards and sanctions. The fourth proposition is that though schools are part of a set of 'nested' relationships, they are autonomous enough to affect pupil achievement independent of external factors such as socio-economic status.

Early schools effectiveness research into 'what works' coalesced around five critical factors; strong educational leadership; emphasis on students acquiring basic skills; an orderly and secure environment; high expectations of student attainment and; frequent assessment of student progress (Scheerens, 1992). The seminal work of Sammons et al (1994), commissioned by the office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), reviewed school

effectiveness research in primary and secondary schools, with a particular emphasis on British schools. They were unable to provide a single definition of effectiveness due to a variety of factors that were used in different studies such as which schools were sampled, the choice of outcome measures or and methodologies used to assess effectiveness. Nevertheless, eleven key interrelated factors were identified with associated criteria (Table 1).

**Table 1. Eleven Factors of Effective Schools**

Factors	Criteria
Professional leadership	Firm and purposeful; a participative approach; a leading professional
Shared vision and goals	Unity of purpose; consistency of practice; collegiality and collaboration
A learning environment	An orderly atmosphere; an attractive working environment
Concentration on teaching and learning	Maximisation of learning time; academic emphasis; focus on achievement
Purposeful teaching	Efficient organisation; clarity of purpose; structured lessons; adaptive practice
High expectations	High expectations all round; communicating expectations; providing intellectual challenge
Positive reinforcement	Clear and fair discipline; feedback
Monitoring progress	Monitoring pupil performance; evaluating school performance
Pupils rights and responsibilities	Raising pupil self esteem; positions of responsibility; control of work
Home-school partnerships	Parental involvement
A learning organisation	School based staff development

These interrelated and in many ways mutually dependent factors appeared to be generic (Sammons et al., 1994) in that they applied to both primary and secondary schools and

as argued above, are also suited to the Omani context described above. However, it was underlined that the emphasis or means of expression for each factor may differ between schools and the student population being served. Further, it was also acknowledged that schools may be more effective with one particular student population than another or in one department more than others. It was also stressed that the findings of the review should not be applied mechanically without an understanding of a schools' particular and possible unique context. Thus, despite the generic factors identified, and despite Bottery's (2005) emphasis that schools are to a significant degree detached from environmental factors, it is crucial to remember that effectiveness is contextual and factors may not be generalisable. Therefore, some elements of effectiveness, such as 'time' and 'risk', though not high profile, oft-cited factors in the literature, were included in the present research instrument as a response to the locally contextualised findings of the pilot study.

The eleven factors identified by Sammons et al were seen as focussing not only on core processes of classroom organisation and teaching but also on whole school processes. They are seen as crucial in providing the overall structure in which teachers and classrooms operate and incorporate areas such as leadership, decision-making, and goal-setting. Scheerens' (2000), updating his earlier work for UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, and after reviewing more recent literature, again identified effectiveness as relevant to a broad range of factors and criteria. He found consensus greatest across the factors of a) achievement orientation (or high expectations); b) co-operation; c) educational leadership; d) frequent monitoring and; e) time, opportunity to learn and 'structure' of the learning process. These he identified as key instructional conditions (Scheerens, 2000:46). Once more there is emphasis not only on classroom factors such as achievement, orientation and high expectations and the targeting of student mastery of basic subjects, but also on the structural or framing elements of effective leadership constituted through efficient information delivery, the orchestration of participative decision-making, controlling classroom processes, and initialising staff development within an orderly school climate. These factors are to varying degrees fore-grounded in the findings of this study. There is a repeated concern for unity, consensus and cohesion amongst staff that has been identified as potentially leading to strong organisational cultures whereas individual autonomy and collegiality and the ability to

develop as a person and professional may result in fragmented and ineffective ones. For Harris (2005:11), school effectiveness research has consistently shown that ‘effective schools are structurally, symbolically and culturally more tightly linked than less effective ones ...[and] ... operate more as an organic whole and less as a loose collections of disparate sub-systems’. Thus, the dichotomies of control versus autonomy, and a concern for sub-cultures described earlier are introduced into the effective school mix. For Scheerens (2000), effectiveness is not just a checklist of measures imposed from the outside but becomes an activity involving students, staff and pupils in deciding whether the organisation is effective as a group of people working together; an activity that lies at the heart of this thesis.

Further empirical support for effectiveness comes from MacBeath et al (1995) in which the views of 638 teachers, managers, support staff, pupils, parents and governors in six primary, three secondary, and one special school were solicited on what made a school effective or ‘good’. These factors were derived from an open-ended task in which participants in the project were invited to fill blank spaces with their own thoughts on what is a good school, rather than using pre-constructed criteria. From this, ten indicator clusters were generated which bear close alignment to key factors of effectiveness recorded above i.e.

1. School climate
2. Relationships
3. Classroom climate
4. Support for teaching
5. Support for learning
6. Recognition of achievement
7. Time and resources
8. Organisation and communication
9. Equity (sense of belonging and catering for all)
10. Home-school links.

The taxonomies of Sammons et al, Scheerens and MacBeath described above reveal that the factors that potentially lead to effective education have remained fairly constant over

time, with only the labels changing. This is supported by a wide range of authors working within the effectiveness field who, as demonstrated in the summary in Table 2 below, concur on factors seen as enabling effectiveness. These include international perspectives such as the work of Creemers and Reezigt (2005) in secondary schools in Europe, Cheng (2000) on Asian perspectives of effectiveness, Smart et al (1997) and Cameron and Tschirhart (1992) on effectiveness in colleges and universities in the US, and Fertig (2000) on effectiveness in developing countries. UK based empirical support for the factors identified comes from the work of Hobby (2004) in primary, secondary and special schools in the UK, and the study commissioned by the National Union of Teachers (MacBeath et al., 1995) in secondary schools in the UK. Thus, a broad international base of research underpins the frequently cited factors and criteria listed in Table 2. To this are added factors that through the pilot study have been deemed relevant to the local context yet may not always have been widely focused on in the literature i.e. ‘time’, ‘risk taking’, ‘service’, ‘planning’, and ‘inclusion’.

Table 2 is divided into three columns. The first column identifies two overarching themes or dimensions i.e. ‘Developing Organisational Structure’ and ‘Developing Community’. The latter, with an emphasis on people, is divided into three parts: ‘Developing Community (Staff)’; ‘Developing Community (Students)’; and ‘Developing Community (External)’. Despite this attempt at division, there is considerable overlap between the dimensions, for example, students and staff are part of both internal and external communities and ‘Developing Organisational Structure’ is both a reflection and a mechanism of human development. Nevertheless, these overarching dimensions provide a framework into which 22 initial factors of effectiveness drawn from the literature and piloting can be placed (Column 2). Again, there is considerable overlap, for example the need for ‘Collaboration’ is both a feature of the effective organisational structure and the effective development of the community of staff. Though there appears to be considerable consensus amongst authors, it is noted that this may mask considerable divergence in the operationalisation of each factor. For example, leadership is multi-faceted and degrees to which leadership is given or taken will vary across organisational, professional and societal cultures. The third column provides sets of criteria that allow the factors to be enacted in practice.

**Table 2: A Summary of the Literature of Factors of Effectiveness & Associated Criteria**

Dimension	Factor	Criteria
<b>Developing Organisational Structure</b>	Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquire and monitor resources such as people, money, space, and ideas (Dimmock and Walker, 2000, Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Smart et al., 1997)</li> </ul>
	Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give people time for consultation and improvement – cannot depend on goodwill (Reezigt and Creemers, 2005)</li> <li>• Distribute information in timely and accurate fashion (Pounder, 2001a)</li> <li>• Monitor use of time (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003)</li> </ul>
	Expectations of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create high performance expectations for all (Cheng and Wong, 1996, Hobby, 2004, Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000)</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create culture of success and improvement (Hobby, 2004, Stoll and Fink, 1996)</li> <li>• Emphasise achievement (Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000)</li> <li>• Provide intellectual challenge (Sammons et al., 1994)</li> </ul>
	Risk taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept risk taking (Stoll and Fink, 1996)</li> </ul>
	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership should be firm and purposeful yet participative (Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000)</li> <li>• School leader as initiator and facilitator of staff professionalisation (Scheerens, 2000)</li> </ul>
	Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfort of the staff is secondary to the needs of the students (Hobby, 2004)</li> <li>• Students come first (Hobby, 2004)</li> <li>• Focus on rules and regulations; punishment and reward, absenteeism, conduct, satisfaction (orderly atmosphere) (Scheerens, 2000)</li> <li>• Focus on relationships, engagement, appraisal of roles and tasks, facilities, conditions of labour, task load and satisfaction (climate) (Scheerens, 2000)</li> </ul>
	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set goals and objectives for the future (Smart et al., 1997)</li> <li>• Develop effective coordination strategies (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001)</li> </ul>

<b>Developing Organisational Structure (cont'd)</b>	Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school owns the standards, not the teacher (Hobby, 2004)</li> <li>• Evaluation of school performance is key (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000, Sun et al., 2007)</li> <li>• Hold teachers accountable for their performance (Hobby, 2004, Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Stoll and Fink, 1996)</li> <li>• Provide clear and fair discipline; feedback (Sammons et al., 1994)</li> </ul>
	Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasise collegiality and collaboration, unity of purpose (Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Reezigt and Creemers, 2005, Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 1992, 2000)</li> </ul>
<b>Developing Community (Staff)</b>	Professional & Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to staff development and in-service training (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Sammons et al., 1994, Smart et al., 1997)</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for individual learning and reflection (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003)</li> <li>• Provide incentives and structures to promote changes (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003)</li> <li>• Define standards of professional practice at national/ international level (Dimmock and Walker, 2000, Stoll and Fink, 1996)</li> </ul>
	Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect is shown for staff, their feelings and needs (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003)</li> <li>• Mutual respect (Stoll and Fink, 1996)</li> <li>• Celebration and humour (we feel good about ourselves) (Stoll and Fink, 1996)</li> </ul>

<b>Developing Community (staff) cont'd</b>	Collaboration & Collegiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An emphasis on collaborative and collegial patterns of staff behaviour (Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000, Stoll and Fink, 1996) sharing best practice (Hobby, 2004)</li> <li>• All staff are engaged equitably (Stoll and Fink, 1996)</li> <li>• Unity of purpose and shared beliefs and values (Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Sammons et al., 1994)</li> <li>• Development of interpersonal relationships (Pounder, 2001a)</li> </ul>
	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment of teachers to change is particularly important (Wikeley et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Offer intellectual stimulation (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003)</li> <li>• Sense of belonging (Pounder, 2001a)</li> </ul>
	Role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers should be role models (Cheng and Wong, 1996, Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Leithwood and Riehl, 2003)</li> </ul>
	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intense interaction and communication (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001)</li> <li>• Discuss differences calmly – openness (Stoll and Fink, 1996)</li> <li>• Communicate expectations (Sammons et al., 1994)</li> <li>• Include participants vertically (e.g. students and administrators) and horizontally (e.g. across departments) in decision making (Cameron and Tschirhart 1992)</li> </ul>
	Support & Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive climate within the school (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001)</li> <li>• There is always someone there to help (Stoll and Fink, 1996)</li> </ul>
	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orderly atmosphere (Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Sammons et al., 1994, Sammons and Mortimore, 1997, Scheerens, 2000)</li> <li>• Provide attractive, quality working environments (Cameron and Tschirhart, 1992, Sammons and Mortimore, 1997)</li> </ul>
	Recruitment & Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment and retention should be stable but not static (Reezigt and Creemers, 2005)</li> </ul>

<b>Developing Community (Students)</b>	Quality Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student educational satisfaction/ academic development/ career development (Scheerens, 2000, Smart et al., 1997)</li> <li>• Look beyond academic and exam success to prepare the foundations of a student’s broader life (Cameron and Tschirhart, 1992, Hobby, 2004)</li> <li>• Develop personally as well as academically (Cameron and Tschirhart, 1992, Smart et al., 1997)</li> <li>• Prime concern of teachers is the curriculum and student learning (Cheng and Wong, 1996, Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Sammons et al., 1994)</li> <li>• Purposeful teaching – efficient organisation (Sammons et al., 1994)</li> </ul>
	Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention should be divided equally, not on the basis of ability to succeed (Hobby, 2004)</li> </ul>
	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise pupil self esteem and emphasise rights and responsibilities (Sammons et al., 1994)</li> </ul>
<b>Developing Community (External)</b>	Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with representatives from outside the school e.g. parents, community members, business and government liaisons (Hobby, 2004, Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000)</li> <li>• Develop ‘social capital’ through links to community (Sun et al., 2007)</li> <li>• Understand the importance of context – national, local and school – when describing effectiveness (Busher, 2005a, Sun et al., 2007)</li> </ul>

The effectiveness movement is not free from contention. Firstly, effectiveness is problematic in that it is not easily measurable nor simply conceptualised; for example, it is not clear whether effective means the same as successful and it is likely that its definition is dependent not only on time, outcome and student group (Sammons, 1999) but also on whether different nations or groups can agree about the characteristics of effectiveness and whether the interests of society, parents and children are all the same, all the time. In other words, effectiveness is hindered by relativity and what may be regarded as effective in one educational or cultural system (or even at a classroom or departmental level) may not be regarded as so in another (Dimmock and Walker, 2002).

Secondly, it is argued that effectiveness does not account for the development of meta-cognitive, behaviour or cultural skills but instead measures only the transmission of knowledge (Bennet and Harris, 2005, Creemers and Kyriakides, 2006, Fidler, 2005) and quantification of student progress from their attainment on entry to their attainment on leaving. School effectiveness is viewed as located within a technical-rationalist framework that reflects an obsession with performance and that a single outcome measure, notably academic achievement, is an inadequate method of ascertaining the true level of effectiveness in any one institution (Harris, 2005). However, though this may have once been the case, the research now acknowledges that a new range of personal affective outcomes be introduced (Reynolds, 2005), and a wider perspective taken on the possible outcomes of schooling such as the development of intellectual, cultural and behavioural skills (Fidler, 2005, Sammons et al., 1994). The literature summary in Table 2 suggests that this is already taking place. Though there are concerns for the achievement of students in tests and academic development, there is also the notion of placing students first, (Hobby, 2004), with an emphasis on academic *and* personal development (Cameron and Tschirhart, 1992, Hobby, 2004, Smart et al., 1997) through processes of teaching and learning (Cheng and Wong, 1996, Dimmock and Walker, 2000, Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Leithwood and Riehl, 2003), as well as student rights, responsibilities and esteem (Sammons and Mortimore, 1997). Though governments and researchers may continue to focus on quantifying outcomes in terms of short-term improvement in student grades, that is simply

a case of preferring easier, measurable outcomes over longer-term less quantifiable measures of cognitive development or social contribution.

Associated with this is the issue of causality or reciprocity and the difficulties in proving that one factor can lead to another or whether factors feed of each other (Sammons et al., 1994). For example high expectations may enhance student achievement, which in turn promote high expectations for succeeding cohorts and therefore caution must be exercised in making simplistic claims of what leads to effectiveness or indeed, what effectiveness leads to.

Nevertheless, the concern for measurement does lead to a fourth issue; whether judgements about school effectiveness are based on all possible outcomes or just a subset of them (Scheerens and Bosker, 1997). If the latter, questions remain as to which should be chosen and by which stakeholders (Fertig, 2000, Scheerens and Bosker, 1997). Certainly, as Table 2 demonstrates, there is an extensive and comprehensive range of factors covered by the literature on effective schools and, as Scheerens (2005) and others have pointed out, there is some relativity or ambiguity in the interpretation of these factors. Consequently, it is unlikely that an organisation can focus on all of these at any one time, nor that the nuances of meaning held within individual values, such as interpretations of the terms 'expectation', 'standards', 'quality', 'collaboration', 'commitment', 'justice' can be quickly and effectively understood by all - especially in multi-cultural organisations - without deeper, more qualitative investigation. As already mentioned, there is also the complex interaction of factors to consider for example, how working on one factor, such as creating an orderly atmosphere, can impact on expectations of student progress and understandings of what constitutes high achievement.

Finally, it is argued that research into 'what works' in education, or the identification of factors that lead to effective schooling has often been targeted at the school level. However, the school may not be the appropriate unit of analysis. (Bennet and Harris, 2005, Scheerens, 2000). Research by Sammons *et al* (1997) demonstrates the existence of differential effectiveness within and across subject departments, emphasising its relativity,

whilst Harris and Hopkins (2000) have also highlighted differential effectiveness amongst teachers and the centrality of the classroom as the locus of change. Further, as Fidler (2005:55) writes, it may be too simplistic to simply state that this number of factors alone can lead to effective schooling; changes in a school's effectiveness may be due to a school's internal practices, changes in other schools' practices, a combination of the two or other factors. It is therefore more accurate to talk about the relative quality of factors that may be associated with effectiveness, relative to the organisational culture, practices, pressures to change (both internal to the organisation and external), leadership, and context within the wider socio-political and cultural milieu. Scheerens (2005) describes an integrated model that sees effective factors as relative or 'malleable' to the various levels of the organisation. The primary level is the school with foci on achievement, leadership, consensus, quality curricula, orderly atmosphere and evaluative potential. A second level is the classroom where effective factors include structured learning, opportunities to learn, high expectations of pupil progress and the degree or evaluation of student progress. However, Scheerens also regards inputs, such as teacher experience and parent support; outputs such as student achievement adjusted for previous achievement or intelligence; and composition and stimulants from higher administrative levels, as mediating the degree to which these factors can be effective.

Though criticisms of effectiveness can be levelled and answered, such dialectics are dependent on the epistemological and ontological positions of those making them (Fidler, 2005). These positions concern not only questions of who should be educated, how and for what purpose but also touch on how organisations are constructed (discussed above). For example, organisations can be seen as constructed and political phenomena (Busher, 2005a:78) and therefore, schools utilising and embedding effective frameworks may be simply following the agendas of people in central government, universities and schools who have been more successful (or powerful) in asserting their views than others. Notions of effectiveness are problematic in much the same way that concepts of leadership or quality or assessment are also problematic; personal values and perceptions influence interpretation and judgement; and resulting choices colour research aims and methodologies. In accepting this, it is acknowledged that multiple references for

effectiveness may lead to the organisation being pulled in many different directions simultaneously but the ability to ‘perceive the limitations of one’s own culture and to evolve the culture adaptively is the essence and ultimate challenge of leadership’ (Schein, 2004: 2). Nevertheless, there are sufficient overlapping features about what constitutes effective education at an international level to warrant further research of the literature and the development of a framework. Despite criticisms, the effectiveness movement has achieved significant progress in demonstrating that schools do make a difference to student learning, that effective schools are structurally and culturally more tightly linked than less effective ones and that teachers are important determinants of children’s educational and social achievements (Harris, 2005).

In summary, this chapter has explored two key ways to investigate organisations; how people can be organised; and how organisational cultures develop and maintain themselves. In doing so it has revealed that a rational or rational/ open model may be best suited to educational organisations in the sense that schools should be focused not only on goal orientation through formal hierarchies and structures (rational) but also on the relationships between for example, departments, teachers, and managers (open). However, the rational/open model, like a transactional/ transformational one, seems to be an uneasy blend in which tensions can arise across boundaries between the competing forces, for example the control of authority and the development of relationships; setting organisational goals and setting personal goals; or certainty of structure versus flexibility and adaptability. The positions that individuals or groups take along the continuum between the various poles effects the organisational dynamic and these effects may be heightened through the formation of sub-cultures and/ or divisions between roles such as teachers or administrators. At a departmental level such division is seen as a cause of ineffective schooling though the causal relationship is not always clear. Nevertheless, schools where outlooks, values and norms are widely shared have been viewed as effective organisations.

School effectiveness explores factors that may contribute to effective education relative to the cultural, environmental, socio-political and socio-economic context in which the school operates. Effectiveness is seen as a broad-based rather than nuanced approach

that provides quantitative data for reflection and decision-making (Bottery, 2005:155). Though what is effective can be variously defined and is dependent to a large degree on context, factors of effectiveness have remained consistent and in part, address issues of hierarchy and power outlined above; favouring collaborative and communal involvement and personal and professional growth within a goal oriented and evaluative framework. Therefore, they may be useful in exploring how distinct groups, such as lecturers and middle-leaders, view the actual and desired factors of their organisation. This is explored in the next chapter. Though the factors are generic and have a common-sense appeal, they should not be applied mechanically. Instead, ‘they should be viewed as a helpful starting point for school self-evaluation and review’ (Sammons et al., 1994:5). In other words, the factors of effectiveness employed in this research serve to develop a process of reflection in educational organisations and are not employed to deliver a verdict on institutional effectiveness. The 22 factors and associated criteria identified in Table 2 provide an extensive resource of material, drawn from both international and local contexts, from which a research instrument can be created. This is further discussed in the next chapter.

### **3. THE RATIONALE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN OMAN AND GAPS IN THE LITERATURE.**

#### **3.1 Rationale**

Empirical research into educational theory and practice in Oman is a recent phenomenon (Al-Lamki, 2006) and the current output negligible. However, the fact that there is little research does not infer that the *field* of educational research in the Omani context is negligible. Higher education is booming in Oman (Al-Lamki, 2006, Carroll, 2006) and across the region generally, most notably through private sector involvement (Al-Lamki, 2006). This is a result partly of increases in population generally, a swell of secondary school graduates, rising aspirations of parents and nationals (Coffman, 2003) and a perceived need to meet the ‘custodial needs of society’ (Al-Lamki, 2006: 55) for students unable to be absorbed into the labour force.

The rationale for this study is premised firstly on the pressing need to investigate what is happening within the emerging tertiary educational sector across all levels of policy and practice and to understand not only how approaches to teaching and learning are perceived and enacted in a fast-changing, multi-cultural, privatised sector, but also how such perceptions converge or diverge from research carried out in other contexts. Secondly, and intimately connected to the first point, to my knowledge there is no published research into school effectiveness in Oman and none that has looked at the perceptions of effectiveness held amongst predominantly multi-cultural staff in private higher education in Oman. This study therefore allows some small-scale exploratory research to be carried out that may provide the basis for further exploration.

### 3.2 Extant Research in Oman/ Arabian Gulf

Most research on educational leadership and school effectiveness has been carried out in the Anglophonic context of schools in US, Canada or UK. There are some exceptions in Europe, where effectiveness has been combined with improvement models, notably the Effective School Improvement Project (ESI) (Creemers and Reezigt, 2005, Reezigt and Creemers, 2005, Wikeley et al., 2005); and broadly in countries seen as developing (Fertig, 2000) or Third World (Riddell, 1995, cited in Harris, 2005:10).

Published research in education in Oman in any field is sparse although various areas have been recently touched upon, for example; policy analysis of private higher education (Al-Lamki, 2006), E-learning amongst university students (Al-Musawi and Abdelraheem, 2004); history and prospects of education in the country (El-Shibiny, 1997), ideology of English culture and language amongst non-native English-speaker teachers (Al-Issa, 2005a, 2005b), and the development of quality assurance (Al-Bandary, 2005, Carroll et al., 2009). However, there has been little empirical research. Outside of the educational field there have been attempts to exam Omani female attitudes towards leadership authority (Al-Lamki, 2007, Neal et al., 2005), the management of human resources (Al Hamadi et al., 2007) and an exploration of Omani employee value orientations (Aycan et al., 2007). Slightly more research has been published from Oman's neighbour, the United Arab Emirates. Again, most has focused on broad concerns such as; school management (Shaw

et al., 1995), prospects for higher education (Al Jassim, 1997, Bahgat, 2005), nationalisation and its effect on human resource management (Rees et al., 2007), faculty appraisal (Mercer, 2006), impact of state funding (Nicks-McCaleb, 2005), globalism, networking, and linguistic dualism (Findlow, 2001, 2005, 2006) or concerns of reflective practice in an Arab culture setting (Clarke and Otaky, 2006, Richardson, 2004) and pre-service teachers perceptions of Europe and Europeans (Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2005). Coffman (2003) has written more generally about higher education in the Gulf.

Wider still, there is significantly more literature derived from the fields of business and cross-cultural psychology that examine leadership from Arab or Middle-Eastern perspectives. Various frameworks exist for examining and comparing cultural values at a societal level and their influence on family, education, workplace and state (Hofstede, 2001, House et al., 2004, Inglehart and Baker, 2000, Schwartz, 2004, Trompenaars and Hamden-Turner, 1997, Walker and Dimmock, 2002). However, the majority of research relevant to the Gulf region draws on measures of societal culture derived from either the work of Geert Hofstede (Anwar and Chaker, 2003, Dedoussis, 2004, Hofstede, 2001, Wasti, 2003, Yousef, 2000) or the more recent work of the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) research programme (House et al., 2004) and associated works (Abdallah and Al Homoud, 2001, Blyton, 2001, Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002, Kabasakal and Dastmalchian, 2001). Such studies, which have origins in the field of cross-cultural psychology and are essentially quantitative, centre on the key issue of whether psychological processes can be seen as universal across cultures and convergent or culturally contingent and divergent (Cheung et al., 2006, Leung et al., 2005). This body of work is of limited value to this study for several reasons. Criticisms of these studies concern the homogenisation of diverse cultures (Blyton, 2001, Cheng, 2000, Holliday, 1999, Leung et al., 2005, Schaffer and Riordan, 2003, Walker and Dimmock, 2000); complex issues associated with data gathering, analysis and associated validity (Bond, 2002, Graen, 2006, House et al., 2006, Kirkman et al., 2006, Morrison, 2002, Peterson and Castro, 2006, Poortinga, 1989, Smith, 2006, Smith et al., 2006); shifts in values due to economic development (especially relevant for Gulf states) (Georgas et al., 2004, Hofstede, 1997, Inglehart and Baker, 2000, Inglehart et al., 1998, Smith et al., 2006); and

aggregation of findings to a nation level that ignores individual and organisational differences (Leung et al., 2005, Robertson et al., 2001, Smith et al., 2007). This last point underlines the importance of looking at educational institutions from different perspectives and emphasises the case for examining work-related issues on a smaller scale where differences between individuals or groups within and across organisations in specific contexts can be recognised (Leung et al., 2005) and explored.

## CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

### Overview

The previous chapter reviewed the literature and established a conceptual framework within which the current study can be operationalised. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the research questions may be best investigated. It is set out in the following parts:

1. An examination of the research strategy.
2. An exploration of the research design, i.e. a quantitative case study.
3. An exploration of the research methods i.e. focus groups and card sorts. This is followed by the presentation of a tool for mapping perspectives within the organisation.
4. Details of the data collection and analysis, re-presentation of the research questions, and descriptions of the sampling strategy, scheduling and operation of the research.
5. Reliability and validity issues.
6. Ethical issues.
7. A description of the pilot study.
8. Summary.

Before moving into the body of the chapter, it is worth reiterating the aims of the research: to explore perceptions about the effective organisation and management of teaching and learning in a Higher Education Institution in Oman, and the extent to which those perceptions converge with, or diverge from, core conceptions of effective schooling and educational practice derived from the literature. It is also worth emphasising that this is not a cross-cultural study. The purpose is not to compare an institution in Oman with an institution in England, nor, due to the multi-cultural staff typical of the region, is it comparing exclusively Omani perceptions of education, nor analysing the cultural roots of the perceptions held.

## **1. RESEARCH STRATEGY**

### **1.1 Choice of paradigm**

Research strategy refers to the general orientation of the conduct of the research (Bryman, 2004), that is to say, whether it aligns with positivist or interpretive paradigms. This research investigates the factors and associated criteria that are perceived as obstacles or enablers of organisational effectiveness. In other words, it looks at ‘what’ works, rather than ‘why’ it works (Harris, 2005). However, it should be stressed that ‘why’ people believe factor ‘A’ is more important than factor ‘B’ for an organisation, or indeed how ‘A’ might be differently interpreted by different individuals, groups or role-holders within the organisation is significant in gaining a complete picture of an organisation and that, ideally, a focus on the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ yields the most comprehensive data. The breadth of this study; research across three faculties and 36 staff members, means that there is a lack of depth in the interpretation of why people or groups promoted certain factors over others. Nevertheless, by allowing the research lens to focus on as wide an area as possible, at the expense of individual nuance, a wider variety of perceptions and patterns can be gathered leading to a better general understanding of the current state of the organisation (Lee, 2007). Specifically, the research aims to:

1. Provide data on the degree to which perceptions of lecturers and middle-leaders about the actual and desired organisational characteristics of a Higher Education Institution in Oman converge and/ or diverge with regard to the effective operation of teaching and learning processes within the institution.
2. Provide a methodological tool that other organisations might use to investigate staff perceptions of the organisation as part of a system of self-evaluation and review.

The general research focus and specific aims therefore guide the researcher into selecting a research strategy and methods that may best suit these purposes. A positivist approach such as that adopted here ‘implies a particular stance concerning the social scientist as an observer of social reality’ (Cohen et al., 2000:8). The end product of such

observation is analysis of that which can be quantified. In positivist educational research, students, teachers, administrators and other stakeholders become the objects of the research (Morrison, 2002) and only observable data, such as the ordering of statements utilised in this research, can be considered knowledge, and 'feelings' are ruled out as unobservable. Thus, knowledge is obtained through 'fact' gathering and these 'facts' can lead to theories about the research context and generalisations can be made that extend into similar research contexts. Positivists see themselves as standing outside the research context they investigate and therefore the research could be duplicated by others leading to similar conclusions (Morrison, 2002) (the generalisability of the findings is discussed below).

The influence of positivism on quantitative research has been considerable and has a number of key features (Morrison, 2002), of which four are examined here. Firstly, there is a link between concepts, observation and measurement. For example, what is viewed as effective educational practice may be defined differently, not only by individuals or groups within an organisation, but also across wider cultural and societal contexts. Therefore, although this research sets out a range of factors derived from the literature, how such factors are prioritised allows participants to shape them to the context and define the factors they see operating in the organisation currently, and those they wish the organisation to aspire to. By creating a set of statements and choosing an instrument such as a card sort (discussed below), the data is standardised and accessible to the researcher, though the pre-selection of factors and criteria is not without limitations (discussed below). The fragmentation and delimitation of phenomena i.e. factors and criteria of effectiveness, into measurable or common categories allows for the application of that phenomena to all of the subjects or wider and similar situations (Winter, 2000). In this case, the statements and collection of data through card sorts allows for other organisations to carry out similar research to aid their development, though possibly with differing results depending on how similar they are to this research site and when the research is undertaken.

Secondly, quantitative research is also interested in causality i.e. what makes a school 'effective' or 'ineffective', and how do we know if a school has become more or less 'effective'? This is problematic for the effectiveness movement as there are dangers in

interpreting correlations as evidence of causal mechanisms (Sammons et al., 1994) and ignoring reciprocal relationships. This snapshot does not forge links between cause, effect and reciprocity but quantifies the data so that processes of self-evaluation may move forward to further explore such issues across faculties and roles.

A third factor is an interest in generalisation. By focusing on the representativeness of sample populations, the researcher may be able to claim that the same research carried out in the same contexts with the same samples would produce the same results, though for Yin (2003:37), commenting on case studies, this is phrased as whether the research *can* be replicated rather than whether it *is*. In this research, the participants are brought together in one place at one time. It is unlikely that a week later they would give exactly the same data because personal and professional contexts change daily. Thus, the findings are not generalisable in the sense that the case study is bounded in space and time (discussed in Section 2.1, below). This means the findings can apply only to what people believed were the factors of effectiveness characterising the organisation, and those they aspired for the organisation, on the particular day of the data collection and within the contextual boundaries of the organisation existing at that time. As such they are not transferable to other institutions. However, a case study is also a single example of a broader class of things (Denscombe, 2008). In this case, MUC is one of a number of private HEIs in Muscat with multi-national staff offering degree courses through affiliated universities. The applicability of the findings to the broader class thus depends on the extent to which any other institution shares similar features with MUC such as size, staff demographics, subjects taught, institutional management structure, external links to UK universities, links to national and international quality processes, or condition and range of facilities.

Finally, there is an emphasis on the individual as the object of the research with an aggregation of individualised data providing an overall picture. For example, a questionnaire asking 50 female teachers and 50 male teachers to prioritise key factors of successful classroom practice could be aggregated to give summative feedback on the three key factors identified by females, and those identified by males. In this case 22 lecturers and 14 middle-leaders were researched across three faculties, resulting in the identification

of one more-characteristic factor, one less -characteristic, two more-desired and one less-desired characteristic on which all lecturer groups agreed and two more-characteristic, two less characteristics and two more-desired characteristics on which all middle-leader groups agreed.

In contrast to the paradigm chosen, the interpretive paradigm holds that the role of social science is to discover how different people interpret the world (Bush, 2003, Cohen et al., 2000). As a result, universal objectivity does not exist and consequently human behaviour cannot be measured quantitatively (Morrison, 2002). Qualitative research, located broadly but not exclusively in the interpretive paradigm (Bryman, 2004), focuses on perceptions of individuals and consequent concerns with meanings or interpretations placed on events by participants (Bush, 2003, Morrison, 2002). It explores the 'why' of human action and thought. Objectivity, implying neutrality and detachment is not possible in such a context (Gunter, 2005, Shah, 2004). For Gunter (2005:176), the researcher is located in power structures that impact on relationships with others. However, such relationships are not confined to the selfhood of the researcher alone and how he or she relates to the researched. It is also claimed that those researched cannot be studied without account being taken of the physical, cultural and social milieus they inhabit and the consequent effects of these on behaviour (Shah, 2006, Smith et al., 2006).

This researcher does not disparage the interpretive paradigm, but the current small-scale and resource-limited research project is targeted at uncovering the perceptions of 36 individuals across the organisation with the hope that the process and findings will aid the process of broad organisational self-evaluation and review. It does this at the expense of deeper explorations that are suited to uncovering the thinking behind the prioritising of the cards and how such statements are interpreted. It is also recognised that a mixed methods approach to research in the social sciences and education involving both qualitative and quantitative methods is valid and appropriate (Blyton, 2001, House et al., 2004, MacBeath et al., 1995, Thomas, 2007). Although this research relies on quantitative data, it foresees further interpretive investigation being carried out within organisations to get at the fine-grained and nuanced meaning of participant responses. Indeed, there is a call for the 'what'

of school effectiveness to be more closely linked to the 'how' and 'why' of school improvement (Harris, 2005, Reynolds, 2005).

## **2. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design refers to the framework for the collection and analysis and data and therefore reflects decisions about what sort of data is being collected, how prioritised, and how analysed (Bryman, 2004:543).

### **2.1 Case Study**

The case study approach was chosen for this research as, although case studies can be variously defined and operationalised, there appear to be some identifiable generic characteristics (Luck et al., 2006). Firstly, case studies are empirical in the sense that they start with the collection of data and investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Bassey, 2002, Yin, 2003) that is to say within the institution studied rather than in the laboratory. This research focuses on perceptions of effectiveness amongst lecturers and middle-leaders and was undertaken within in the college setting. Secondly, a case study is bounded by place, time, event or activity (Bassey, 2002, Creswell, 2003, Luck et al., 2006). In other words, the study focuses on a particular location (e.g. a college of higher education in Oman), a particular time (e.g. a particular spot in the cycle of organisational change, or a period of time when the collection of data is performed), or a particular activity such as recording factors seen as enabling or inhibiting organisational effectiveness. A single site was chosen for two reasons; firstly, it was felt that gathering and analysing data from 36 participants across three faculties and two roles within a single organisation was a large enough task for this small-scale research given the constraints of time and resources available. Secondly, there were few other alternatives at the time; the initial site selected had turned down the previously approved research project on the appointment of a new Dean and though two other suitable colleges (suitable in terms of location, staff mix and numbers, and availability) had come forward one had been used as a pilot site (discussed further below).

Traditionally, case studies are seen as useful when the contextual conditions of the research are deemed relevant or interesting, allowing for the investigation and reporting of the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance (Cohen et al., 2000), and are therefore particularly suited to the interpretive paradigm. However, in a recent article Luck et al (2006:103) argue that case studies offer ‘as yet, under-explored and underutilised potential as a bridge across the traditional research paradigms’ and that it has ‘broad research application and epistemological, ontological and methodological flexibility’. To describe this in detail, Luck et al (2006:104, citing Ragin, 1992) offer a four cell ‘conceptual dichotomy’ of what is a case. The first part of the dichotomy asks whether a case has either empirical units or theoretical constructs and the second part asks whether these are either general or specific. With regard to the first part, a case is either empirical and realist or theoretical and abstract. Cases that are empirical, real and bounded are cases that are ‘found’ or cases that are ‘objects’. For example, a case within an educational institution such as MUC, is bounded geographically and structurally and is therefore an ‘object’ whereas a case in which definitions are uncovered through participants is ‘found’. The second part of the dichotomy relates to case categories which are defined by the process of the research or its products and how they develop and emerge (cases are ‘found’ or cases are ‘made’) and are thus considered specific. Alternatively, as in this study, case categories may be pre-existing or generic units (i.e. lecturer and middle-leader groups within a distinct Higher Education setting) and therefore the case is an object. Though contested (Luck et al., 2006, Yin, 2003), it is important that the researcher identifies what the case is a ‘case of’. Taking the above into account and the Omani contexts outlined in Chapter 1 (specifically the description of Muscat University College), it can be stated that this is a case of how lecturers and middle-leaders from three faculties in a private Higher Education Institution in Oman perceive factors of effectiveness as potentially enabling or hindering the organisation of people in ways that enhance the management of teaching and learning processes. It is operationalised through focus groups and the collection of quantitative data (described below) and provides a picture drawing or descriptive account that draws together the results of the exploration from a particular place and time and analyses the data (Bassey, 2002).

In essence, Luck et al (2006:105) argue that ‘there is a place for both qualitative and quantitative approaches’ to case study design and that research methods are chosen with thought to the nature of the case and the research questions. Yin (2003:14) supports this assertion when stating that case studies (such as this one) ‘can include and even be limited to quantitative evidence’ and need not include direct, detailed observations as a source of evidence.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

#### 3.1 Focus Groups

As a response to the above, focus groups were chosen as an appropriate methodology to partner case study. Though broadly located within the interpretative research paradigm (Thomas, 2008), there is a body of literature to support their use in quantitative or positivist studies (Gibbs, 1997, House et al., 2004, Kitzinger, 1995, Morgan, 1996). Regardless of paradigm, the key elements of focus groups are:

- They are a research method devoted to data collection (Anderson, 1998, Kitzinger, 1995, Morgan, 1996)
- They are a group of individuals selected by the researcher (Anderson, 1998, Cohen et al., 2000, Stokes and Bergin, 2006)
- They explicitly locate the interaction within a group discussion as the source of the research data, (Boddy, 2005, Cohen et al., 2000, Creswell, 2003, Kitzinger, 1995, Morgan, 1996, Parker and Tritter, 2006, Winslow et al., 2002).
- They acknowledge the researcher’s active role in creating the group discussion for data collection purposes (Morgan, 1996, Parker and Tritter, 2006)

Boddy describes a focus group as:

a group of people brought together to participate in the discussion of interest. The focus group discussion aims to provide an environment in which all members of the group can discuss the area of investigation with each other .....they may argue with each other, try to persuade each other of their point of view, agree or disagree, ask

each other questions and generally discuss the topic in an open and friendly way. This results in a broad breadth of discussion as well as discussion in depth. The direction of interaction is between each group participant (including the moderator) and each of the other group participants individually or collectively (Boddy, 2005:251).

In other words, focus groups emphasise participation, supportive environments, discussion, and interaction between all members yet allow the researcher to gain access to a large number of participants economically.

The role of the researcher in the focus group is a critical issue. Morgan (1996) differentiates between researcher involvement with high degrees of control or 'structure' and ones with less 'structure' or 'minimalist' control, as does Wilson(1997). In the former, not only is control exercised as to what questions are asked or topics discussed but also the extent to which participants interact and even where they are seated. In contrast, situations with less structure allow groups to pursue their own interests, the researcher thereby moderating rather than controlling group members. An extreme example of this may see the moderator seated separately from the participants without intervening in the proceedings (Morgan, 1996). Mixed approaches might initially see the researcher taking a back seat in the group discussion before later on adopting a more interventionist style by urging debate and picking up on inconsistencies (Kitzinger, 1995) or the moderator may do most of the initial talking before allowing participants to more freely discuss what they want to in the second half of the session (Winslow et al., 2002). Wilson (1997) notes another case in which the moderator leads the discussion through use of a topic guide that focuses on research topics allowing participants to build on each other's contributions, maximising focus on group interaction and research questions. Hobby (2004:17) appears to use 'facilitators' simply to give instructions about how the groups should operate but other than that, they do not appear to be further involved.

This research adopted approaches used by Hobby (2004) and Winslow (2002) in that the facilitator is unobtrusive and card statements are used rather than a topic guide to

facilitate data gathering. The focus groups were set up by dividing participants into lecturers and middle-leaders from three faculties, with each role and group in a distinct group e.g. Group A was made up of middle-leaders from the Faculty of Arts, Group D lecturers from the Faculty of Business. Each group was provided with a standardised set of cards and grids to mark down where they would place the cards. In this sense the focus groups were structured and controlled. However, the groups were then left to achieve the task in whatever way they thought appropriate, the researcher moving between groups and facilitating only if questions about process were asked. For example, a group enquired whether they had to use all the cards, or whether they could place more than the designated number on a given line. Such an approach has benefits in that the card statements and record sheets guide participants into fulfilling the research aim yet the moderator is unobtrusive and distant. This distancing also allows the groups to behave more naturally when engaging in the tasks and participants were observed sitting on tables, joking with each other, appointing leaders, and distributing tasks.

Although focus group research often leads to the researcher making field notes relating to how participants interact with each other in order to understand not only what they think, but why they think the way they do (Denscombe, 2008), this need not necessarily be the case. Focus groups are participant-centred, not just so that the researcher can eavesdrop on what is being said but also because the interaction between members is intrinsic to them exploring the issues, coming to a consensus and feeling comfortable within the research setting. The works of both Hobby (2004) and MacBeath et al (1995) (further discussed below) both adopt this approach, eschewing recording and interpretation of group interaction in favour of the end product such as prioritised statements. In this research, the focus is on gathering data from the groups using pre-determined statements on cards (a form of topic guide), rather than an analysis, valuable though that may be, of how group members interact or how the card statements are variously interpreted. In other words, focus groups are used to *encourage* the engagement of respondents in the data-gathering process but the nature of that engagement is not in itself used as a source of data in terms that feed into the analysis. This has precedence: for example, Kitzinger (1995) states that a common exercise in focus groups is to present participants with a series of

statements on cards which the group members are asked *collectively* to sort into different categories.

The collaborative nature of the focus group offers another advantage; it becomes part of the organisational process of self-evaluation, encouraging the development of relationships amongst staff, collaborative power sharing, and an involvement in organisational processes away from the classroom; all factors seen as contributing to effective organisations. However, there may be a downside to this in that the naturalistic setting may mask underlying issues such as ‘groupthink’ (Dreachslin, 1999) or consensus (Barbour, 2005, Bryman, 2004) whereby outward conformity of view reflects emerging group interaction rather than individual opinion. Though genuine consensus and identification with the group is not problematic, respondents who publicly agree to the views of others whilst privately disagreeing, potentially limit viability of the study and the aggregation of individual perspectives to a group level (Stokes and Bergin, 2006). Conversely, Morgan (1996) claims that far from achieving consensus, participants’ attitudes may polarise, becoming more extreme after the focus group discussion, and giving rise to ethical concerns about the methodology (Busher, 2002) (further discussed below).

It was inevitable that the participants chosen for this research to some extent knew each other as the sample is drawn from specific faculties and roles within a relatively small organisation (see Sampling, below). Though people who know each other are not always used together in focus groups as participants may feel less need to express in sessions what has already been expressed elsewhere (Bryman, 2004), it is felt that a low-threat setting of friends and colleagues gathered together in a familiar setting has advantages as these ‘pre-existing’ groups (Kitzinger, 1995) are likely to act more naturally than artificially ones.

### 3.2. Card sorts

Once focus groups have been chosen as the preferred methodology, it is necessary next to ask how data can best be collected efficiently and in a uniform manner to ensure not only reliability and validity within this study but also bearing in mind the desire that other organisations be able to use the same tools as a simple, economic yet effective way to

review organisational structure and outcomes relevant to teaching and learning processes. There was a further desire for the collection activity to be compatible with the focus group methodology in that there should be an emphasis on participation and discussion amongst the participants. By providing a series of statements that needed to be prioritised, the card sort generated the necessary interaction and discussion amongst participants to justify its use and allowed for the researcher to be unobtrusive.

Card sorts originate in Kelly's Personal Construct Theory of the 1950s (Fincher and Tenenborg, 2005, Rugg and McGeorge, 2005). This holds that though people categorize the world differently, there is enough commonality for us to understand each other but also enough differences to allow us to retain individuality. People who share categories for making sense of their world are able to cohere on a day-to-day basis in social groupings including organisational cultures or sub-cultures, whilst retaining enough individuality to allow membership of different groups simultaneously or permit movement between groups. Thus, it may be useful for the researcher to attempt to tap into the categorisations that people make, such as whether an organisation is deemed effective or not by groups of lecturers and middle-leaders.

The basic premise behind card sorts is a simple one; asking respondents to sort objects, pictures or cards into groups or categories (Rugg and McGeorge, 2005) thus allowing for the quantification of standardised data. However, various strategies exist and Rugg and McGeorge (2005) identify four types of card sort; Q sorts; hierarchical sorts; all-in-one sorts; and repeated criterion sorts. In addition sorts may be 'open' or 'closed'. This research uses a closed Q sort. Q-sorts consist of a number of cards, each of which carries a different statement or phrase, in this case factors of effectiveness derived from the literature. Participants are asked to sort the cards according to a distribution pattern devised and communicated by the researcher (discussed below). Notably, it is usual for a few cards to be placed at each end of the distribution pattern and for most cards to be placed around the middle of the distribution scale (Rugg and McGeorge, 2005:96). The sort is also 'closed' in that the participants are constrained (Fincher and Tenenborg, 2005) by having to sort factors that have been pre-selected by the researcher into preordained categories

(Wopereis et al., 2005), for example, as in this research; more/ less characteristic or more/less desired.

Two examples of card sort activities in education are pertinent to this research. The first relates to the work of Russell Hobby (2004) on behalf of Hay Group Management. This large-scale research involved 4000 teachers in 134 different primary, secondary and special education schools in the UK. In order to discover what beliefs and values teachers held, Hobby devised a card sort exercise specifically aimed at educational contexts and drawing on the school effectiveness and improvement literature. Fifteen categories of culture were identified and then two statements were drawn up resulting in thirty statements reflecting polarised ends of the fifteen factors. Where possible, groups were formed of between three and ten participants of people in similar roles. Respondents, drawn from teachers, subject leaders, senior leaders, and support staff were then asked to place the cards, bearing 30 statements (examples given below in Table 3.) within a diamond-shaped framework with one at the bottom, two on the second row, three on the third, and so on.

**Table 3: Examples of card Statements (drawn from Hobby, 2004)**

Measuring and monitoring targets and test results	Respecting professional autonomy – creating a space to call your own – perfecting your patch	Experimenting – trying new things – looking to the next big idea	A hunger for improvement – high hopes and expectations	Creating opportunities for everyone – widening horizons – fighting injustice
Raising capability – helping people learn – laying foundations for later success	Working together – learning from each other – sharing resources and ideas – investing in others	Preventing mistakes – making sure nobody and nothing slips through – planning for all eventualities	Investing time with those who can achieve most	Creating a pleasant and collegial working environment

The second example of a relevant card sort activity is drawn from the work of MacBeath et al (1995). In a study commissioned by the National Union of Teachers, the researchers set out to examine and ‘develop, in partnership with schools, a user-friendly but rigorous framework for school self-evaluation’ (MacBeath et al., 1995:1). Ten schools (six primary, three secondary, one special) were researched in England and Wales in 1995 with responses drawn from 638 participants at teacher, manager, support staff, pupil, parent, and governor levels. A set of 23 criteria was created from the OFSTED Framework for School Inspection. Each criterion was placed on a card (see examples in Table 4) and respondents were asked to identify and agree, in small groups, the five criteria they regarded as most important, and the three they regarded as least important.

**Table 4: Examples of Card Statements (drawn from Macbeath, 1995)**

Pupils behave well in and around the school	Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils	Pupils with special needs achieve targets set in their individual plan	Moral principles such as justice are promoted	Pupil progress is monitored and feedback given
Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and show initiative	Roles of senior management, governors and staff are clearly understood	The curriculum complies with national guidelines	Classes are well managed	The standard of pupils work is challenging

The simplicity of the design and approach allowed the same questions to be put to each school and each category of respondents and further created a practical and manageable model that the school itself could use. Moreover, having individual cards ‘allowed people to physically lift and rearrange cards as a way of expressing their view. This defocusing away from face to face discussion allowed the more inhibited and less articulate to participate and to think aloud in a more spontaneous, reflective and less formal way’ (MacBeath et al., 1995:58). This statement underlines the compatibility of card-sorts

with focus groups, the combination allowing for the collection of quantitative data through shared, supportive, and naturalistic media.

The advantages of card sorts are several. Firstly, they are seen as participant focused rather than researcher focused (Sanders et al., 2005) allowing a great deal of freedom to the researched in their tolerance of individual perspective and difference, and in the manner they advantage the expression and sharing of information across individuals and groups. Secondly, they are quick, systematic and easy for researchers and participants to use (Fincher and Tenenbun, 2005, Rugg and McGeorge, 2005) with the additional benefit that 'closed' sorts, such as utilised here, allow for comparison across correspondents and constituencies (MacBeath et al., 1995, Rugg and McGeorge, 2005). Thirdly, they can be used with large and diverse participant groups and are not compromised by different variables such as age, gender or institution (Sanders et al., 2005). Thus, card sorts model a process that educational organisations can use themselves to further gather data quickly and effectively from a wide range of stakeholders and across a broad range of issues using standardised language and processes. As a result, educational organisations may better understand their constituents, guide practice forward, and provide new opportunities for how organisational members perceive the organisations in which they work.

However, the advantages that card sorts offer for the collection of data also bring disadvantages of which the researcher must be aware. In making the sort activity participant-centred the researcher loses a degree of control over events. As with focus groups, individuals within the groups may dominate proceedings, insisting for example, that a card should be interpreted in a certain way or should go in a certain place at the expense of the views of other less dominant members. This may mirror formal or informal power hierarchies outside the research setting, as was the case in the Pilot Study (see Chapter 3, Section 7). Consequently, as was the case here, reducing the possibility of undue influence can be made by separating hierarchical roles, keeping the groups small and by each faculty group carrying out the sort in isolation, though it is probably impossible to fully isolate an individual from the cultural collective in which they live and work.

However, limitations also arise from the way card sorts have been used in this research and in particular the use of pre-constructed statements and their interpretation, number and overlap. Firstly, like questionnaires, statements pre-constructed by the researcher and brought into the research site may not be appropriate for that context at that time. For example, organisational members may have particular views on what is effective or not for their organisation that are not covered by the supplied statements. This was partly the case with the pilot study (see below) and adjustments were made to the statements but that does not mean that those adjustments are applicable to another context. However, if an open sort had been used in which participants build up their own factors, criteria and dimensions of effectiveness (Fincher and Tenenbun, 2005), it might have proven harder to link these to a conceptual framework or to establish standardisation across groups and faculties, thereby threatening the usefulness of the exercise. Secondly, in this investigation, as with those of Hobby (2004) and MacBeath et al (1995), the data gathered is a reflection of surface-level perceptions across a wide range of stakeholders. As such, it is not possible to know if everyone has interpreted terms such as ‘collegial’, ‘success’, moral principles’ or ‘challenging’ in similar or constant ways. Thirdly, summarising the wide-ranging literature into 16 factors and 32 associated criteria took selection and compression, inevitably not all factors identified in Table 2 made it to the cards as discrete items (see 3.3. below), or were concisely and accurately contained within the statements. Thus, the activity was limited by practicalities of time and effort available to researcher and researched alike. These issues are returned to in Chapter 5.

### 3.3. A tool for mapping staff perceptions of factors enabling or inhibiting the effective organisation of people and the enhancement of student outcomes.

From the literature discussed in Chapter 2, the derived conceptual framework illustrated in Table 2, and as a partial response to the contextualisation of the pilot study (see below) a set of statements is presented (Table 5) in a form that lends itself to use in focus group and card sort research.

The core dimensions in column 1 are taken from Table 2 above. The 16 factors in the middle column are derived from Table 2 as being relevant to effective educational practice at theoretical and practical levels. Some factor labels have been changed or adapted as criteria have been separated out to highlight key concepts, or subsumed/ combined with similar items. This produces a manageable instrument in terms of operationalisation and analysis, though some fine-graining is lost. The changes are highlighted as follows:

- The factor ‘Resources’ (Table 2) as related to those resources necessary for professional development, is contained within the ‘Professional Development (Staff) and those relating to the pastoral care of students are subsumed under ‘Support/ Social Justice’ (Table 5). Those related to the physical conditions of the institution are covered under ‘Environment’.
- ‘Leadership’ (Table 2) is covered explicitly under ‘Collaboration’ in Table 5 but the processes of leadership underlie all the factors.
- ‘Service’- students come first - (Table 2) is considered under ‘Focus’ (Table 5), and ‘Service’ - notions of ‘climate’ and ‘orderly atmosphere’ - under ‘Environment’ (Table 5).
- ‘Professional & Personal Development’ – ‘define standards of practice at national/ international level’ - (Table 2) is subsumed under ‘Accountability’ (Table 5); - ‘Commit to staff development and in-service training’ - (Table 2) is incorporated into ‘Professional Development’ (Table 5); - ‘Provide incentives and structures to promote changes’ - comes under ‘Risk’.
- ‘Relationships’ - Developing Community (Students) - (Table 2) is subsumed into ‘Social Justice’

The paired criteria statements in Column 3 reflect these factors. As stated previously, the statements are overlapping and integrated; for example, leadership is inevitably contained in the way many of the factors or criteria may be enacted within the school setting; relationships between students and staff and across departments inevitably touch on issues of collaboration, quality learning and environment. Tighter definition beyond a certain point leads to prescription or forcing participants to think as the researcher does

**Table 5: Dimensions, Factors and Criteria of Effectiveness**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Criteria (Card Statement)</b>
<b>Organisational development.</b>	Time	Time is flexible – Allowance is made for delay and personal circumstance – Toleration and flexibility
		People have sufficient time to consult on and carry out change – People are accountable for deadlines and production
	Expectations of success	The atmosphere is easy going and pleasant – Doing what we can – Safety and security for students and staff
		High performance is expected from students and staff – Desire for excellence – World class
	Risk	Check routine decisions with superiors – Avoid risk taking – Protect oneself
		There is support for innovation & initiative. Take risks – Be proactive
	Account-ability	Standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers and managers are judged by professionals within the organisation
		Standards of acceptable practice of students, teachers and staff are judged by national/ international standards.
	Planning	Goals are fluid and flexible – there is no point planning too far ahead.
		Clear and achievable goals/ objectives for the future have been set and communicated.
	Collaboration	Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment
		Formal and informal leaders work with and through others to set and achieve organisational goals and vision

<b>People Development (Staff)</b>	Excellence	Inside knowledge of the organisation, the needs of students, staff and other stakeholders is key. We know what's best. 'Outsiders' can offer little.
		Knowledge from outside the organisation can offer new insights, help develop excellence and lead to us being the model for others.
	Professional Development	Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development - Resource allocation tied to organisational 'needs' and targeted personnel.
		Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development – inclusion for all.
	Relationships	Different groups look for detachment and autonomy – Best ideas come from within the group
		Mutual caring and trust within and across areas – openness to ideas – Respect for difference – Commitment to change
	Innovation	Evaluate existing work – Embed new ideas – Let's see how things work
		Experiment – Try new things – organisational members are committed to change
	Support/ Social Justice	Self-reliance – Create your own space – Do your job
		There is always someone there to help – Invest time to widen horizons - Fight injustice
	Environment	The working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff.
		The working environment enhances performance of students, teachers and staff

<b>People Development (Students)</b>	Quality Learning	Get students through the tests – Monitor output – Supervise students closely
		Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students – Develop input – Promote independence
	Social Justice	Focus attention and resources on disadvantaged groups of students – Varying standards – Help those in need.
		Attention and resources are divided equally amongst students – Advantaged and disadvantaged – Consistent standards for all
	Focus	Focus on management and control of teaching and learning – The organisation comes first
		Student and curriculum focused – Students come first
<b>Community Development</b>	Inclusion	The organisation is largely self-contained. Little or no contact with non-academic community of parents, employers, alumni etc. Any contact managed through official hierarchical channels and documentation
		The organisation is part of a wider, local, non-academic community and seeks input from parents, employers, government, alumni etc in many areas

Such prescription raises issues of researcher power and control and the ability to define and shape events to meet research ends and account only for the researcher’s own value system.

The resulting 32 statements impact on how participants can record the data. With 30 cards, as used by Hobby (2004), the diamond shape is easily filled with one card on row one, two on two, three on three, four on four, five on five and then descending to one again at the opposite tip. With thirty-two cards this pattern is not possible. However, rather than drop two statements to simply fit a neat diamond pattern, the record sheet was amended (see Appendix 1). Two cards could now be placed at each tip (rows 1 and 10), three cards each on rows 2, 3, 8, and 9; and four cards on rows 4, 5, 6, and 7. This pattern generates some advantages over the Hobby model in that participants still have to prioritise but can

be less refined or artificially constrained. Further, in focussing analysis on the first and last three rows, 16 cards or 50% of the total now come under close scrutiny as opposed to only 25% in Hobby's model.

Hobby (2004) scaled his continuum as 'most characteristic/ least characteristic' for the actual culture and 'most important/ least important' for the idealised culture. However, following piloting feedback, this study applied a subtle change; 'more-characteristic/ less-characteristic' and 'more desirable/ less desirable' as it was felt strongly that the poles should not be absolutes but degrees of difference reflecting also the relativity and malleability of effectiveness factors (Scheerens, 2000) and the fact that there may be more extreme factors that influence the effectiveness of a school such as poor weather or natural disasters, fire in the school, transport strikes, or (as is sometimes the case in Oman), the number of national holidays given in a semester.

MacBeath et al (1995) developed cards using criteria drawn from OFSTED criteria for school inspection and were thus all framed positively, whereas Hobby (2004) saw the paired value statements as opposite poles. In this study, rather than positive or negative poles of the factors expressed as different values, the statements may be seen theoretically as characteristic or desirable depending on the current positioning of the organisation within a cycle of change and development. They are therefore a reflection of a particular time and place rather than a universal, again highlighting their relativity (Scheerens, 2000) and contextuality (Sammons et al., 1994). Consequently, an attempt has been made to present the statements as neutrally as possible, though it is recognised that such neutrality is subjective. Views of what is a positive or negative factor can shift; for example, continuous and dramatic change is unlikely to bring permanent benefit; stability may lead to stagnation. Individuals or groups may see the organisation operating in contradictory ways at different times or see links between statements that others do not. As an example of this, the two statements 'focus on management and control of teaching and learning – the organisation comes first' and 'student and curriculum focused – students come first' may seem to contradict each other in that one appears a top-down process and the latter bottom-up, but in the pilot study, one group of participants placed the statements side by side as

reflecting the current organisational culture. This seeming anomaly was explained as the organisation controlling the management and teaching in order to put students first. As perceived by those participants, the two statements were therefore complimentary.

This study examines 36 participants in three faculties at one HEI in Oman and is not large in scale compared to Hobby (2004) or MacBeath et al (1995). Nevertheless, 36 participants is a large number for the single researcher, and the resulting data provides a quantitative measurement of how a wide spectrum of organisational members see the organisation as it currently is and as they would like it to be.

## **4. DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Collection**

The card-sort activity administered to participants in this research consisted of 32 statements describing 16 factors derived from a review of the literature of effective education (Table 5). Each statement and its number were printed on a separate card and participants were asked to arrange the cards twice; first as a reflection of the groups perception of the current characteristics of the existing organisation (As Is) from 'more-characteristic' to 'less-characteristic'; and secondly as a reflection of the desired characteristics of the organisation from 'more-desired' to 'less-desired' (Should Be). As seen from Appendix 1, the record sheet was set out as a rough diamond with 2 cards on row 1; 3 cards on row 2 and 3; 4 cards on rows 4-7; 3 cards on row 8 and 9; and 2 cards on row 10. Factor statements that are placed on rows with a lower numerical value are seen as more-characteristic or more-desired whereas those on higher-numbered rows are seen as less-characteristic or less-desirable. For example, (as can be seen from Appendix 7a) Business middle-leaders placed card number 4 'High performance is expected from students and staff – Desire for excellence – World Class' in row number 1. This means they see this value as highly characteristic of the current organisation. In contrast, Arts lecturers placed card 18; 'Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments – Openness to ideas – Respect for difference – Commitment to change' in row number 10 (Appendix 3a), showing that they believe this factor is less-characteristic of the organisation as it is.

## 4.2 Analysis

One way to analyse card sort data is through semantic methods (Fincher and Tenenbourg, 2005, Rugg and McGeorge, 2005) i.e. interpretative judgements by individual researchers on the meanings of respondent utterances or categorisations. However, Fincher and Tenenbourg (2005:90) make the important point that though interpretative analysis of card sort data can provide rich insights, it requires a correspondingly high investment of time and scrutiny. As an alternative, quantitative approaches can also be used and are favoured in this thesis. This has precedence; MacBeath et al (1995), analysed their data through simple weighting i.e. taking any single selection of a card as a percentage of all selections by a group. For example, if 13 groups selected the same card 13 times then it would have a 100% score. Hobby (2004:24) calculated the average row in which each card was placed in each school (itself the average of where each group placed the card). For example, if Group 1 placed a card on row three and Group 2 placed the same card on row one, then the average position for that card is two.

Data was analysed in the following way. Each of the six focus groups (one of lecturers, one of middle-leaders, for each of the three faculties) produced two card-sort record sheets; one for the organisation 'As Is' and one for the organisation 'Should Be'. Thus, a total of 12 record sheets (Appendices 3a – 8b) were produced. The top eight and bottom eight cards are of most interest to the researcher. In order to gain a concise understanding of the data and for the sake of both brevity and clarity, two main tactics were used. Firstly, particular emphasis was laid on cards that are repeated across sorts i.e. statements seen as either more-characteristic *and* more-desired; or more-characteristic *and* less-desired; or less-characteristic *and* more-desired; or less-characteristic *and* less-desired. For example, if 'Students come first' is placed in the more-characteristic sort, it can only be seen as more characteristic of the organisation. If it is also placed in the less-desired sort, it can be concluded that it is perceived as a negative influence on organisational effectiveness; if it is placed in the more-desired quadrant; a positive one, and so on. A second tactic was to look for the placing of statements that may demonstrate juxtaposition. For example, 'Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment' may be placed in the more-characteristic sort. However,

‘Formal and informal leaders work with and through others to set and achieve organisational goals and vision’ may have been placed in the more-desired sort. Thus, the former can be taken as having a negative effect on organisational effectiveness and the latter a positive one, though such juxtapositioning should be treated cautiously, as in the pilot study, as it may not always be clear exactly how various terms are interpreted. Nevertheless, in this way, the more/ less-characteristic ‘As Is’ and more/less-desired ‘Should Be’ data for the Arts lecturers’ focus group is described. This is repeated for the Faculty of Business and Faculty of Information Technology lecturer focus groups. The findings for each group are then compared to each other and significant areas of consensus described. Significant here is taken as a minimum of two out of three (66%) lecturer focus groups agreeing on whether a statement is more/ less-characteristic or more/ less-desired. This model of analysis has precedence in the recent work of Parkes and Thomas (2007:217) who, when investigating effective values in principals in Australia, claimed congruence when three out of the five principals (60%) identified the same value. This process was repeated for each middle-leader focus group.

The next analysis then explores the extent to which the findings from lecturer and middle-leader groups significantly converge at characteristic and desirable levels. Significant here is taken as five (83%) or more of the six focus groups being in agreement as to how they rate a factor for the organisation on either more/ less-characteristic or more/ less-desired dimensions. The result is a picture of how lecturers and middle-leaders perceive the organisation as it is, and how they desire it to be, as measured through statements illustrative of effective educational practice. These sessions provided a large amount of data economically, presented in a consistent format and language across groups.

The Hobby study aggregated the findings from 134 schools through an averaging out of the row position of each card and the performance of a one-way ANOVA statistical analysis and post-hoc Bonferroni test to identify cards that were statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) Hobby (2004:39). MacBeath et al (1995) weighted the responses to account for group size. In contrast, this research does not average the position of the cards but rather examines the placing of the top eight and bottom eight cards for each group. The

researcher's concern is not to aggregate findings to a nation level but to investigate and interpret factors and criteria held at role levels within a single organisation. However, a statistical analysis may reveal something about those cards that lie in the middle, largely unexplored rows and also the relationship between clusters of cards within and across faculties. This is an area for future research.

#### 4.3 Research questions

The outputs of the case study research can be seen as a series of snapshots that contextualise the organisation at a particular time and place and answer the research questions:

1. What putative characteristics of effective organisations (as suggested by the literature) do lecturers say are currently in evidence in Muscat University College?
2. Which putative characteristics of effective organisations do lecturers wish the organisation to aspire to?
3. What putative characteristics of effective organisations (as suggested by the literature) do middle-leaders say are currently in evidence in Muscat University College?
4. Which putative characteristics of effective organisations do middle-leaders wish the organisation to aspire to?
5. To what extent do the perceptions of lecturers from three different faculties (Arts, Business, and Information Technology) converge or diverge with regard to the current and desired organisational characteristics?
6. To what extent do the perceptions of middle-leaders from three different faculties (Arts, Business, and Information Technology) converge or diverge with regard to the current and desired organisational characteristics?
7. To what extent do the perceptions of lecturers and middle-leaders in those three faculties converge and/ or diverge with regard to the current and desired organisational characteristics?

#### 4.4. Sampling

The original research site – a faculty in a university in Oman- was selected in 2006 and the research proposal accepted by the then Dean. However, on the appointment of a new Dean in January 2007, the research project was vetoed. Two private HEIs in Oman then offered to host the research; the first had hosted the pilot project (see below) but it was felt that this, and the consultancy work additionally undertaken by the researcher at the college, might affect the validity of responses by the participants and indeed the choice of participants (teachers had been excluded from the pilot work). The second site, MUC, was chosen because fortunately it appeared to have many of the characteristics of Omani HEIs (described in Chapter 1) necessary to answer the research questions but also because pragmatically, there were no other choices at that time.

MUC consists of three faculties: Arts; Business and Accounting; and Information Technology. Including the Dean and Assistant Dean, academic staff total 59 (Table 6.). Researchers are frequently faced with the fact that they cannot collect data from everyone who is in the category being researched. Consequently, they rely on getting evidence from a proportion or sample of the total population in the hope it is representative of the whole, thereby allowing generalisations to be made to describe the whole from the part. There are two ways to address the issue (Denscombe, 2008); probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is based on the researcher selecting the people to take part in the research because he or she believes they will be a representative cross-section of the total population. Non-probability sampling is conducted without such knowledge; that is the researcher does not, or cannot know whether those sampled are representative of the whole. This thesis has set out clearly that it is investigating one college, and that within that one college it is investigating the views on effective organisational culture in specifically targeted populations of middle-leaders and lecturers in three faculties. Clearly, the research has to draw on those populations for the aims to be achieved and if it cannot research all members of those populations then it must draw on as representative a sample as possible to ensure validity of the findings; thus it relies on probability sampling.

**Table 6: Muscat University College. Academic Staff**

<b>Faculty of Arts</b>	<b>Faculty of Business &amp; Accounting</b>	<b>Faculty of Information Technology</b>
1 Head of Faculty	1 Head of Faculty	1 Head of Faculty
	3 Programme Managers	2 Programme Managers
1 Quality Assurance Coordinator	1 Quality Assurance Coordinator	1 Quality Assurance Coordinator
2 Coordinators (Foundation Programme)		3 support staff
13 lecturers (6 lecturers in Foundation programme)	15 lecturers	15 lecturers
<b>Total 17</b>	<b>Total: 20</b>	<b>Total 22</b>

Stratified random sampling is a form of probability sampling. (Cohen et al., 2000, Creswell, 2003, Denscombe, 2008) which allows for the population, for example, the total sum of lecturers and middle-leaders within the college, to be divided into groups holding similar characteristics, such as a group of lecturers and a group of middle-leaders for each faculty. It should be emphasised that the ways in which the members of these groups share characteristics are limited; they have common ground in terms of role and field but they are potentially dissimilar across a range of variables such as gender, religious belief, length of service at the college, nationality, ethnicity, age or place of education. In other words only two variables are accounted for in this small-scale research: job role (lecturers and middle-leaders), and faculty. This is further discussed below.

Stratified random sampling sets boundaries such as role and faculty but applies the principles of randomness within these boundaries. Once the groups were identified, participants were selected at random to fill the sample. In this case, e-mails were sent through the Dean's office and through the research liaison officer to all Faculty Heads asking them to post my request for research participants. This was the recommendation of the Dean. A list of volunteers was then emailed back. Though such 'gate-keeping' allowed

for the relatively smooth management of the research project, it is acknowledged that in volunteering through the Head of Faculty, participants may have had other agendas other than an altruistic interest in this research, such as the desire to be seen as ‘committed’ or ‘keen’ by the Head of Faculty. Similarly, the Head of Faculty may have wished to impress the Dean by providing a suitably long list of professionally committed members from his or her department. Thus, an element of bias may have crept in to the sampling procedure. Nevertheless, six focus groups were created (Table 7.) totalling 36 participants (approximately 61% of total academic population).

Three focus groups were filled with middle-leaders from each faculty (groups A, C, and E). The sample was 100% of middle-leaders for Arts and Business, and 71% for IT. A further three groups (B, D, and F) were filled with lecturers, one for each faculty. The sample was 47% of the total population for Arts, and 46% for Business and IT. For the

**Table 7: Muscat University College Focus Groups**

<b>Faculty of Arts</b>	<b>Faculty of Business &amp; Accounting</b>	<b>Faculty of Information Technology</b>
<p><b>Focus group A:</b>            1 Head of Faculty            1 Programme Manager            1 Quality Assurance Coordinator            1 Semester Coordinator            2 male/ 2 female  <i>Total 4 (100%)</i></p>	<p><b>Focus group C:</b>            1 Head of Faculty            3 Programme Managers            1 Quality Assurance Coordinator            2 male/ 3 female  <i>Total 5 (100%)</i></p>	<p><b>Focus Group E:</b>            1 Head of Faculty            2 Programme Managers            1 Quality Assurance Coordinator            1 Project Coordinator            3 male/ 2 female  <i>Total 5 (71%)</i></p>
<p><b>Focus Group B:</b>            8 Lecturers            5 male/ 3 female  <i>Total 8 (47%)</i></p>	<p><b>Focus Group D:</b>            7 Lecturers            5 male/ 2 female  <i>Total 7 (46%)</i></p>	<p><b>Focus Group F:</b>            7 Lecturers            5 male/ 2 female  <i>Total 7 (46%)</i></p>

middle-leader sample, it was decided that as the total population was small, and nearly all the middle-leaders had volunteered, the groups should include all volunteers. The lecturers also showed a significant degree of enthusiasm and again it was decided that the total numbers for each group were manageable, in line with the literature for focus groups (Kitzinger, 1995, Winslow et al., 2002), and therefore all volunteers could again be included.

In selecting participants for each group, it was important to consider that they were not just lecturers or middle-leaders but were also a representative cross-section of the population i.e. that the data would not be skewed by all members being female for example, or of one nationality. The research sought the generic views of participants by role and faculty, not the specific views of female lecturers or Indian middle-leaders. The male/female ratio roughly approximated to the total organisational population. As set out in Chapter 1, my concern is that in educational organisations where there are staff members drawn from different nationalities, ethnicities, educational backgrounds, levels of experience, or religion, there may be multiple mismatches between the roles and sub-cultures that constitute the culture of an organisation and therefore the ability of the organisation to develop successfully. Though it is not within the scope or ability of this research to link specific perspectives to individual gender, faith or ethnicity, it is important that the multi-faceted nature of the organisation is represented. To this end, bio-data was collected from participants at the beginning of the research (Table 8). For anonymity, the data is presented for three faculties as a whole rather than by role or faculty. From this it can be seen that 11 nationalities, 4 religions and a wide range of ages are represented within the focus groups. Such a wide range of variables underscore the potential for differing perspectives on organisational effectiveness to undermine or hinder the process of uniting staff around core factors of effectiveness which guide all staff towards common goals. As noted previously, organisations in which members share core values and purpose and comply with clearly defined norms of behaviour are viewed as 'strong' cultures (Busher, 2005c, Cheng, 2000, Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Lussier and Achua, 2004, Tierney, 1988, van Rekom et al., 2006), whereas an organisation in which core values remain poorly envisioned or ambiguity derived from multiple perspectives of what is 'right' may be

regarded as having a 'weak' culture, and this has been associated with ineffective schools (Reynolds, 1998).

The research sought to record perceptions of organisational effectiveness amongst middle-leaders and lecturers across three faculties in the selected organisation. Focus groups were chosen as a method to gain as wide a range of views effectively and economically as possible within a naturalistic approximation of the workplace setting. The higher the number of participants, the greater the confidence that the views given would reflect those of the sampled population as a whole. The card sort activity ensured that group participants completed a task using standardised criteria that could be quantitatively measured. The sample size is determined by judgement (Cohen et al., 2000), best practice, manageability, and the demands of focus group and organisational operation. Further, the participants are purposefully sampled with account being taken of the setting, actors, events, and process (Creswell, 2003).

#### 4.5. Scheduling

After an initial meeting with the Dean at which the research proposal was discussed, the proposal was further disseminated amongst faculty heads and approved. The Head of Faculty for the Arts College acted as liaison between the researcher and the faculties in arranging and confirming dates. This was backed up with direct contact through e-mail with other Faculty Heads to establish format, participants, time and place. It was agreed that sessions should take place on Wednesday afternoons (the end of the working week in Oman) as classes usually finished by 12 am and teachers, though contracted till 3 p.m. were often available for professional development between 1pm and 3pm. However, in scheduling the research at this time, it is acknowledged that the views or enthusiasm of the participants may be tainted (or enhanced) by the knowledge that the end of the week is just the other side of the research session.

**Table 8: Muscat University College Bio Data**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>#</b>
Indian	19	Muslim	17	M	22	50-54	2	Doctorate	10
Sudanese	4	Hindu	9	F	14	45-49	8	Masters	24
Pakistani	3	Christian	4			40-44	8	Bachelors	2
British	2	Jain	1			35-39	7		
Algerian	1	N/A	5			30-34	8		
Egyptian	1					25-29	2		
Iraqi	1					N/A	1		
Jordanian	1								
Omani	1								
Tunisian	1								
Turkish	1								
N/A	1								
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>		<b>36</b>		<b>36</b>		<b>36</b>		<b>36</b>

Table 9 below summarises the operational data. The sessions were also scheduled to occur on Wednesdays at the end of April/ beginning of May to avoid clashes with exam invigilation and marking that occurs later in the month. Data gathering was successfully achieved on this basis for both the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Business. Although the Faculty of IT data gathering was initially scheduled for the Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2007,

**Table 9: Muscat University College Research Operational Data**

<b>Faculty/ Group</b>	<b>'As Is' Sort Time (minutes)</b>	<b>'Should Be' Sort Time (minutes)</b>	<b>Total Time</b>
Arts Middle-leaders	60	45	105
Arts Lecturers	45	15	60
Business Middle-leaders	45	20	65
Business Lecturers	35	15	50
IT Middle-leaders	15	10	25
IT Lecturers	25	20	45
Average	37.5	20.8	58.3

this was postponed as key college staff had to travel to Saudi Arabia for ten days for marketing. Data gathering finally took place on 30<sup>th</sup> May. However, by this time exams had begun and participants could only devote one hour to the research project. Operational data is summarised in Table 9.

#### 4.6. Operation

Each session began with participants gathered in one room. There was an explanation of where the researcher worked, the nature of the Ed.D, areas focused on i.e. factors of effectiveness, and an outline of the afternoon. Participants were asked for any questions and requested to fill in as much of the Personal Data form as they felt comfortable in doing (Appendix 2). Following bio-data collection, participants were then identified by a show of hands as to whether they were lecturers or middle-leaders. The two groups were then separated into different rooms. Once the groups were set up in their rooms, the researcher handed out a set of cards and two Record Sheets (Appendix 1) on which the groups could record their findings. As the two groups were in separate rooms, the researcher moved between the two, changing room every five to ten minutes, remaining in the background and coming forward only to answer questions when participants were unsure of the procedure. For example, two groups asked if they had to follow the layout of the diamond pattern in arranging the cards or whether they could omit cards. This 'remoteness' from the researched has been identified as a viable position to take with focus groups and has been used in large-scale research projects (Hobby, 2004, Kitzinger, 1995, MacBeath et al., 1995).

As with the Hobby (2004) research, it was left to groups to form their own decision-making processes. For example, in the group comprising Arts lecturers, one lecturer acted as leader and coordinator by common consent. This lecturer read the cards out to the others who sat grouped around the table. In the group comprising Arts middle-leaders, no one person took control but the tasks were shared out equally. This behaviour in the different groups suggests that Kitzinger (1995) was right in claiming that focus groups may lead to replication of external social norms, though this thesis argues that the naturalistic focus group setting is not so much a replication or laboratory copy of external (organisational)

norms but merely a continuation in that sessions took place in the institutional context as part of the daily professional lives of the members. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 Section 3.1, the replication of external norms and power hierarchies may be seen as positive in that it may enable members within the group to complete the task efficiently and economically. However, it is also possible that the external norms may exert a negative influence in that one individual's views or behaviour may dominate the proceedings, perspectives may polarise and the public 'consensual' outcomes may mask private disagreement.

From Table 9 above, it is possible to see how long each group took to complete each sort activity, the times ranging from 15 minutes for IT administrators on the 'As Is' sort to 60 minutes for Arts administrators to 45 minutes for Arts administrators on the 'Should Be' sort. The average time taken was 20.8 minutes and discrepancies between the IT Faculty and the other two in terms of operation and timing are judged to be a result of lack of time and communication over the nature of the research.

## **5. PILOTING, RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

### **5.1 Piloting**

Yin (2003:79) describes piloting in case studies as 'an opportunity to refine data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed'. It is formative in that it helps to develop ideas and directions and help with the conceptualisation of the research problem and what is possible in terms of operation. Preliminary piloting of the research instrument and its operationalisation was carried out in November/ December 2006 when undertaking leadership consultancy workshops for a local College of Engineering.

The purpose of a series of workshops was to guide core leaders and managers of the college towards work practices that would enhance individual and group leadership skills

and organisational efficiency. Though the researcher had asked for teachers to also be included in the sessions this was not accepted by the Dean. Nineteen participants took part representing various departments; academic, quality assessment, library, professional development, language support, public relations, and finance and accounts. Bio-data was taken at the end of the morning session. This is illustrated in Table 10 below, and reveals the institution to be multi-cultural, though dominated by personnel from India, as is characteristic of the sector (Chapter 1, Section 1.1). The Dean and Associate Dean were British.

**Table 10: Pilot Study Bio-Data**

Participants By:	Numbers & Attribution
Nationality	1 Tunisian, 1 Sri Lankan, 1 Iraqi, 1 Sudanese, 1 British, 2 Australian, 2 Omani, 10 Indian
Religion	11 Muslim, 5 Hindi, 2 Christian, 1 not given
Gender	6 female, 13 male

An afternoon session consisted of using Hobby's (2004) card-sort instrument, utilising the 30 statements. Though the groups carried out the card-sort effectively and with enthusiasm, there was some hesitation as different hierarchical positions were either mixed within one group (e.g. the Dean was on the same table as the librarian) or one role group was in close proximity to another (e.g. Finance Managers were next to a table of Resource Managers), leading to some anxiety about what might be overheard or recorded. Despite this, the workshop was a success in so far as participants discussed statements and completed the data records. The data was analysed by group, thus giving a valid snapshot of the organisational culture as perceived by the 19 managers present. These issues, further explored in later sessions, provided a platform for organisational development and led to strategies for better communication amongst senior managers and the development of competencies for each role.

Nevertheless, significant issues arose from the pilot that affected both the validity and reliability of the research and needed to be accounted for in the current research.

## 5.2 Validity

Denscombe (2008:282) identifies key areas for the validity of quantitative data:

- The data are appropriate for the purposes of the investigation (the right thing is being measured)
- The data has been recorded accurately and precisely
- The explanations derived from the data are correct.

In the pilot study, it was felt by some participants that the use of the Hobby instrument did not fully cover issues relevant to the local context of multi-national staff in higher education in Oman such as time management and connection with community. As such, it was possible that the right things were not being measured. Though use of time as an aspect of effectiveness is noted by some writers (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Pounder, 2001a) it is not always fore-grounded. Nevertheless, it was felt that how time is perceived and used by multi-cultural organisational members was a factor worth highlighting in the current research though its relevance to the MUC context would be unknown till the research was carried out. In the same way, it was felt that notions of community should have greater prominence in the current research reflecting the diverse professional, social and community inputs into college life. Other issues that arose amongst a minority in piloting were not included, such as the need for educational practice to reflect Islamic principles. Though this is a fascinating area with an extensive literature (Halstead, 2004, Shah, 2006, Talbani, 1996), it was felt that firstly, this view might reflect only one or two people in the college where the work was piloted. Secondly, it was not desirable for focus groups to dwell on thorny religious issues at the expense of thorny educational ones. Thirdly, as with the pilot study, the mix of religions and sects within any one focus group was not known till after the event, thus causing sampling difficulties and finally, the subject is ethically complex. Nevertheless, from the pilot study and a consequent return to the literature, the four core areas of effective schooling emerged as being potentially appropriate and relevant to the local context under investigation. These were; Organisational Development; People Development (Staff); People Development (Students); and Community (see Table 2). The fourth core area 'Developing Community' leaves the

door open for the issue of religion and education to arise indirectly in individual the sessions. In turn, the 32 statements were created (Table 5). These statements may not capture all perspectives on effectiveness or indeed, whether there are other ways of judging educational organisations. Nor does it capture ‘why’ participants organise their cards in such a way or how they interpret the statements. However, they capture the ‘what’ of those effective factors and associated criteria seen as characteristic of, and desired for, the organisation, from a broad and representative population, in a uniform and consistent manner.

The second issue concerned the accurate and concise recording of data. In the pilot study, Hobby’s (2004) card sort instrument was used utilising 30 statements and the diamond grids for the recording of data. The means of gathering data was viewed as a success in that it allowed participants to prioritise the criteria in an economic and consensual manner. However, in the pilot only the managers had taken part and it was felt that to obtain a fuller picture of an organisational culture, it was necessary to include other members of that culture and triangulate the data across middle-leaders and lecturers. Another useful point was learnt from the pilot; Hobby (2004) had seen all his participants placed in a big hall and that the general noise level of the discussion had masked individual comments. This had not been the case in the pilot study and a senior manager made comment to a junior manager that caused some embarrassment to her. This was despite agreed session rules that allowed free expression of opinion without censure and absence of controlling hierarchy and power structures. From this, it was decided for the present study that groups of similar status or job role should be placed in different rooms to prevent similar ethical problems (further discussed below) and mask individual contributions within a consensual group finding. Separating groups also has the added benefit of allowing for clearer and more valid data analysis, both within a faculty and across faculties.

The design of the research instrument has mirrored the Hobby instrument closely in that it aims to capture the factors and associated criteria seen as enabling or inhibiting effective organisational practice as perceived by lecturers and middle-leaders. A standardised instrument of statement cards and templates has been devised that can collect

uniform and comparable data across groups. The statements themselves have been drawn up after an extensive summarisation of the literature.

Denscombe (2008) provides a number of checks that can be performed to ensure validity. However, as with reliability (discussed below) these measures revolve around 'test-retest' and consistency of respondent replies over time which are problematic within the scope of this case study and its bounding by space and time. This also applies to another of Denscombe's checks: that the findings will apply to other people in other contexts. Again, this is problematic as each organisation is a unique blend of individual and collective traits, experiences, values and desires, and the organisation responds to internal and external pressures idiosyncratically because of this. However, in case studies, Yin (2003:37) puts the emphasis on doing the same case over again. In other words, his concern is not that the results can be replicated in another case study but that another researcher, following the same procedures and conducting the same case study would arrive at the same findings and conclusions. Though this is perhaps an ideal rather than a practical application due to the location of responses within a unique time reference, the point is well taken; there is a need to clearly document the procedures so that they can be followed.

This thesis covers key aspects of case study protocol as set out by Yin (2003:68) in that:

1. Research aims and questions are identified
2. A theoretical framework is set out
3. Field procedures such as the operationalisation of the research and access to the site have been laid out
4. The case study report (thesis) is set out to required standards.

## 5.2 Reliability

Reliability broadly concerns the likelihood that in repeating a research procedure or method, identical or similar results would be arrived at (Bush, 2002). Yin(2003:38),

referring to case study research, identifies one part of reliability as the documentation of procedures followed so that another researcher could follow the path the first researcher has set down and arrive at the same results. This includes not only the conceptual framework but also the operationalisation of the research and the handling of data derived from the research context. In this case, this thesis provides a trail of documentation concerning conceptualisation and operationalisation of the research project from the development of a conceptual framework of effectiveness through to the research approaches and methods used to gather data.

For the quantitative researcher, the research instrument should be reliable in that it should give more or less the same results each time it is used with the same person or group (Bush, 2002). Though this can be addressed by looking for consistency within the data in terms of respondents with similar profiles (such as lecturers or middle-leaders) giving similar answers (Denscombe, 2008), reliability can also be measured longitudinally by using the same instrument on the same sample at a later time and producing similar results. However, as discussed above, this 'test-retest' (Denscombe, 2008) is regarded as unreliable in that responses from an individual or group may change over time as extraneous circumstances impinge on the research participants (Golafshani, 2003). For example, in researching at MUC, though the card sort statements, collection grids and overall operationalisation of the research instrument remain constant, the responses of individuals or groups may alter as exams approach, pay reviews are announced, employees leave or new ones join. For this reason, it is also problematic to return to the research site at a later date to verify or confirm findings with participants. Indeed, respondent participation is viewed as a 'flawed method' (Silverman, 2000:177) as it does not verify data but merely increases them. Individuals respond in different ways at different times depending on a wide range of internal and external variables and as such their responses are not replicable. The organisation also faces different challenges internally and externally at different times and a set of responses drawn from questions at a certain point in time in the organisation's history may not match the responses from the same set of questions a week, month or year later. Thus, though this research uses the research tool to gather data that is analysed

quantitatively rather than qualitatively, it is bounded in space and time as a case study and can only be a snapshot of the organisation rather than a longitudinal study.

By working within the given context, the research does not seek to generalise about the degree of effectiveness of any other organisation nor state that lecturers or middle-leaders at other private HEIs would hold similar views to those at MUC simply on the basis of role or Faculty. The contextual setting, organisational structure and personnel are unique. However, as stated earlier, a case study is also a single example of a broader class of things (Denscombe, 2008) and in this case MUC is one of a number of private higher education providers in Muscat with multi-national staff offering degree courses through affiliated universities. Thus, the findings *may* be applicable to another organisation providing it shares similar features with MUC such as the staff demographics, institutional management structure, links to external organisations, student profile, and the condition and range of facilities outlined earlier (Chapter 1, Section 1.2, and this Chapter, Section 1.4. above).

One main hope for the research is to develop a tool that can be used in other contexts as a framework for mapping the educational culture or cultures present and thereby help other institutions to unify culturally varied personnel around key notions of effectiveness. Thus, though the substantive findings of the research remain unique to this organisation, the methodology may apply to any other educational institution with a similar interest in exploring how its members perceive it and how it may potentially enhance the management and organisation of teaching and learning processes through explorations of effectiveness.

## **6. ETHICAL ISSUES**

Ethical issues can be divided into four concerns; research aims, research methodology, research validation, and research operation. The first centres on concerns whether the aims of the research and the scientific background of the research are cohesive, coherent and valid. This researcher believes Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate that the literature

review has depth, that there is a proven theoretical background, and that the research questions are valid within the context.

A second ethical issue concerns the research methodology. In particular, the use of focus groups raises ethical and practical issues. The first of these is associated with sampling (Barbour, 2005). The impact on pre-existing groups must be considered when asking participants to share their views, especially if participants are drawn from different hierarchical groups within the organisation, e.g. lecturers and middle-leaders. Though participants in this research project are separated into different groupings the point is well taken. By focusing data collection and analysis at a group level it is hoped that individual sensitivity to the political contexts of the research environment will be overcome to a considerable extent i.e. group findings mask individual findings and therefore reduce exposure of individuals to censure and displays of power. On the other hand, the individual in a focus group is a visible and audible member of that group and therefore to some extent exposed to the others. Therefore, there may be a danger of harm to some members as anonymity is not guaranteed or even offered at the data gathering level, though the overall findings for individual and conflated groups are anonymous and the institution is given a pseudonym. Moreover, care was taken to separate roles from each other, for example, lecturers and middle-leader groups were placed in separate rooms so that one could not have influence over the other. Session rules may be established at the outset of the focus group sessions but there is no guarantee that they will be adhered to; people may take a stance, opinions may polarise, forceful voices dominate and intimidate. Of course the moderator has some control over events and may intercede to manage the groups, but the damage may already have been done by the time of intervention.

Connected to issues of potential harm to participants is a third issue; how the research is validated and in particular whether written transcripts or other documents should be given of the proceedings for verification (Barbour, 2005, Mercer, 2007). In this case, participants gained some feedback in that the findings for each individual group were disseminated to that group (and that group only) but no group was allowed to alter its original data or have access to another group's data. Providing participants with some form

of feedback on research findings is supported in the literature as it allows corroboration of the researcher's account, though this form of respondent validation varies (Bryman, 2004:274). However, limiting feedback to the dissemination of findings to the respective individual groups meant that individuals were not exposed to scrutiny and remained anonymous. In any case, respondent validation may be a moot point: as with this research, reconvening groups physically was not only impractical but also doubtful from a theoretical standpoint for had reconvention taken place, participants may have changed their opinion or the surrounding organisational and wider cultural milieu may have changed. These drawbacks also seem salient when considering the distribution of written documents on the findings to participants. Mercer (2007:12) sees a person as having 'multiple understandings of reality ..... and verbal descriptions of these various understandings ..... will be different at different times and with different people'.

Having said this, this author feels that research is not for the researcher alone and that, in this particular study at least, it was important to disseminate findings to the groups to allow change to potentially occur within the organisation. Dissemination of findings to each focus group afforded participants a sense of connection and a further sense of gaining tangible results for all their time and effort. In turn, feedback to the researcher allowed them agency rather than being simply guinea-pigs. However, as discussed in the section on reliability above, dissemination of findings does not equate to further research or the gathering of further data from the researched.

A fourth issue is one of research operation. At this level, permission to conduct research needed to be obtained not just from the Dean of MUC but also from those involved in the research process (Busher, 2002, Fogelman, 2002). Withholding or granting of consent may have been influenced by factors such as the Dean's personal view of whether this was an appropriate research topic for the site; logistical issues such as who was involved? When? For how long? Where? and the informed consent of other members of the sample. An outline of the research was communicated in writing to the Dean. Once approved, the sample had to be filled, sessions organised, and lines of communication established. In the research sessions, an outline of the aims and operation of the project was

given to all participants and the participants were asked to complete a Personal Data sheet to establish the multi-cultural nature of the staff. However, participants were free to omit any data request they deemed inappropriate. The bio-data remains confidential and has not been used to discuss individuals. Despite legitimate and lingering concerns, it is felt that overall, given the communicative nature of educational practice, the professional ethos of teaching, and the particular context of the research setting, methodology and operation, the rights and dignity of those participating were respected; no harm has knowingly been caused to any participants arising from their participation in the research; and the research has been operated with honesty and integrity (Denscombe, 2008).

In summary, this chapter has linked the investigation of factors perceived as enabling or inhibiting organisational effectiveness to a positivist approach for the collection of data. Such an approach allows the 'what' of the seven research questions set out above to be answered at the expense of the 'how' or 'why'. In doing so, it has set out the reasons for using case study, focus groups and card sorts as valid means of gathering appropriate forms of data, though it does not set such approaches and methods above others, indeed mixed methods approaches should be seen as a generally preferred form of investigation. However, in determining that a broad investigation would allow organisations to replicate and follow up the research for themselves economically and reliably, and further allowing for the time and resource constraints of small-scale research, it was decided to follow this path with the hope that further deep investigations will in future add to the understanding of organisations and their cultures.

## CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

### Overview

This chapter presents and analyses the findings. The results of each card sort are replicated in Appendices 3a-8b.

- 3a. Faculty of Arts lecturers – more/ less-characteristic
- 3b. Faculty of Arts lecturers – more/ less-desired
- 4a. Faculty of Business lecturers – more/ less-characteristic
- 4b. Faculty of Business lecturers – more/ less-desired
- 5a. Faculty of Information Technology lecturers – more/ less-characteristic
- 5b. Faculty of Information Technology lecturers – more/ less-desired
- 6a. Faculty of Arts middle-leaders – more/ less-characteristic
- 6b. Faculty of Arts middle-leaders – more/ less-desired
- 7a. Faculty of Business middle-leaders – more/ less-characteristic
- 7b. Faculty of Business middle-leaders – more/ less-desired
- 8a. Faculty of Information Technology middle-leaders – more/ less-characteristic
- 9b. Faculty of Information Technology middle-leaders – more/ less-desired

In section 1.1 the findings for each lecturer group are examined in detail. Particular emphasis is placed on the eight top and eight bottom statements; especially those which are repeated across sorts e.g. statements representing factors seen as either more characteristic *and* more desired; or less characteristic *and* more desired. Also of interest are sorts in which both criteria associated with a single factor have been placed. For example, placing ‘the atmosphere is easy going and pleasant – doing what we can – safety and security for students and staff’ in the more-characteristic sort and ‘high performance is expected from students and staff- desire for excellence – World class’ in the more-desired sort sets up a line of enquiry and contrast as both are associated with the factor ‘Expectations of Success’. In section 1.2 this process is repeated for the findings of each middle-leader group. Then, in section 1.3, findings are explored across the three lecturer groups, looking

for patterns of shared statements and associated factors. This is repeated for the middle-leader groups in 1.4. Finally, in section 1.5 the lecturer and middle-leader groups are explored for convergence or divergence. Rather than repeat references to the literature and conceptual framework such links are only made in sections 1.3-1.5. Throughout, the statements have been shortened in the tables for ease of reference and comparison. Numbers in parentheses refer to the card number and where necessary, row number.

## 1. ANALYSIS

1.1 What putative characteristics of effective organisations (as suggested by the literature) do lecturers say are currently in evidence in Muscat University College? Which putative characteristics of effective organisations do lecturers aspire for the organisation?

### *1.1.1 Faculty of Arts Lecturers. More/ less characteristic – More/ less desired.*

Appendices 3a and 3b set out the full data from the Faculty of Arts lecturers' focus group. From this, the eight top and bottomed ranked statements for characteristic/ desired sorts have been extrapolated. These are presented in Table 11 below.

Three main themes emerge from the data:

1. Organisational structure and control
2. Attitudes to student learning.
3. Contact with the external community

The first key area concerns organisational structure and hierarchical control. From looking at row 1 of the more-characteristic sort, lecturers view the organisation as one in which firstly, formal leaders establish goals and vision and pass them down for enactment (card11, placed in row 1) and secondly, formal and informal leaders working together is

**Table 11: Faculty of Arts. Lecturers. Characteristic & Desired criteria of organisational effectiveness**

<b>More-characteristic criteria</b>	<b>Row</b>	<b>More-desired criteria</b>
Inside knowledge of the organisation is key (13)	1	High performance is expected from students and staff (4)
Formal leaders set the goals and vision (11)	1	Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments (18)
Focus on management and control (29)	2	Experiment – Try new things (20)
Get students through the tests (25)	2	There is always someone there to help (22)
The organisation is largely self-contained (31)	2	The working environment enhances performance (24)
There is support for innovation & initiative (6)	3	Formal and informal leaders work with, and through others (12)
Different groups look for detachment and autonomy (17)	3	Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development (16)
Standards of acceptable practice are judged by national/ international standards (8)	3	Student and curriculum focused (30)
<b>Less-characteristic criteria</b>		<b>Less-desired criteria</b>
Formal and informal leaders work with/ through others (12)	8	Professionals within the organisation judge standards (7)
Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development (16)	8	Formal leaders set the goals and vision (11)
Knowledge from outside the organisation can offer new insights (14)	8	Get students through the tests (25)
The working environment enhances performance (24)	9	Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)
Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)	9	The working environment does little to enhance performance (23)
Check routine decisions with superiors (5)	9	The organisation is largely self-contained (31)
Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments (18)	10	Check routine decisions with superiors (5)
The working environment does little to enhance performance (23)	10	Goals are fluid and flexible (9)

uncommon, being perceived as less-characteristic (12, row 8). Evidence that these two factors are seen as having a negative impact on the organisation's effectiveness is drawn from the desire for Arts lecturers to work collaboratively (12, row 3) whilst seeing hierarchical command structures as less-desired (11, row 8). This negative perception of a hierarchical organisational culture is underscored by the view that there is managerial control of teaching and learning and an emphasis on putting the organisation first (29, row 2).

It appears that a hierarchical, managerial structure epitomises the current organisation but is diametrically opposed to this group's ideal of what an educational organisation should be, and how people should best be organised to manage teaching and learning processes. In its place, these lecturers desire a more democratic organisation where leadership is distributed across formal and informal leaders and other perspectives are heard in the decision-making process. This is demonstrated by the fact that card 18, regarding openness to ideas, respect for difference and mutual caring and trust has been placed in row 10 of the less-characteristic sort and in row 1 of the more-desired sort. Further evidence of a desire to foster relationships comes from a wish (22, row 2) for the organisation to widen horizons and fight injustice and to allow a culture of experimentation and change (20, row 2). Coupled with these statements is the desire for a culture that supports personal and professional development (card 16, row 3), though this is currently perceived as less-characteristic (row 8). However, the placing of card 5 (row 9) in the less-characteristic sort tempers claims of rigid hierarchy and control as checking routine decisions with superiors (5) is viewed as less-characteristic and less-desired. In addition, support for innovation and risk-taking (6) is placed in row 3, again suggesting that the organisation is not as controlling as it might first appear.

Control is also closely connected with a second key issue; attitudes to student learning. Card 25 in row 2 identifies a current organisation that is focused on getting students through tests, monitoring output and supervising students closely. This is viewed negatively as the same card appears in row 8 of the less-desired sort. However, although in opposition to this there is a desire for the organisation to put students first and to be

curriculum focused (card 30, row 3), there is no direct evidence to suggest a strong desire to foster the personal, social and intellectual skills of students such as described in card 26 or a desire to foster relationships with students, because these cards were not placed in the first three rows. Instead, there is a simple desire for high performance from staff and students (4, row 1).

A third theme concerns the organisation's contact with the external world. Four cards (13, 31, 17 and 8) out of eight in the more-characteristic quadrant address this issue. Firstly, the organisation is characterised by a view that outsiders offer little to the organisation and that those within the organisation know best (13, row 1). At the same time, input from outside the organisation that can lead to new insights is seen as less-characteristic (card 14, row 8). This perception is enhanced by a view of the current organisation as self-contained, with little or no contact with the outside community (31, row 2) though this is also seen as less desirable (row 9). A sense of introspection is further emphasised with card 17 (row 3), whereby the current organisation is perceived as being made up of members and groups looking for detachment and autonomy. However, whereas card 13 with its emphasis on the centrality of inside knowledge is seen as more-characteristic, it is set against card 8 in the same sort which states standards of acceptable practice should be judged by national and international standards. Card 7 in the less-desired sort appears to endorse this factor positively by claiming that professionals within the organisation judging standards is less-desired. In other words, both local contextual knowledge and wider external management of standards are seen as being necessary facets of the organisational structure.

In summary, a gulf appears to exist between how the lecturers currently view the organisation and how they desire it to be. Issues centring on organisational structure, control and democracy; student learning; and external community dominate the findings. A significant proportion of the more-characteristic statements are seen as having a negative impact on the organisation's current levels of effectiveness, either directly or indirectly, and a similar proportion of the less-characteristic statements are desired as being able to potentially enhance organisational effectiveness, though the gulf is not

always as clear cut as it may seem. Overall, the organisation is perceived by the participating Arts lecturers as being characterised by the following factors and criteria:

- Collaboration (formal leaders set the goals)
- Accountability (acceptable practice for students, managers and teachers is judged by international standards through links with external educational bodies. However, adaptation to local context is seen as necessary and the expertise of those within the organisation is called on. Thus, there are varying degrees of insularity and openness).
- Focus (hierarchical with control of teaching and learning arranged through managerial processes)
- Quality learning (get students through the test).
- Inclusion (the organisation is largely self-contained).
- Risk (there is support for innovation and risk)
- Relationships (different groups look for detachment and autonomy)

Overall, there is a desire for the organisation to focus on the following factors and criteria to enhance effectiveness:

- Expectations of Success (be a model of excellence).
- Environment (provide a working environment that enhances performance).
- Inclusion (increase contact with the local community).
- Quality learning (put the broader development of students ahead of a sole focus on testing and monitoring output, though how this may be enacted is not stated).
- Risk (allow risk-taking and initiative to flourish).
- Collaboration (involve lecturers more in the processes of leadership and communication).
- Relationships (develop care and trust across areas and departments and respect difference in values or opinions).
- Support/ Social Justice (provide social justice to students and lecturers)

- Professional Development (support personal and professional development for all).

*1.1.2 Faculty of Business Lecturers. More/ less characteristic – More/ less desired.*

Appendices 4a and 4b set out the data from the Faculty of Business lecturers' focus group. From this, the eight top and bottomed ranked cards for characteristic/ desired card sorts have been extrapolated (Table 12).

Three main themes are again identified:

1. Organisational structure and control;
2. Attitudes to student learning;
3. Contact with the external community.

The first broad area of interest is the organisational structure. Findings show that this group opposes hierarchical management practices and see them as hindering effective teaching and learning processes. This is demonstrated by positioning card 11 in row 2 of the more-characteristic sort and row 9 of less-desired. In other words, a current organisational structure in which formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment is seen as characteristic yet less-desired and therefore hinders effectiveness. Further, the organisation is dominated by a focus on management and control (29, row 1) though this is again less-desired. Despite these perceptions of control however, goal-setting is seen as fluid and flexible (9, row 3) with little or no point in planning ahead. The organisation is currently characterised as one in which routine decisions are checked with superiors, risk avoided (5, row 3), and people create their own space rather than rely on others (21, row 2). Yet risk taking and support for initiative and innovation is strongly desired (6, row 2). This is accompanied by the desire for incentives and structures that promote and support professional and personal development (16, row 3), also currently seen as less-characteristic (16,9). Finally, there is desire for the working environment to enhance performance (24, row 2) with its opposite perceived as less desirable (23, row 10).

**Table 12: Faculty of Business. Lecturers. Characteristic & Desired criteria of organisational effectiveness**

<b>More-characteristic criteria</b>	<b>Row</b>	<b>More-desired criteria</b>
Focus on management and control (29)	1	Student and curriculum focused (30)
Student and curriculum focused (30)	1	Time is flexible (1)
High performance is expected (4)	2	High performance is expected from students and staff (4)
Formal leaders set the goals and vision (11)	2	The working environment enhances performance (24)
Self-reliance (21)	2	There is support for innovation & initiative (6)
Check routine decisions with superiors (5)	3	Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development (16)
Goals are fluid and flexible (9)	3	The organisation is part of a wider, local, non-academic community (32)
Experiment – Try new things (20)	3	Professionals within the organisation judge standards (7)
<b>Less-characteristic criteria</b>		<b>Less-desired criteria</b>
The atmosphere is easy going and pleasant (3)	8	People have sufficient time to consult on change and carry it out (2)
Focus attention and resources on disadvantaged groups (27)	8	Inside knowledge of the organisation is key (13)
The organisation is largely self-contained (31)	8	Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)
Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development (16)	9	Focus attention and resources on disadvantaged groups (27)
There is always someone there to help (22)	9	Focus on management and control (29)
The working environment does little to enhance performance (23)	9	Formal leaders set the goals and vision (11)
Time is flexible (1)	10	The working environment does little to enhance performance (23)
There is support for innovation & initiative (6)	10	The organisation is largely self-contained (31)

As with the Arts lecturers, there are some apparent anomalies. Firstly, although routine decisions are checked with superiors and risk-taking is avoided, the perception is that a culture of experimentation and a commitment to change exists (card 20, row 3). Secondly, although this group advocates a culture of excellence and high performance, it also sees as highly desirable an organisation in which time is flexible, allowance is made for delay and personal circumstance, and there is room for tolerance and flexibility (1, row 1). The strength of this desire is underscored by stating that it is *less* desirable for people to be accountable for deadlines and production (2, row 8). As such, it is difficult to reconcile desires for high performance and excellence with a desire to avoid accountability, take it easy, and emphasise personal circumstances over professional.

A sense that hierarchy and control is undesired spills over into the second key area; attitudes to student learning. The factors placed in row 1 of the more-characteristic sort appear to contradict one another. Card 29 sees a focus on management and control of teaching and learning with the organisation coming first yet card 30 suggests an alternative perspective; that the students come first and the organisation is student and curriculum focussed (30). In the pilot study, a similar juxtaposition was recorded. However, whereas in the pilot study participants desired the organisation to set student-centred educational goals and pass these to teachers for enactment, it is not clear if this is the case here because regrettably, there was no opportunity for the group to explain or justify their answers. Admittedly, participants see a focus on students and curriculum as both characteristic and desired (row 1) but though the focus on management and control of teaching and learning (29, row 1) is seen as characteristic, it is seen as a less effective criterion for the desired organisation. In other words, the participating Business lecturers desire students and learning to be placed first but do not wish the process to be controlled by management and hierarchical structure. Despite this, the lecturers do not make clear exactly what goals they have in mind for student learning and there are few factor statements that directly address the student community. Although focusing attention and resources on disadvantaged groups of students is seen as less-characteristic (27, row 8), as is someone being there to help, invest time to widen horizons and fight justice (22, row 9), there is little evidence that social justice and welfare are desired for the organisation. Indeed, a factor that supports

disadvantaged groups and social justice is viewed as less desirable (27, row 9). This would seem at odds with the desirability of putting students first.

A third broad area concerns notions of external community. The Business lecturers see the current organisation, and desire the future organisation, to embody high performance from students and staff, to strive for excellence, and be World Class (4, row 2). Yet other factors suggest that the potential for this may be limited. Firstly, participants desire professionals *within* the organisation, rather than those outside, to judge standards of acceptable practice for students, teacher, and managers (7, row 3) despite valuing an organisation that is part of the wider community (32, row 3) and perceiving a self-contained organisation (31, row 10) as potentially ineffective and undesirable.

In summary, once again, this group appears to dismiss a narrow focus on management and control of teaching and learning policy and practice with a wider, if somewhat problematic vision of community practice and decision-making. Overall, the participating Business lecturers perceive the current organisation as being characterised by the following factors and criteria:

- Collaboration (formal leaders set goals and vision and pass them on for enactment).
- Focus (student and curriculum focused and a focus on management and control of teaching and learning)
- Expectations of Success (high performance is expected from students and staff).
- Risk (check routine decisions with superiors – avoid risk taking)
- Support/ Social Justice (self-reliance – create your own space)
- Planning (goals are fluid and flexible)
- Innovation (experiment and try new things)

Overall, the participating Business lecturers perceive the following factors and criteria as potentially enhancing organisational effectiveness:

- Focus (student and curriculum focussed – students come first)
- Expectations of success (expect high performance from students and staff).
- Time (be tolerant of personal circumstance).
- Environment (the working environment enhances performance)
- Risk (support initiative, innovation and risk)
- Inclusion (the organisation is part of a wider community)
- Professional Development (incentives and structure should be available)
- Accountability (allow professionals within the organisation to interpret national and international standards).

*1.1.3. Faculty of Information Technology (IT) Lecturers. More/ less characteristic – More/ less desired.*

Appendices 5a and 5b set out the data from the Faculty of IT lecturers' focus group. From this, the eight top and bottomed ranked cards for characteristic/ desired sorts have been extrapolated (Table 13). Two broad themes emerge from the data:

1. Organisational structure and control,
2. Attitudes to student learning.

Also worth foregrounding is the finding that the IT lecturers perceive all eight statements currently seen as more-characteristic of the organisation as also *less* desirable. Seven of these are directly represented in the less-desired quadrant (20, 4, 15, 26, 11, 25, and 30) and one through the placing of its paired criterion in more-desired values (23/24). Similarly, seven of the criteria currently seen as less-characteristic of the organisation are also placed in the more-desired sort (18, 22, 16, 21, 31, 3, 24).

As with the other lecturer groups, the current organisation is viewed as one in which formal leaders set goals and vision and pass them for enactment (11, row 3). Again, this is viewed as less desirable (row 8). Beyond this, the data from this group is more divergent, whereas the data from the other lecturers groups is more convergent. Experimentation,

**Table 13: Faculty of Information Technology. Lecturers. Characteristic and Desired criteria of organisational effectiveness**

<b>More-characteristic criteria</b>	<b>Row</b>	<b>More-desired criteria</b>
Experiment – Try new things (20)	1	The working environment enhances performance (24)
The working environment does little to enhance performance (23)	1	The atmosphere is easy going and pleasant (3)
High performance is expected (4)	2	Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development (16)
Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)	2	Self-reliance (21)
Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students (26)	2	The organisation is largely self-contained (31)
Formal leaders set the goals and vision (11)	3	Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments (18)
Get students through the tests (25)	3	There is always someone there to help (22)
Student and curriculum focused (30)	3	Goals are fluid and flexible (9)
<b>Less-characteristic criteria</b>		<b>Less-desired criteria</b>
Time is flexible (1)	8	Experiment – Try new things (20)
Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments (18)	8	Evaluate existing work – Embed new ideas (19)
There is always someone there to help (22)	8	Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved (11)
Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development (16)	9	Student and curriculum focused (30)
Self-reliance (21)	9	Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students (26)
The organisation is largely self-contained (31)	9	Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)
The atmosphere is easy going and pleasant (3)	10	High performance is expected from students and staff (4)
The working environment enhances performance (24)	10	Get students through the tests (25)

trying new things, and a commitment to change (20) are seen as highly characteristic of the current culture (20, row 1) but this factor is also rejected as less desirable (row 8). From this, it might be expected that a statement reflecting a position more towards the inverse of this i.e. evaluate existing work; embed new ideas; see how things work out (19, row 8) would be seen as desirable for effective organisational practice; but this is not the case as card 19 is also seen as less-desired. There exists a desire among IT lecturers for an easy and pleasant atmosphere (3, row 1), in which goals are fluid and flexible and there is no need to plan too far ahead (9, row 3) and, although a culture of high performance and expectation is seen as characteristic (4, row 2), it is also seen as less desirable for the future (4, row 10).

This group appears to desire a flexible, autonomous, relaxed organisation in which lecturers get on with the job and do it their own way without disturbing the status quo (21, row 2). Such a perspective may find further endorsement in the desire for an organisation that is self-contained with little or no contact with the outside community (31, row 2). Nevertheless, there are some disparate findings. Though this group seeks isolation from outside influences, it also desires an organisation in which internal mutual caring and trust exists within and across areas and departments, and in which there is openness to ideas, respect for difference and commitment to change (18, row 3). Further, it desires a culture of help and social justice (22, row 3) and a democratic distribution of incentives and structures that promote and support personal and professional development (16, row 2), though on the surface this seems at odds with the desire for self-reliance and autonomy. Finally, this group characterises the current organisation as one in which the working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff (23, row 1). However, like the other lecturer groups, there is a desire that the working environment should improve performance (24, row 1).

A second area concerns this group's perceptions of which criteria enable or hinder student learning and outcomes. The current organisation is perceived as one in which there is a focus on students and curriculum and where students come first (30, row 3). However, though this group sees getting students through the test, monitoring output; and supervising students as more-characteristic of the current state (25, row 3), it also perceives the current

organisation as fostering the personal, social and intellectual skills of students (26, row 2). Yet this criterion is actually less-desired (26, row 9), as is a focus on students and curriculum (30, row 9) and of getting students through tests (25, row 10). In other words, every statement seen as currently characteristic of the organisation is rejected as being less-desirable for organisational effectiveness in the future

It might be expected that if this group sees the current student-learning related criteria as successful, they would endorse them. If unsuccessful, they might endorse one end of the continuum e.g. get students through tests (output), and reject the other e.g. develop social and cognitive skills (input). In fact, they see both as less-desired. Further, there is nothing in the desired quadrant or even just outside it that hints at what this group might desire for students. Indeed, the findings for the desired criteria centre almost entirely on staff concerns rather than student concerns, which is puzzling data.

To sum up, overall, the participating IT lecturers perceive the following factors and criteria as characterising the current organisation:

- Innovation (trying new things and committed to change).
- Environment (the working environment does little to enhance performance)
- Expectations of Success (expecting high performance from students and staff)
- Professional Development (limited incentives and structures to promote and support development)
- Quality Learning (foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students/ get students through the tests)
- Collaboration (formal leaders set the goals and pass them down)
- Focus (students come first).

Overall, the participating IT lecturers perceive the following factors and associated criteria as potentially enhancing organisational effectiveness:

- Environment (the working environment enhances performance).
- Expectations of Success (the atmosphere is easy-going, tolerant, caring and goals are fluid and flexible).
- Professional Development (incentives and structures are available for development)
- Inclusion (the organisation is largely self-contained)
- Relationships (mutual caring and trust within and across areas)
- Planning (goals are fluid and flexible)

1.2. What putative characteristics of effective organisations (as suggested by the literature) do middle-leaders say are currently in evidence in Muscat University College? Which putative characteristics of effective organisations do middle-leaders aspire for the organisation?

*1.2.1. Faculty of Arts. Middle-leaders. More/ less characteristic – More/ less desired.*

Appendices 6a and 6b set out data from the Faculty of Arts middle-leaders' focus group. The eight top-ranked and bottom ranked statements for characteristic/ desired sorts are set out in Table 14 below.

One broad but multi-faceted area of interest emerges:

1. Organisational structure and control.

The most striking aspect of these two card sorts is the way in which cards have been almost identically ranked for criteria seen as both characteristic and desired. This is very much in contrast to the findings for the IT lecturers and to a lesser extent, the other two lecturer groups. Firstly, the Arts middle-leaders perceive the current organisation as one in which formal and informal leaders work together to set and achieve organisational goals

**Table 14: Faculty of Arts. Middle-leaders. Characteristic & Desired criteria of organisational effectiveness**

<b>More-characteristic criteria</b>	<b>Row</b>	<b>More-desired criteria</b>
Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments (18)	1	Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments (18)
Standards of acceptable practice are judged by national/ international standards (8).	1	High performance is expected from students and staff (4)
High performance is expected from students and staff (4)	2	Standards of acceptable practice judged by national/ international standards (8)
Inside knowledge of the organisation is key (13)	2	Inside knowledge of the organisation is key (13)
Formal and informal leaders work with, and through others (12)	2	Formal and informal leaders work with, and through others (12)
There is support for innovation & initiative (6)	3	Clear and achievable goals/ objectives have been set and communicated (10).
Experiment – Try new things (20)	3	Experiment – Try new things (20)
Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students (26)	3	Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students (26)
<b>Less-characteristic criteria</b>		<b>Less-desired criteria</b>
Self-reliance – Create your own space (21)	8	Self-reliance – Create your own space (21)
Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)	8	Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)
Check routine decisions with superiors (5)	8	Check routine decisions with superiors (5)
Different groups look for detachment and autonomy (17)	9	Different groups look for detachment and autonomy (17)
Goals are fluid and flexible (9)	9	Goals are fluid and flexible (9)
The working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff (23)	9	The working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff (23)
Focus on management and control (29)	10	Focus on management and control (29)
The organisation is largely self-contained (31)	10	The organisation is largely self-contained (31)

and vision (12, row 2) and this is also desired (row 2). In support of this, the group also sees an organisation with little current evidence or desire to manage and control the teaching and learning processes (29, row 10). Instead of hierarchical and centralised control, the middle-leaders see the current organisational culture as one highly characterised by criteria reflecting mutual caring and trust within and across areas or departments; an openness to ideas; a respect for difference; and a commitment to experiment and change (18, row 1). More broadly, notions of diversity and community are bolstered by statements that support innovation, initiative and risk (6, row 3); allow experimentation; and call for a commitment to change (20, row 3).

Secondly, different groups looking for autonomy and detachment are seen as neither characteristic (17, row 9) nor desired (row 9) criteria of effectiveness. Support for this is also evident from the perception that self-reliance, the creation of one's own space and simply doing one's job (21, row 8) are similarly viewed as neither characteristic nor desirable (row 8). Instead, standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers, and managers are judged from outside the college community by national and/ or international standards (8, row 1). Superficially however, this view seems at odds with a characteristic and desired statement that eschews outside help and expertise and instead looks internally for expertise (13, row 2). As with the Arts lecturers, the findings point towards middle-leaders supporting both the involvement of external bodies in the organisation and looking for expertise within the faculty. Middle-leaders also see as currently characteristic and desired the criteria of high performance being expected from staff and students (4). Thirdly, the middle-leaders desire an organisation where clear and achievable goals/ objectives for the future have been set and communicated (10, row 3). This is the one criterion that is present in the more-desired sort but absent from the top three rows of the more-characteristic sort.

Lastly, an organisation in which limited incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional growth is seen as both less-characteristic (15, row 8) and less-desired (row 8) for the organisation, and therefore such characteristics can be perceived as hindering effective organisational practice and development. In part,

this supports the creation of a learning community in which there is opportunity and equality for all. Once again, this is echoed by a low desire for organisational members to check routine decisions with superiors, avoid risk and protect themselves (5, row 8) and this aligns well with the current and desired value of supporting experimentation and change (20, row 3), and the current culture that supports innovation, initiative and risk-taking (6, row 3). Despite the presence of factors that hint at the establishment of a learning community, these middle-leaders pay little attention to the students in the sorts. Admittedly, they claim that both the current and desired organisation characteristics foster the personal, social and intellectual skills of students; and the promotion of independence and life skills (26, row 3) and that they see standards for students judged by international standards as highly characteristic (8, row 1) and desirable (row 2). However, the findings point towards a focus on the overarching organisational dimensions of goals, standards, performance, and commitment to change rather than clear evidence for putting student and curriculum performance at the centre of the learning process.

In summary, the participating Arts middle-leaders perceive the following factors and associated criteria as both characteristic and potentially enhancing the effective organisation of teaching and learning practices:

- Relationships (mutual caring and trust within and across areas)
- Accountability (standards of practice judged by national/ international standards and/ or with input from internal constituents)
- Expectations of Success (high performance is expected from staff and students)
- Excellence (inside knowledge of the organisation is key)
- Collaboration (formal and informal leaders work together)
- Innovation (experiment and try new things)
- Quality Learning (foster the personal, social and intellectual skills of students).
- Committed to change and the inclusion of formal and informal leaders in shaping and achieving goals.

A further factor Risk (support for innovation and initiative) is seen as characteristic but not more-desired, and is replaced in the more-desired sort by Planning (clear and achievable goals are set and communicated).

### *1.2.2 Faculty of Business. Middle-leaders. More/ less characteristic – More/ less desired.*

Appendices 7a and 7b set out the data from the Faculty of Business middle-leaders' focus group. From this, the 8 top and bottomed ranked cards for characteristic/ desired sorts are presented (Table 15).

There is one overarching theme:

- Organisational structure and control

Like the Arts middle-leaders there is a dominant focus on organisational structure and control, and the management of an internal community. The Business middle-leaders clearly set out their perceptions of the organisation as it currently is and should be in the future, and like the Arts middle-leaders, the criteria they have chosen are shared across more-characteristic and more-desired sorts, though the set of criteria chosen differ between the two groups. Of the eight statements selected to describe the current organisation As Is, six reappear in the same positions in the more-desired sort. Of the eight statements selected to describe the less-characteristic facets of the organisation, six appear in the less-desired sort.

Findings show that Business middle-leaders perceive as highly characteristic and desirable an organisation where there are expectations of high performance from students and staff; a desire for excellence and the chance to be World Class (4, row 1). Here, like the Arts middle-leaders, there is a perception that current standards of practice for students, teachers and staff are judged by national or international standards (8, row 2) and that this is an effective strategy, as it is also highly desired. Secondly, (and again like the Arts middle-leaders) there is a perception that formal and informal leaders work with, and through others to set and achieve organisational goals and vision (12, row 1) at both current

**Table 15: Faculty of Business. Middle-leaders. Characteristic & Desired criteria of organisational effectiveness**

<b>More-characteristic criteria</b>	<b>Row</b>	<b>More-desired criteria</b>
High performance is expected from students and staff (4)	1	High performance is expected from students and staff (4)
Formal and informal leaders work with, and through others (12)	1	Formal and informal leaders work with, and through others (12)
Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments (18)	2	There is support for innovation & initiative (6)
There is support for innovation & initiative (6)	2	Standards of acceptable practice judged by national/ international standards (8)
Standards of acceptable practice judged by national/ international standards (8)	2	The organisation is part of a wider, local, non-academic community (32)
The working environment enhances performance (24)	3	The working environment enhances performance (24)
Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development (16)	3	Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development (16)
Knowledge from outside the organisation can offer new insights (14)	3	Knowledge from outside the organisation can offer new insights (14)
<b>Less-characteristic criteria</b>		<b>Less-desired criteria</b>
The atmosphere is easy going and pleasant (3)	8	Formal leaders set the goals and vision (11)
Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)	8	Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)
The working environment does little to enhance performance (23)	8	The working environment does little to enhance performance (23)
Student and curriculum focused (30)	9	The atmosphere is easy going and pleasant (3)
Inside knowledge of the organisation is key (13)	9	Inside knowledge of the organisation is key (13)
Time is flexible (1)	9	Focus on management and control (29)
Focus on management and control (29)	10	Get students through the tests (25)
Check routine decisions with superiors (5)	10	Check routine decisions with superiors (5)

and desired levels. Though in this case, the middle-leaders do not desire input from internal constituents. In contrast, it is seen as less desirable and less effective for formal leaders to set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment (11, row 8). Further, this group sees a focus on management and control of teaching within the current organisation as less-characteristic (29, row 10). In other words, the Business Faculty middle-leaders perceive and desire an organisation in which there are high expectations for students and staff but those standards are effectively achieved through communal endeavour in which staff are supported and encouraged and join with formal leaders to set and achieve goals.

The view of the organisation as democratic and participative is complemented by a perception that there currently exists a culture of mutual caring and trust within and across areas and departments (18, row 2) though this is not expressly highly desired (appearing in row 4). However, a sense of community is enhanced by a view that knowledge from outside the organisation can offer new insights, help develop excellence and lead to the organisation being a model for others (14, row 3). Moreover, unlike the arts middle-leaders the criteria that insiders know best and outsiders can offer little is seen as less-characteristic (13, row 9), less-desired (row 9) and consequently less effective. In fact, this group not only desires that standards are judged nationally and/ or internationally but that the organisation forms part of a wider, local, non-academic community that seeks input from parents, employers, government, and alumni in many areas (32, row 2). This is one criterion that this group does not currently see as characteristic of the organisation.

Within this community, support for initiative, innovation, risk and a proactive stance is again sustained across both sorts (6, row 2) whereas checking of routine decisions with superiors, and avoidance of risk and self-protection (5, row 10) are seen as both less-characteristic and less-desired. Similarly, incentives and structures are seen as being available to promote and support personal and professional development for all (16, row 3) whereas the inverse view, that such incentives and structures be available to exclusive groups only (15, row 8), is seen as less-desirable. Like the lecturers there is a focus on the working environment; the middle-leaders see as characteristic and desirable a working

environment that enhances the performance of students, teachers and staff (24, row 3) although this should not be construed as one that is easy-going or pleasant (3, row 8 of less-characteristic); nor is this desired.

As with the Arts middle-leaders, the Business middle-leaders appear to have emphasised organisational structure, outside auditing, and internal community over statements centred on students. That is not to say such values are completely absent. This group views getting students through the tests, monitoring output, and supervising them closely (25) as less desirable (row 10). However, fostering personal, social and intellectual skills of students and developing independence and life skills (26) is placed in a lowly row 6 of both characteristic and desired sorts. Likewise, a focus on students and curriculum and putting students first (30), is seen as less-characteristic of the current organisation, though this is only placed in row 5 of more/ less desirable criteria.

To sum up, the participating Business middle-leaders perceive the organisation as characterised by the following factors and associated criteria and see the same factors and criteria as enhancing future effectiveness:

- Expectations of Success (high performance is expected from students and staff).
- Collaboration (formal and informal leaders work together).
- Risk (supportive of innovation and initiative).
- Accountability (standards of acceptable practice are judged by national/ international standards).
- Environment (the environment enhances performance).
- Professional Development (incentives and structures to promote personal and professional development for all are available).
- Excellence (knowledge from outside can help the organisation become a model for others).

One statement and associated factor is placed in the more-characteristic sort but absent from the more desired sort; Relationships (mutual caring and trust within and across areas). It is replaced in the more-desired sort by Inclusion (the organisation is part of a wider community).

*1.2.3. Faculty of Information Technology (IT). Middle-leaders. More/ less characteristic – More/ less desired.*

Appendices 8a and 8b set out the data from the Faculty of IT middle-leaders' focus group. From this the eight top and bottomed ranked cards for characteristic/ desired sorts are presented (Table 16 below).

Like the IT lecturers, the IT middle-leaders appear more idiosyncratic in their selection and placement of statements when compared to middle-leaders from the other two faculties. Nevertheless, the major theme is once again one of organisational structure and control.

Firstly, although these middle-leaders characterise the current organisation as one in which formal and informal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved, and pass them down for enactment (11, row 2) this criteria is also seen as less-desirable for the future effectiveness of the organisation (row 8). Instead, this group desires a focus on management and control of teaching and learning in which the organisation comes first (29, row 2), a criteria currently seen as less characteristic (row 8). Within this framework it is highly desired that the organisation is student and curriculum focused (30, row 1). Thus, it can be inferred that a hierarchical organisation should control the curriculum goals. Secondly, expectations of high performance, a desire for excellence and to be World Class are seen as not only characteristic (4, row 2) but highly desired (row 2), as is the criteria describing practice for students, teachers and managers being judged by national and international standards (8, row 1). However, unlike the Arts middle-leaders, but similar to the Business middle-leaders, there is also a perception that a desired structure is effective when it includes professionals *within* the organisation having input into standards of acceptable practice (7, row 3) alongside national and international bodies. The IT

**Table 16: Faculty of Information Technology. Middle-leaders. Characteristic & Desired criteria of organisational effectiveness**

<b>More-characteristic criteria</b>	<b>Row</b>	<b>More-desired criteria</b>
Standards of acceptable practice are judged by national/ international standards (8)	1	Student and curriculum focused (30)
Student and curriculum focused (30)	1	Standards of acceptable practice are judged by national/ international standards (8)
High performance is expected from students and staff (4)	2	High performance is expected from students and staff (4)
Formal leaders set the goals and vision (11)	2	Clear and achievable goals/ objectives have been set / communicated (10)
The organisation is part of a wider, local, non-academic community (32)	2	Focus on management and control (29)
Professionals within the organisation judge standards (7)	3	People have sufficient time to consult on change and carry it out (2)
Get students through the tests (25)	3	Professionals within the organisation judge standards (7)
Focus attention and resources on disadvantaged groups of students (27)	3	The working environment does little to enhance performance (23)
<b>Less-characteristic criteria</b>		<b>Less-desired criteria</b>
Goals are fluid and flexible (9)	8	Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students (26)
Different groups look for detachment and autonomy (17)	8	Formal leaders set the goals and vision (11)
Focus on management and control (29)	8	Check routine decisions with superiors (5)
Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development (15)	9	Experiment – Try new things (20)
Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments (18)	9	Evaluate existing work – Embed new ideas (19)
The working environment does little to enhance performance (23)	9	Inside knowledge of the organisation is key (13)
There is support for innovation & initiative (6)	10	Different groups look for detachment and autonomy (17)
Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development (16)	10	Goals are fluid and flexible (9)

middle-leaders also see this as characteristic and this links to the idea that local expertise and knowledge filter national and international standards to more closely fit the needs of the local context.

The belief that professionals within the organisation have a role to play in the judgement of standards to some extent mitigates the desire for managerial control of teaching and learning. A sense of collegiality can also be gathered from the idea that different groups looking for detachment and autonomy is less-characteristic (17, row 8) and less-desired (row 10). However, this group sees a culture in which members experiment and try new things and are committed to change as also less-desired (20, row 9), though paradoxically they also place the inverse value - that existing work should be evaluated and new ideas embedded before further change – in the less-desired quadrant (19, row 9). Although the current organisation is seen as unsupportive of innovation, initiative and risk taking (6, row 10, less-characteristic) this is not advocated for the future.

The group sees the organisation placing students first and being student and curriculum focused (30, row 1), and this is also considered effective practice as it appears in row 1 of the more-desired sort. However, the curriculum focus is currently characterised by getting students through tests, monitoring output, and supervising students closely (25, row 3) and the fostering of personal, social and intellectual skills of students and the promotion of independence is seen as a less-desired factor (26, row 8) for organisational effectiveness. Thus, students come first, but only in terms of getting them through the tests and exams they face.

Several anomalies appear in this group's sorts. Aside from the ones already mentioned there are contradictions in the placing of cards 15 and 16, referring to incentives and structures being available to support personal and professional development, in rows 9 and 10 respectively of the less-characteristic quadrant, and card 23 in the more-desired sort that desires a working environment that does little to enhance performance.

In conclusion, despite some leanings towards internal community, this group does not view the current organisation as strongly characterised by mutual caring and trust.

Instead, as with the Arts middle-leaders, it emphasises a desire for accountability and a general reliance on managerialist practice encoded in terms such as ‘standards’, ‘performance’, ‘goals and objectives’, and ‘management and control’. The participating IT middle-leaders perceive the organisation as characterised by the following factors and associated criteria:

- Accountability (standards of acceptable practice are judged by national/ international standards *and* judged by professionals within the organisation)
- Focus (student and curriculum focused)
- Expectations of Success (high performance is expected from students and staff)
- Collaboration (formal leaders set the goals and vision and pass them down)
- Inclusion (the organisation is part of a wider community)
- Quality Learning (get students through the test)
- Social Justice (focus attention and resources on disadvantaged groups of students)

Overall, the participating IT middle-leaders desire the future organisation to be characterised by the following factors and associated criteria and see the same factors and criteria as enhancing future effectiveness:

- Focus (student and curriculum focused *and* a control of teaching and learning)
- Accountability (standards of acceptable practice are judged by national/ international standards *and* judged by professionals within the organisation)
- Expectations of Success (high performance is expected from students and staff)
- Planning (clear and achievable goals have been set and communicated)
- Time (people have sufficient time to consult and carry out change)
- Environment (the environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff).

- 1.3. To what extent do the perceptions of lecturers from the three different faculties (Arts, Business, and Information Technology) converge or diverge with regard to the current and desired organisational characteristics?

Table 17 illustrates significant areas of agreement between lecturer groups with significance taken as a minimum of two out of three lecturer focus groups agreeing on whether a statement is more/ less-characteristic or more/ less-desired. As in the analysis of the individual groups, attention is focused on the first and last three rows of the data, though here row position is conflated. In doing so, it is acknowledged that focus at this level may eclipse nuances that a wider analysis might provide. Consensus centres on three factors and associated criteria:

1. Collaboration (how goals and vision are set and communicated).
2. Professional Development (the extent to which incentives and structures are available to foster personal and professional growth).
3. Environment (the extent to which the working environment enhances performance of students, teachers and staff).

The lecturers across all three faculties agreed that formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment. This is not only seen as typical of the current organisation but was also perceived as being less desirable. One potential criteria for effectiveness identified is that leaders with formal positions involve other stakeholders such as lecturers, in participative practices (Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000) and engender unity of purpose through collegiality and collaboration (Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Reezigt and Creemers, 2005). Indeed, the two large-scale investigations of Hobby (2004) and MacBeath et al (1995) reveal that both teachers and senior managers perceive this to be a core element of successful schools. Though an organisation in which formal leaders articulate and disseminate organisational vision and values is often seen as having a strong culture (Deal and Kennedy, 1983), the lecturers view the current top-down structure as ineffective. This

**Table 17: Significant agreement at role level. Lecturers from Faculties of Arts, Business & Information Technology.**

<b>Criteria statement</b>	<b>More Characteristic</b>	<b>Less Characteristic</b>	<b>More Desired</b>	<b>Less Desired</b>
1. Time is flexible – Allowance is made for delay and personal circumstance – Toleration and flexibility.		Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers		
3. The atmosphere is easy going and pleasant – Doing what we can – Safety and security for students and staff.		Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers		
4. High performance is expected from students and staff – Desire for excellence – World Class	Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers		Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers	
11. Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment.	Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers			Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers
15. Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development - Resource allocation tied to organisational ‘needs’ and targeted personnel.				Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers
16. Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development – inclusion for all.		Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers	Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers	
18. Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments – Openness to ideas – Respect for difference – Commitment to change.		Arts Lecturers IT Lecturers	Arts Lecturers IT Lecturers	
20. Experiment – Try new things – Organisational members are committed to change.	Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers			
22. There is always someone to here to help – Invest time to widen horizons - Fight injustice.		Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers	Arts Lecturers IT Lecturers	
23. The working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff.		Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers		Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers

Table 17 (cont'd). Significant agreement at role level – Lecturers of Arts, Business, and IT Faculties.

24. The working environment enhances performance of students, teachers and staff.		Arts Lecturers IT Lecturers	Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers	
25. Get students through the tests – Monitor output – Supervise students closely.				Arts Lecturers IT Lecturers
29. Focus on management and control of teaching and learning – The organisation comes first	Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers			
30. Student and curriculum focused – Students come first	Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers		Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers	
31. The organisation is largely self-contained. Little or no contact with non-academic community of parents, employers, alumni etc. Limited contact through official hierarchical channels and documentation		Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers		Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers

Arts = Faculty of Arts; Bus = Faculty of Business; IT = Faculty of Information Technology

is bolstered by two groups - Arts and Business - seeing the College characterised by a focus on management and control of teaching and learning and on placing the organisation first. However, there is little evidence to suggest an alternative to this hierarchical structure in which power is held by those in formal positions of authority, as although the Arts lecturers see formal and informal leaders working together, the other two groups did not place this factor as highly desired.

The issue of whether the views of lecturers are taken into account by formal leaders touches on the degree to which the organisation can balance the hard procedural elements of institutional practice with the formative, developmental elements of personal and professional selfhoods set out in Chapter 2, Section 1.1. Firstly, all three lecturer groups see a culture of incentives and support for personal and professional growth as less-characteristic but more-desired (16). This perception is forcefully underlined by all three groups claiming that having limited incentives and structures, or incentives and structures targeted only at certain personnel, is less-desired and therefore less effective. Again, this reflects the effectiveness literature in which there is a perceived need for in-service training (Sammons et al., 1994, Smart et al., 1997), reflection, opportunities for learning (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003), and incentives and structures to promote change (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). These perceptions, coupled with the wish to not have formal leaders setting the agenda, move the lecturers towards the community-building end of the organisational structure continuum or towards a human relations system (Scheerens, 2000) in which there is emphasis on well-being, consensus, relationships and human resource development (Chapter 2, Section 1.1). However, it must also be borne in mind that the desire by lecturers to deny formal leaders the established power hierarchy may have less to do with altruistic concerns for community and more to do with previously described political models (Busher, 2005a, Scheerens, 2000) (Chapter 2, Section 1.1.1) in which people 'look for sources of power to help them implement their views and values' (Busher, 2005a:76). Nevertheless, further support for building community comes from both the Business and IT lecturers seeing a culture of putting the student first and being curriculum focused as characteristic, and the Arts and Business lecturers seeing the same factor as desirable. However, putting the students first should not be seen as getting them through

tests or broadly monitoring output as this is seen as less-desirable by the Arts and IT lecturers. As before there is no clearly articulated alternative such as might have been demonstrated if the group had placed the card 'foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students – develop input – promote independence' in the more-desired sort. Thus, although placing students first is seen as contributing to effective schooling and a key finding of recent studies (Hobby, 2004), it is not clear in what way the lecturers support this, envisage its enactment, or perceive how high performance and excellence should be measured.

A third element that appears to underline the lecturers' preference for a humanistic system over a rational/ bureaucratic one is the desire by all three groups for a working environment that enhances the performance of students, teachers and staff (24) whilst one that does not is seen as less desirable by Arts and Business groups. Concepts of the working environment are variously defined at both physical and affective levels, though the two are interlinked. For example, the physical environment may be measured by the amount of graffiti, damage to equipment (MacBeath et al., 1995), or general state of repair and maintenance of buildings and facilities (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Sammons et al., 1994). It may also be gauged by affective factors such as shared purpose (Wikeley et al., 2005), interpersonal relationships (Pounder, 2001a), inclusion (Stoll and Fink, 1996), respect (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Stoll and Fink, 1996), and atmosphere (Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Sammons and Mortimore, 1997). Though the statements associated with the relevant factor (Environment) do not allow for differentiation between the two, the desire by all three groups for a positive environment underscores the importance of this factor, however defined, in aiding the creation of effective schools.

Lastly, two groups (Arts and IT) perceive mutual caring and trust within and across departments; openness to ideas, respect for difference, and commitment to change (18) as less characteristic but more desired. Again, this underlines the preference lecturers have for an organisation in which members act collaboratively and communally for the benefit of the organisation and its members (Hobby, 2004, Pounder, 2001a, Stoll and Fink, 1996, Wikeley et al., 2005). Such a preference is reinforced by the Arts and IT groups seeking an

organisation in which there is always someone there to help; where time is invested in widening horizons, and injustice is fought; factors supported in the literature (Dimmock and Walker, 2004, Hobby, 2004, Stoll and Fink, 1996). Despite this, there are no clear-cut views on how community is constituted or the extent to which community members such as parents, employers or government members can or should be included in educational practice and organisation, though setting the school within the wider cultural milieu is advocated (Sun et al., 2007). Two groups (Business and IT) perceive the organisation as currently less characterised by a sense of self-containment with little or no contact with the non-academic community of parents, employers or alumni whilst two groups (Arts and Business) also see the same factor as less-desired. From this, it might be inferred that the opposite is both more characteristic, more desired and therefore more effective i.e. that the organisation forms part of a wider, local, non-academic community (Hobby, 2004, Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000) but whereas the Business lecturers place such a statement in the more-desired sort, the IT lectures desire the organisation to be largely self-contained and the Arts lecturers place neither statement in the desired sort.

It has been claimed that in educational contexts, sub-cultures may be located at the discipline or subject level (Lee, 2007). Despite this, the consensus amongst lecturers across three faculties on factors of effectiveness such as the distribution of power, personal and professional development, and the degree to which the working environment enhances performance and development suggest greater convergence at role level than faculty level. Nevertheless, three points need to be raised; firstly, it is not clear whether lecturer groups have interpreted all the factors in the same way or to the same degree (Scheerens, 2000). Secondly, the lecturers have at times been vague about what they do want i.e. they put students first, but do not state how; they do not want formal leaders to set the goals and vision, but they do not explicitly state that they want to work with those formal leaders to achieve organisational goals and vision. Though the range of card statements gave them some opportunity to do this, it is acknowledged that the card sort activity did not allow them to elaborate on what this might mean in practice. Thirdly, there may be differences between lecturers at discipline and/ or subject level that have not been uncovered here. In summary;

1. All three groups see formal leaders setting goals and vision and passing them down for enactment as more-characteristic but significantly, less-desired. Collaboration is therefore viewed as a key factor in organisations, as it can lead to unity of purpose and ownership, leading to improved academic achievement and the fostering of respect, support and relationships (Hobby, 2004, Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000, Stoll and Fink, 1996).
  2. All three groups see incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development as less-characteristic yet more-desired. In other words they see current policy and practice to support professional and personal growth as inadequate and ineffective. Again, this finding supports the work of those authors who see professional development as vital to enhancing effectiveness (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Leithwood and Riehl, 2003) because it creates a 'learning organisation' (Sammons et al., 1994:50) that can keep pace with societal and educational change.
  3. All three groups desire a working environment that enhances performance of students, teachers and staff. Environment or climate is a third key factor of effectiveness because, according to MacBeath et al (1995) and Sammons et al (1994:27) keeping a school safe, orderly and in a good state of repair can lead to higher academic achievement and better behaviour, as well as an improvement in morale.
- 1.4. To what extent do the perceptions of middle-leaders from the three different faculties (Arts, Business, and Information Technology) converge or diverge with regard to the current and desired organisational characteristics?

Table 18 illustrates the significant areas of agreement between middle-leaders, with significant taken as a minimum of two out of three middle leader focus groups agreeing on whether a factor is perceived as more/ less-characteristic or more/ less-desired. Consensus centres on six factors and associated criteria:

**Table 18: Significant agreement at role level. Middle-leaders from Faculties of Arts, Business & Information Technology**

<b>Criteria statement</b>	<b>More Characteristic</b>	<b>Less Characteristic</b>	<b>More Desired</b>	<b>Less Desired</b>
4. High performance is expected from students and staff – Desire for excellence – World Class.	Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders	
5. Check routine decisions with superiors – Avoid risk taking – Protect oneself.		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders
6. There is support for innovation & initiative. Take risks – Be proactive.	Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders			
8. Standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers, and managers are judged by national/ international standards	Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders	
9. Goals are fluid and flexible – There is no point planning too far ahead.		Arts Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders		Arts Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders
10. Clear and achievable goals/ objectives for the future have been set and communicated.			Arts Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders	
11. Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment.				Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders
12. Formal and informal leaders work with, and through others to set and achieve organisational goals and vision.	Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders	
13. Inside knowledge of the organisation, the needs of students, staff, and other stakeholders is key. We know what’s best. ‘Outsiders’ can offer little.				Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders
15. Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development - Resource allocation tied to organisational ‘needs’ and targeted personnel.		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders

Arts = Faculty of Arts; Bus = Faculty of Business; IT = Faculty of Information Technology

Table 14 (cont'd). Significant agreement at role level – Middle-leaders of Arts, Business, and IT Faculties

17. Different groups look for detachment and autonomy – Best ideas come from within the group		Arts Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders		Arts Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders
18. Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments – Openness to ideas – Respect for difference – Commitment to change.	Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders			
23. The working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff.		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders
29. Focus on management and control of teaching and learning – The organisation comes first		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders		Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders

Arts = Faculty of Arts; Bus = Faculty of Business; IT = Faculty of Information Technology.

1. Expectations of Success (the extent to which high performance is expected from all students and staff).
2. Risk (to what extent risk is encouraged).
3. Accountability (the degree to which standards of acceptable practice are judged internally or externally to the organisation).
4. Professional Development (the degree to which incentives and structures are available to support personal and professional growth).
5. Environment (the degree to which the environment enhances performance).
6. Focus (the extent to which focus should be on the organisation or the student)

At the more-characteristic level, all three middle-leader groups characterise the current organisation as one in which high performance is expected from students and staff and where there is a desire for excellence and a wish to be World Class. Furthermore, this same statement is also seen as desirable by all three groups and can therefore be seen as guiding the College towards the effective organisation of teaching and learning practices and the improvement of student outcomes. Expectations of success and associated demands for high performance from students and staff are seen as core features of effective schools although it is not always clear how high performance and excellence should be measured (Bennet and Harris, 2005).

One contributory element to high performance and excellence may be gathered from all three groups agreeing that at characteristic and desired levels, standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers and managers should be measured by national and international standards (8). Tenuously, this links factors of Excellence and Accountability together, though it is not clear whether the potential relationship is either causal or reciprocal (Sammons et al., 1994). Nevertheless, the view that practice should be judged by national or international standards is consistent with the effectiveness literature which views conceptual frameworks and instrumentation drawn from an international base as both 'desirable' and 'imperative' (Dimmock and Walker, 2000). At the same time the local context of the College and its affiliation to an outside university and Omani accreditation procedures must remain relevant. This leads to quality processes relevant to an Omani

context yet framed within the international community (Carroll, 2006) (see Chapter 1, Sections 1.1, 1.2). Sun et al (2007:513) in a recent study of Dutch schools, noted that external evaluation and external agents were key factors leading to effective school improvement and that too much teacher autonomy in assessment areas was a key factor in schools perceived as less effective. Despite concerns about teacher autonomy, two middle-leader groups (Arts and Business) perceive high levels of performance and effectiveness (currently and in future) being achieved through formal and informal leaders working together to set and achieve goals and objectives (12). This viewpoint is supported in the effectiveness literature where, for example, teacher involvement in the decision-making process is seen as 'essential' (Reezigt and Creemers, 2005:415). To some extent this also links with the perceptions of the lecturers who saw top-down setting of goals and vision as less desirable (though they were less clear about what they desired in terms of hierarchy and power distribution). Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 2, if performance and effectiveness is perceived as achievable through leaders and followers working more collaboratively within the organisation, there must be a concern for finding the balance between formal control mechanisms and the degree of autonomy given or taken by followers and informal leaders internally (Briggs, 2005, Harris, 2003). This internal balance should also be extended to the wider world and the extent to which audit cultures and external accountability measures undermine the ability of staff to engage in communal activities (Biesta, 2004, Deem, 2007). Two middle-leader groups point towards the need for balance between internal and external features by advocating that standards should be judged by national or international standards whilst acknowledging that inside information is key (Arts middle-leaders), or by advocating that standards are judged by international standards *and* by professionals within the organisation (IT middle-leaders). However, it is also important to note that though lecturers and middle-leaders to some extent share criteria, how they interpret concepts of collegiality and collaboration may differ between individuals, groups and departments.

The issue of collegiality links to the second key area of congruence across middle-leader groups - ideas of community. The middle-leaders broadly perceive the organisation as democratic and open and they desire similar characteristics for the future. All three

groups share the perception that the organisation is characterised less by a focus on management and control of teaching (29) and instead, two groups see the organisation as valuing mutual caring and trust across areas and departments, having an openness to ideas, respecting difference and being committed to change. However, the Arts and IT middle-leaders see different groups looking for detachment or autonomy as less-characteristic and significantly, less-desired and less effective. Conceptually, this speaks to the idea of standardised practices across all areas of the organisation being central to the success of modern organisations in that they allow people to stop wasting energy on basic activities and provide a platform on which creative people can build (Handy, 1993, Kanter, 2008). Further support for this comes from two groups (Business and IT) seeing outsiders as unable to offer much to the organisation as less-desired (13). Though it is not clear which outsiders may be of most benefit to the College, the literature identifies outside standards and the inclusion of those outside the school such as parents, employees and government departments as having the potential to enable effectiveness (Sammons et al., 1994, Stoll and Fink, 1996, Sun et al., 2007). If detachment and autonomy are viewed as less desirable, then there has to be some loss of individual and group autonomy (at departmental or subject levels) as the organisation moves towards standardised practices and unity around core goals and objectives. A consequence of this may be the growth of a rational or bureaucratic organisational model (Scheerens, 2000), that may lead to a strong culture (Hobby, 2004) and associated claims of effective practice (Reynolds, 1998). However despite this, tension between control and freedom is likely to remain as both lecturers and middle-leaders seek personal and professional growth, advocate initiative, and look for increased input into the practices and policies of the College in order to gain the resources they need (Busher, 2005a) to achieve desired ends.

Despite support for controlling factors, two middle-leader groups see the current organisation supporting initiative, innovation and risk and eschewing checking routine decisions with superiors and self-protection (3); a characteristic perceived as less desirable by all three groups and a contributory factor in ineffective schools (Stoll and Fink, 1996), though it can be argued that this may depend on where the organisation is located in its cycle of change (see p.71). Moreover, all three groups see limited incentives and structures

to support personal and professional development (15) as both less-characteristic and less-desired, again aligning with effectiveness research (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Sammons et al., 1994). In other words, the groups claim that personal growth and development are advocated rather than constrained and therefore link themselves, at least in part, with human relations models (Scheerens, 2000) and the effectiveness movement (Sammons et al., 1994) that advocate personal growth and interconnectedness and the formation of democratic communities of learners and teachers.

The middle-leaders of Arts and IT see as less-characteristic and less-desired an organisation in which goals are fluid and flexible (9), and instead desire clear and achievable goals to be communicated. This speaks perhaps to their roles as transmitters of core strategic values (Clegg and McAuley, 2005) and wise organisational managers who translate purpose and vision into practical activity and outcome (Briggs, 2005) (Chapter 2, Section 1.1). Clear goals passed down through the hierarchy enable them to organise members effectively, though this may mean that loyalty to subject area is sacrificed for organisational harmony across departments (Scheerens, 2000).

All three groups place the value identifying the working environment as doing little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff (23) as less-characteristic. The inference is that the working environment does enhance performance. However, the picture is confused. The IT group desires a working environment that does *little* to enhance performance (23); the Business group desires an environment that does enhance performance (24) and along with the Arts middle-leaders sees an environment that does little to enhance performance as less desirable. Thus, only one group (Business) places a desire for a positive environment in the more-desired sort.

In contrast to the lecturers, it is noted that each of the three middle-leader groups had a distinct set of criteria that they applied to both the more-characteristic and the more-desired sorts, though those criteria are not necessarily common *across* all three groups. In fact, the above analysis shows that all the middle-leader groups agree on only two factors and associated criteria that span more-characteristic and more desirable sorts:

1. Expectations of Success (high performance is expected from students and staff).
2. Accountability (standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers and managers are judged by national and international standards).

The middle-leaders also agree on three factors and associated criteria seen as less-characteristic:

1. Professional Development (incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development are limited and tied to organisational needs and targeted personnel)
2. Environment (the working environment does little to enhance performance of students teachers and staff)
3. Focus (there is a focus on management and control of teaching and learning – the organisation comes first).

There is further consensus on one factor and connected criteria seen as less-desired:

1. Risk (checking routine decisions with superiors, avoiding risk taking and protecting oneself is undesired).

The Arts middle-leaders placed seven of the more-characteristic criteria in the more-desired quadrant; the Business middle-leaders likewise placed seven of the more-characteristic criteria in the more-desired sort. The IT middle-leaders placed only four of the more-characteristic criteria in the more-desired sort, but even this is double the number of any lecturer group. In contrast, the lecturer groups see none of the current criteria as desirable but place six of the statements they see as less-characteristic as in the more-desired sort. These differences are more fully discussed in the next section but the degree to which individual middle-leader groups chose the same criteria for both characteristic and desired sorts suggests that the middle-leaders are content with the direction and status of the college. It has been argued (Section 2.3. above) that the lecturers have a general sense of where they want to go but lack concrete focused goals on how to get there. The middle-

leaders seem more confident and more satisfied and more comfortably acculturated to the organisation.

1.5. To what extent do the perceptions of lecturers and middle-leaders in the three faculties converge and/ or diverge with regard to the current and desired organisational characteristics?

Table 19 shows areas of significant convergence on criteria of effectiveness across all six groups. Significant is taken as five (83%) or more of the six focus groups showing consensus in the placing of a statement in either more/ less-characteristic or more/ less-desired quadrants. By taking congruence across five groups as a baseline, it means that three groups of either middle-leaders or lecturers must be included and two of another. If four was taken as a base it could mean three middle-leader groups agree and only one lecturer group or vice versa, thus skewing the cross-faculty consensus data. Table 19 shows that at this level of significance there is *some* consensus across the groups as to what criteria and associated factors of effectiveness constitute either the actual or desired profile of the College. Emphasis is placed on *some* as the evidence is limited, i.e. there is no single criterion on which all six groups converge.

Table 20 below sets out key areas of divergence amongst the groups. Though divergence is identified across 9 factors, most attention is paid to those factors which contrast sharply with convergent factors given in Table 19, i.e. Collaboration, Professional Development, and Environment.

Perceptions of lecturers and middle-leaders coalesce around four criteria (Table 19). Five groups (all middle-leaders and both the Business and IT lecturers) see the organisation as expecting high performance from students and staff, desiring excellence, and working towards being World Class. This statement is also seen as more desirable and therefore effective by five of the six groups (all middle-leaders, and the Arts and Business lecturers). Unsurprisingly, success is seen as a key element in organisational effectiveness. For Mac

**Table 19: Significant Convergence across Faculty and Role. Lecturers & Middle-leaders from Faculties of Arts, Business & Information Technology**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Criteria statement</b>	<b>More Characteristic</b>	<b>Less Characteristic</b>	<b>More Desired</b>	<b>Less Desired</b>
Expectations of Success	4. High performance is expected from students and staff – Desire for excellence – World Class	Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders		Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders	
Collaboration	11. Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment.				Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders
Professional Development	15. Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development - Resource allocation tied to organisational 'needs' and targeted personnel.				Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers IT Lecturers Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders
Environment	23. The working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff.		Arts Lecturers Bus Lecturers Arts Mid-leaders Bus Mid-leaders IT Mid-leaders		

**Table 20: Significant Divergence across Faculty and Role. Lecturers and Middle-leaders from Faculties of Arts, Business & Information Technology**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Criteria statement</b>	<b>More Characteristic</b>	<b>Less Characteristic</b>	<b>More Desired</b>	<b>Less Desired</b>
Risk	5. Check routine decisions with superiors – avoid risk-taking – protect oneself				Arts lecturers
					Arts, Business and IT mid-leaders
Accountability	8. Standards of acceptable practice of students, teachers and staff are judged by national/ international standards			No lecturers	
				Arts, Business and IT mid-leaders	
Planning	9. Goals are fluid and flexible – there is no point in planning too far ahead		No lecturers		
			Arts & IT mid-leaders		
Collaboration	11. Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment	Arts, Bus & IT Lecturers			
		IT Mid-leaders			
	12. Formal and informal leaders work with and through others to set and achieve organisational goals and vision	No lecturers			
		Arts & Business mid-leaders			
Professional Development	15. Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development – resource allocation tied to organisational needs and targeted personnel		Arts lecturers		
			Arts, Business & IT mid-leaders		

	16. Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development – inclusion for all		Arts, Business & IT lecturers	Arts, Business & IT lecturers	
			IT mid-leaders	Business mid-leaders	
Relationships	17. Different groups look for detachment and autonomy – Best ideas come from within the group		No lecturers		No lecturers
			Arts & IT mid-leaders		Arts & IT mid-leaders
	18. Mutual caring and trust within and across areas – openness to ideas – respect for difference – commitment to change	No lecturers			
		Arts & Business mid-leaders			
Support/ Social Justice	22. There is always someone there to help – invest time to widen horizons – fight injustice		Business & IT lecturers		
			No mid-leaders		
Environment	24. The working environment enhances performance of students, teachers, and staff.		Arts & IT lecturers	Arts, Business & IT lecturers	
			No mid-leaders	No mid-leaders	
Focus	29. Focus on management and control of teaching and learning – the organisation comes first	Arts & Business lecturers	No lecturers		
		No mid-leaders	Arts, Business & IT mid-leaders		

Beath et al (1995) successful schools are successful for people in a range of ways but fundamentally for students, success was measured not only in qualifications gained but also in the development of responsibility, confidence, inventiveness and enterprise. However, as explored in Chapter 2 Effective Schooling, what exactly success is and how it is measured remains problematic. Although qualifications are readily seized on as a quantitative measure of success by parents, governments and community, the other elements of success are far harder to measure or even define both conceptually and culturally. For example, what is seen as responsible (or irresponsible) behaviour in a nineteen-year old Omani female student may differ significantly from that of a Japanese male student. Further, whether success is a result of effective schooling, a cause or a reciprocating element is not fully understood (Scheerens, 2000). For example, creating expectations of success in teachers and students may create success that will in turn create further desire. Nevertheless, promoting excellence and having high expectations were key features of successful schools in the large-scale studies of key stakeholders in UK schools by Hobby (2004) and Macbeath (2002). Cameron and Tschirart (1992) see success as identifying what an institution does best and then doing more of it, a view echoed by Stoll and Fink (1996) who see success as continuous improvement. Hobby (2004) sees success as something more aggressive, describing it as a hunger for improvement and a desire to achieve excellence. Therefore, success is a drive to do something well, and having achieved this by some measure, to not only make further improvements but to extend the model of success into other areas. Thus, success is both a driver of effectiveness (Hobby, 2004, Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Sammons and Mortimore, 1997) (we want to be successful), and an outcome when applied to other factors (we have succeeded in doing x).

Though there is consensus on a need for high expectations and a desire for excellence, the factors around which groups prioritise their expectations differ and may therefore undermine the ability to achieve success. For example, for the lecturers, aside from high performance (on which only two lecturer groups converge), all three groups agree on two criteria as more-desired (Table 20); a) incentives and structures to support personal and professional development (16); and b) establishing a working environment that enhances performance of students, teachers and staff (24). It can be inferred from this

that the lecturer groups see success in these key areas as an outcome of high expectations of success within these areas. In contrast, all middle-leaders converge on only one desired criterion, namely; standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers and managers are judged by national/ international standards; a criterion that is not seen as desired by any of the lecturer groups (Table 20). This is not to say that the aims of the two sets of participants are incompatible or mutually exclusive. For example, putting students first does not preclude judging performance by international standards; and a positive working environment at both physical and affective levels may enhance performance and raise standards. Nevertheless, there appear to be significant differences in how success and high expectations are prioritised and possibly enacted within the organisation.

The second shared criteria on which lecturers and middle-leaders (Arts middle-leaders excepted) converge is that an organisation in which formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment is less-desired (Table 19) and therefore potentially less effective. However, only the lecturers and middle-leaders of the Arts Faculty directly assert that they desire an organisation in which formal and informal leaders work more closely together in devising and achieving organisational goals, despite such collaboration being seen as a potential core factor in making schools more effective (Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000). Notably, collaboration is seen as particularly necessary in higher education (Pounder, 2001b) where distributed leadership can bring a flatter hierarchy of power to the organisation. Collaboration should be seen as necessary in not only facilitating and extending the flow of power within the organisation to improve the design and operation of organisational processes and policies, but also in empowering individuals to develop professional and personal selves. Such collaboration brings together the human relations and rational models described in Chapter 2 whereby organisational units such as departments are formed into a 'harmonious whole' (Scheerens, 2000:25). This harmony, seen as particularly relevant to higher education (Briggs, 2005), blends the transformational effects of social and professional interaction that moves members beyond self-interest, with the transactional effects of a bureaucracy that provides a hard shell of distributed responsibilities and accountability to stakeholders. Despite this joint desire, the groups

diverge on perceptions of the current organisation. All three lecturer groups and one middle-leader group (IT) currently see formal leaders setting the goals and vision and passing them down to the lecturers for enactment (11) whereas two middle-leader groups (Arts and Business) perceive themselves as working collaboratively with others to set and achieve the same goals and vision (12, Table 20). Clearly, this second area of disjuncture between lecturers and middle-leaders as to how the current organisation is perceived suggests that the correct balance, or harmony has not been found between power and autonomy, transaction and transformation, or hard structures of managerial organisation and soft development of personal and professional selfhoods (Chapter 2, Section 1.1).

The third criteria shared across five groups (all lecturer groups and Arts and Business middle-leaders) is one that views limiting the allocation of resources for personal and professional growth as less-desired (15, Table 19), although only the three lecturer groups and the Business middle-leaders actually state that the opposite is more desired (16, Table 20). The associated factor for these criteria is Professional Development and effective schools have been identified as those in which there is commitment to staff development (Sammons et al., 1994), with incentives and structures provided (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003) as well as opportunities for reflection (Stoll and Fink, 1996). It is further claimed that in professional cultures, personnel should identify with their profession leading to further engagement at the national and international level (Dimmock and Walker, 2000). However, opportunities for growth and development may be framed by the interests of the school (Muijs and Harris, 2007:118) and school resources are not boundless. Consequently, a quantitative and qualitative commitment by leadership to support growth and development amongst staff in the interest of creating a dynamic community has to be tempered by the limitations of resources, both human and physical. The necessity of controlling those resources leads to them being channelled towards the interests of the school at the expense of the individual. In this case, although five groups agree that limiting incentives and structures is less-desired, once again, there is significant divergence on the current view of the organisation with three middle-leader groups seeing the limiting of incentives and structures as currently less-characteristic whilst only one lecturer group (Arts) shares such a view (15, Table 20). Instead, all three lecturers' groups

take the opposite view - that inclusion for all in incentives and structures is less-characteristic (16). In other words, as with Collaboration, convergence on a desired factor is mirrored by divergence at the current organisational level.

This pattern continues with the final consensual criterion that centres on the working environment. Five groups (except IT lecturers) see as less-characteristic a working environment that does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff (23, Table 19). From this it can be inferred that the working environment in the current organisation is reasonably positive, though only the Business middle-leaders actually claim this in the more-characteristic sort and two lecturer groups (Arts and IT) actually see an enhancing environment as less-characteristic (24, Table 20). However, all three lecturer groups desire such a positive working environment (24, Table 20). An orderly atmosphere and an attractive and quality working environment (Cameron and Tschirhart, 1992, Sammons et al., 1994) are regarded as providing a context in which effective schooling can take place and may in themselves be taken as elements of effectiveness. However, 'attractive' and 'quality' are subjective terms, culturally related and may mean different things to different people. For example, for the lecturers, an attractive and positive working environment may include the active promotion of personal and professional development within the organisation, new classrooms and equipment, or their involvement in decision-making processes. For the middle-leaders it may mean clear standards, knowing where staff are at any given time or a clearer understanding of future goals. Once again, outward consensus may mask inner difference and it is unclear whether the working environment is seen as the physical one of classrooms, buildings and facilities; an affective one of atmosphere; or both.

In summary, although the lecturer and middle-leader perceptions of what criteria currently and in future may enhance effectiveness converge in some areas, there are significant differences in the detail. Firstly, although lecturers and middle-leaders generally view both high performance and expectation of success as characteristic of the current organisation, they diverge in what constitutes high performance and success (though evidence for this is less compelling). Secondly, although it is agreed that formal leadership

passing down goals and vision for enactment by others lower down the hierarchy is less-desired, there is divergence over the extent to which that is currently taking place within the organisation and by extension, how concepts such as collegiality, collaboration and control are understood differently by different groups. Thirdly, and similarly, although there is consensus that the limiting of incentives and structures used to promote personal and professional growth is undesired, there is a gap between how lecturers and middle-leaders perceive the current organisational structure as achieving those aims and this impacts on how current practice is seen as effective. Finally, there is agreement that the current working environment doing little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff is less-characteristic though the inverse statement; that the working environment does enhance performance is less-clearly articulated.

## **CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. CONCLUSIONS**

The aims of this research (as set out in Chapter 1, Section 3) were to:

1. Provide data on the degree to which the perceptions of lecturers and middle-leaders about the actual and desired organisational characteristics of a Higher Education Institution in Oman converge and/ or diverge with regard to the effective operation of teaching and learning processes within the institution.
  
2. Provide a methodological tool that other organisations might use to investigate staff perceptions of the organisation as a precursor to building commitment to a shared vision of effective practice.

This work has drawn on the international literature for the effective school movement, with particular emphasis on the relevance of effective schooling in secondary contexts. The findings show that differences concerning how teaching and learning are effectively practised and organised at current and desired levels are greater between lecturers and middle-leaders, irrespective of their faculty, than between lecturers from different faculties, or middle-leaders from different faculties. There is no clear evidence to suggest that one particular dimension of effectiveness (Developing Organisational Structure; Developing Community (Staff), Developing Community (Students) or Developing Community (External) dominates the concerns of lecturers or middle-leaders, though factors relating to Developing Organisational Structure and Developing Community (Staff) have a slightly more raised profile than the others in that they occur at the extremes of the sort-card diamond more frequently.

The greatest degree of convergence between lecturers and middle leaders was found on the factor 'Expectations of Success' within the dimension of Developing Organisational Structure. Two lecturers groups and three middle-leader groups saw this factor as not only characteristic of the current organisation but also more-desired, and therefore a significant enabler of organisational effectiveness. At first glance, such convergence might signal a unity of purpose and vision that is a central element of strong cultures (Deal and Kennedy, 1983, Lussier and Achua, 2004) and a key long-standing component of effective schools (Hobby, 2004, Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 1992). However, this convergence masks differences across lecturers and middle-leaders groups in how high performance and excellence are constituted, and the degree to which such factors are currently enacted within the organisation.

Overall, lecturers forge links between what is more characteristic but less desired, and what is less characteristic but more desired. In other words, key descriptors of the current organisation are actually seen as hindering effectiveness whereas those not currently seen as characteristic are perceived as enabling effectiveness. The conclusion drawn from this is that lecturers see the current organisation as ineffective in its management of teaching and learning practices. Core factors that span the characteristic/desired dichotomies are: Collaboration (how goals and vision are set and communicated); Professional Development (the degree to which incentives and structures are available to foster personal and professional growth); and Environment (the extent to which the working environment enhances performance of students, teachers and staff). The first factor (Collaboration) is linked to the dimension of Developing Organisational Structure. All three lecturer groups saw formal leaders setting the goals and vision and passing them down to the lecturers for enactment in the current organisation as more characteristic. It is recognised that strong leadership articulations of goals and vision are necessary in aiding the formation of strong organisational cultures (Deal and Kennedy, 1983). However, the effectiveness movement broadly supports collaborative and collegial participation in decision making and the consequent decentring or dispersal of leadership throughout the organisation (Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000). Though the majority of lecturer and middle-leader groups viewed such hierarchical practice as *less-desired*, and therefore less

effective, all the lecturer groups saw this as characteristic of the current organisation, whereas the middle-leaders, with the exception of those from IT, did not.

The second consensual factor amongst the lecturers, associated with the dimension of Developing Community (Staff), saw an organisation providing incentives and support for personal and professional growth as less-characteristic of the current organisation. However, they also saw it as more desired and therefore it is a factor that may potentially enhance organisational effectiveness, a view supported elsewhere (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Sammons et al., 1994). Once again, although three lecturer groups and two middle-leader groups saw limiting incentives and structures as less desired, the middle-leaders stance was different to the lecturers in that they did not view such limitations as characteristic of the current organisation.

Thirdly, the lecturers perceive an environment that enhances performance, Development of Community (Staff), as desirable and therefore potentially able to contribute to organisational effectiveness. Nevertheless, they do not see that as currently operational. In this at least, there is some superficial consensus as two lecturer groups and three middle-leader groups see the working environment as doing little to enhance performance as less characteristic. However, evidence of consensus is weak as two lecturer groups saw the environment as simultaneously inhibiting and enabling performance and there remains some question mark over whether this refers to a physical and/ or affective environment.

Overall, despite agreement that Expectations of Success dominate the current organisational structure, there is a sense that the lecturers perceive the current structure as ineffective due to a constraint of hierarchy and control of resources, and a focus on management and control of teaching and learning at the expense of mutual caring and collegiality, despite the views of middle-leaders that this is not the case. This perception amongst the lecturers aligns MUC with the bureaucratic and rationalist models of organisations identified in Chapter 2, Section 1.1. and seems distant from the human-relations models which advocate collegiality, care and growth (Scheerens, 2000).

In contrast, at the more-characteristic level, the middle-leaders converge on Expectations of Success (High performance is expected from students and staff – Desire for excellence – World Class) and Accountability (Standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers, and managers are judged by national/ international standards)- both related to the dimension of Developing Organisational Structure - seeing these factors as enabling effective organisation of teaching and learning practice. To a lesser degree, the middle-leaders also see the current organisation supporting Risk (innovation, initiative and risk), Collaboration (formal and informal leaders working together to set and achieve organisational goals and vision), and Relationships (mutual caring and trust within and across departments).

Drawing on the literature of organisational cultures, and thus linking outcomes of effectiveness with educational processes, the clear consensus and prioritisation of issues pertaining to performance and standards, (with less compelling evidence for the development of people suggests the middle-leaders) sees the current organisation reflecting a rational-open systems model (Bennet, 2005) in which formal power structures exist but there is additional focus on the interrelationship of individuals and departments and the creation of community (Scheerens, 2000). This connects to the transactional/transformational continuum identified for middle-leaders by Pounder (2001b) who sees individuals changing themselves and the organisation through an organisational framework of goal-setting and hierarchy. The tensions that these models infer between hard structure and soft human development may be reflected in the disparate perceptions of the lecturers and middle-leaders, and may mask micro-political inequalities of power held within the organisation (Busher, 2005a). Nevertheless, in contrast to the lecturers, the middle-leaders perceive factors operating at the more-characteristic level as enabling effectiveness and those at the less characteristic level as hindering effectiveness, as they are also recorded in the less-desired quadrant. Thus, lecturers and middle-leaders differ significantly on the factors they see embedded in the current organisation and such division in itself has been identified with less effective educational practice (Harris, 2005).

At the desired level, though differences in detail and interpretation remain, lecturers and middle-leaders converge around three key factors they perceive as enabling effectiveness; a) Expectations of Success (high performance and expectations), b) Professional Development (professional and personal growth), and c) Collaboration (an organisation in which formal hierarchy and control is replaced with more participative structures). These core factors lie at the heart of the effectiveness movement (Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens, 2000, Stoll and Fink, 1996) in their ability to potentially enhance the development of effective educational policy and practice through structures that incorporate both rational goals, such as student achievement (Scheerens, 2000), and the development of human relations through collaboration, collegiality, motivation and well-being (Scheerens, 2000). Thus, these findings for lecturers and middle-leaders in a HEI in Oman to some extent overlap with findings from large scale research projects carried out amongst teachers in the UK (Hobby, 2004, MacBeath et al., 1995).

Drawing on the literature for educational organisations, it is argued that lecturers be viewed as a key influence on the degree to which organisations can be considered effective (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, Reynolds, 2005, Sun et al., 2007). Similarly, middle-leaders have been described as pivotal figures between the senior management and classroom practitioners (Clegg and McAuley, 2005) and significantly, they are seen as translating the purpose and vision of the organisation into practical activity through their own practice and the management of others (Briggs, 2005, Clegg and McAuley, 2005). Divergence or convergence in view between these two key stakeholder groups is therefore not only worthy of investigation but essential to organisational effectiveness. The rift that exists between the two groups at the current level, whatever its origins, threatens the ability of organisational members to coalesce around broad unified goals identified at the desired level, hinders the process of distributed leadership advocated in the literature, and impacts directly on the working environment within the three faculties, and the organisation as a whole. As noted before, weak or ineffective cultures may arise when ambiguity is high amongst members leading to inconsistency in expectations of behaviour (p.30). This is taken up in Recommendations below.

School effectiveness explores factors that have the potential to enhance the organisation of teaching and learning practices within the chosen institution, and to improve student outcomes whether measured through tests or more holistic development of the student as a cognitive and social being (Fidler, 2005, Reynolds, 2005). Factors of effectiveness explore ‘what works in education ’ rather than why (Creemers and Reezigt, 2005, Scheerens, 2000) and though issues of what should be measured and how it should be measured remain, effectiveness should be seen as a useful tool in providing broad-based, institution-wide quantitative data (Bottery, 2005). In this thesis, the shortcomings of the effectiveness literature, with its engagement with outcomes, have been overcome by linking effectiveness with the processes and values of organisational cultures and sub-culture creation. Nevertheless, effectiveness is to a large extent contextual and consequently what is perceived as effective organisation in MUC may not be regarded as such in different settings. Although in the pilot study local concerns such as ‘time’, ‘risk taking’, ‘service’, ‘planning’, and ‘inclusion’ were fore-grounded these were not major concerns of the MUC participants reflecting differences in context. Further, even within MUC, the settings in which the investigation takes place should not be seen as static but may vary across time as the organisation responds to internal and external pressures to change. Consequently, the findings may not be generalisable to other settings (Sammons et al., 1994) and although factors of effectiveness may be seen as generic (as in oft-cited) or ‘common sense’ (Sammons et al., 1994), their contextual nature means that they cannot be applied mechanically or dogmatically or be seen as a checklist for successful education (Scheerens, 2000). However, a case study is also a single example of a broader class of things (Denscombe, 2008) and in this case, MUC is one of a number of private Higher Education providers in Muscat with multi-national staff offering degree courses through affiliated universities. The applicability of the MUC findings to the other institutions within the sector thus depends on the extent to which any other institution shares similar features with MUC such as staff demographics, institutional management structure, student intake, or condition and range of facilities.

In taking concepts of effectiveness as a starting place for self-evaluation and review of ‘what works’ within the organisation, it is argued as many different stakeholder groups

as possible and/ or practical be involved in the gathering of data. These stakeholder groups should reflect both internal (for example, students, teachers and administrators) and external constituents (for example, parents, employers and shareholders). This small-scale research has confined itself to two populations seen as having significant impact on the organisation and practice of teaching and learning.

The need to gather data on ‘what’ rather than ‘why’, and the need to draw on a wide body of participants, led to the investigation being framed by a quantitative case study approach. This case study of MUC is empirical in that it has collected quantitative data in order to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Bassegy, 2002, Yin, 2003). The data have been collected within the organisation itself and are bounded by a) place in that it is situated within a single HEI in Oman, b) time in that the data gathered is intimately connected to that particular time and different data may have been collected at a different time, and c) activity in that it focused on gathering data about perceptions of effectiveness within the organisation (Bassegy, 2002, Creswell, 2003, Luck et al., 2006). Thus, the contextuality of effectiveness is matched to the research paradigm and design (further discussed below).

In terms of the second research question, the Oman Accreditation Council and the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman share the aim of developing quality systems in HEIs that involve peer review of programmes and professional development of members (see pp.9-10). This is coupled with Muscat University College’s mission to strive for excellence in learning, teaching and research and to build a knowledge-based learning organisation. In response to these aims, the current research is a practical and timely move towards achieving these goals. Leaders need to encourage people to reflect on the assumptions they hold about teaching policy and practice (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003) and these assumptions need to be discussed and argued for (Heck and Hallinger, 2005, Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Wikeley et al., 2005). Awareness of what these assumptions are and who holds them within the organisation should be seen as critical concerns for MUC leadership and the successful management of the organisation. Sergiovanni (1992:73) notes that consensus runs deep in successful schools, and the more perceptions of what is effective practice are shared, the more staff and students respond with increased motivation and commitment.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003:5) claim that school effectiveness and its legitimacy with the broader community are enhanced when there are clear understandings about students and the nature of teaching and learning. In other words, MUC may be more effective when beliefs about what is effective educational practice, and how effectiveness is enacted are exposed, explored and endorsed by those with stakes in the process. This research has allowed the process of self-evaluation to begin within the College and for areas of division to be acknowledged and explored. Potentially, this may lead to clearer understandings, (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003), tighter unity (Harris, 2005), and more effective practice (Scheerens, 2000)

Self-evaluation has its strongest appeal in schools that have a keen interest in improvement (MacBeath, 2002) and it is likely that members of the senior management of MUC who invited the researcher into the heart of their organisation have such an interest. It is argued that the balance of internal and external evaluation has to be weighed in respect of each individual school (MacBeath, 2002) and the context in which it works. It has been demonstrated in this case study that there are concerns about where the boundaries between internal and external standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers and staff are set and policed and by whom. In many cases, audit cultures (which subject organisational members to internal and external accountability measures) are perceived as taking autonomy, power and community away from internal stakeholders (Deem, 2007, Zepke, 2007). Here, an investigation of what is perceived as effective practice within the organisation has become an activity that has involved and empowered key stakeholders in deciding whether the organisation is effective as a group of people working together to achieve its aims and purpose.

Focus groups and card sort activities have provided new opportunities for members of MUC to understand how peers and colleagues perceive the organisation in which they work. Though focus groups have been used as a means to encourage the collection of data rather than as a way to find out why participants act as they do, their use demonstrates that firstly, they answer the call for effectiveness research to become an activity in which organisation members can reflect and self-evaluate (Sammons et al., 1994, Scheerens,

2000) and secondly, they are compatible in their joint emphasis on participation, support, discussion and interaction between all members (Boddy, 2005, Sanders et al., 2005, Thomas, 2008). Thirdly, because of their relative simplicity, it has been possible to collect a large amount of data economically, uniformly and with minimal expertise or technical skill (Boddy, 2005, Fincher and Tenenbun, 2005, Rugg and McGeorge, 2005). Thus, focus groups and cards sorts speak to the second broad aim of the research i.e. to provide a methodological tool that other organisations might use to investigate staff perceptions of the institution in which they work.

## **2. LIMITATIONS**

A key limitation of the study stems from the research paradigm chosen and how this impacts on both the nature of the research itself and the findings. The study sought quantitative answers to ‘what’ factors and associated criteria of effectiveness lecturers and middle-leaders perceived as characteristic and desired for the organisation. Focusing on the broad spectrum of ‘what’ came at the expense of the ‘why’ with consequences for the analysis of the data and the findings.

Firstly, the study did not seek to explore how participants may have variously interpreted the concepts contained within the statements. For example, Cards 27 and 28 caused much discussion with the managers in the Faculty of Business. Card 27 states ‘focus attention and resources on disadvantaged groups of students – varying standards – help those in need’ whilst Card 28 states ‘attention and resources are divided equally amongst students – advantaged and disadvantaged – consistent standards for all’. The problem seemed to arise from how ‘disadvantaged’ was to be interpreted, whether it meant students who struggled with the work or whether it meant students from poorer backgrounds or even students who were physically disadvantaged. For the IT lecturers, it was Card 13 that proved problematic. This card states that ‘inside knowledge of the organisation, the needs of students, staff and other stakeholders is key. We know what’s best. Outsiders can offer little’. The issue here was how to identify who was a stakeholder and who was an outsider. In other words statements may have been interpreted differently both within and across groups and roles with an impact on the findings. This limitation extends to other concepts

in the study such as environment, collaboration, or success. Such data could have been collected through additional qualitative means such as recording focus group discussion or by asking participants at the time to elaborate on why they had placed certain cards in particular rows or what they understood by the phrasing of the statements.

Secondly, reducing the literature to 16 factors and 32 associated criteria took selection and compression, inevitably not all factors and criteria identified in Table 2 could be incorporated into the research instrument if that instrument were to be manageable for researcher and researched alike. Consequently, nuance and fine-graining have been lost. Further, the data has been examined in the light of how participant groups placed cards on a grid from rows 1 to 10 with the analysis confined to the top three and bottom three rows. Important issues may lie undiscovered in the middle four rows that have not been analysed i.e. issues that the lecturers and middle-leader groups do not prioritise may be just as important as the ones they do in providing data on how effectiveness is perceived within the organisation. Though links have been made between factors and criteria within and across groups and roles as systematically and uniformly as possible, it must be borne in mind that a pattern – whether of the present or future – is always arbitrary or partial in that there could always be a different one or a further elaboration of the same one. However, the limitations discussed above must be set against the benefits of a quantitative study in providing an organisational tool for kick-starting the process of self-evaluation and review.

With regard to the research methods, some limitations need to be fore-grounded. For focus groups, it is claimed that individuals do not understand social phenomena in isolation from each other (Bryman, 2004) and that the construction of social realities take place through interaction and discussion with others. In this case, the focus group setting allowed participants to voice their values, agree, disagree and possibly persuade others of their worth, and settle on consensual perceptions of the criteria of effectiveness perceived currently and desired for the future. Though mixing lecturers and middle leaders together was avoided, it is possible that other external divisions and power imbalances may have been brought into the groups that the researcher was not aware of and which may have affected the outcomes of the card sorts. A second point is that the focus groups were used

to gain answers to what works in education rather than why. To this end, the full potential of focus groups to study the processes that lead to collective meaning such as who says what and how (Bryman, 2004) was not utilised. A school that can allow a much longer time-frame for self-evaluation than was possible with this small-scale research may well benefit from combining broad and deep approaches and reveal more nuanced information on how members interpret and enact terms such as ‘collaborative’, ‘success’, ‘environment’.

There are also limitations to the use of card sorts. Firstly, participants were asked to sort statements that had already been devised and tested, thereby barring participants from entry-level input into the research process and control over what is researched. However, this is not without precedent (Hobby, 2004) and allows organisations quick access to a stable list of generic, ‘common sense’ (Sammons et al., 1994) factors of effectiveness whose prioritisation will lead to contextually relevant data . Nevertheless, it is recognised that a grounded-theory approach to the research connected to card sort activities might have produced different, more contextually relevant factors and associated values (Harry et al., 2005, Wopereis et al., 2005). Secondly, out of the 32 statements in the card sort activity, only the top and bottom eight were subjected to detailed analysis. Though this pattern of analysis has precedence in similar effectiveness research (Hobby, 2004, MacBeath et al., 1995) it means that the middle sixteen cards were largely ignored and nuances missed.

### **3. SIGNIFICANCE**

The rationale for this study is premised firstly on the pressing need to investigate what is happening within the emerging tertiary educational sector in Oman across all levels of policy and practice, and to understand not only how approaches to teaching and learning are perceived and enacted in a fast-changing, multi-cultural, privatised sector, but also how such perceptions converge or diverge from research carried out in other contexts (see p.47).

A prime area of significance is that studies in effectiveness have not been carried out in Higher Education Institutions in Oman and this case study extends effectiveness research into a new geographical area. It answers the call from national and international

bodies, such as the Oman Accreditation Council, to determine and develop the capacity and capability of HEIs to continuously improve and achieve their aspirations (Carroll et al., 2009) and has further significance as the number of private HEIs, and their affiliations with foreign universities continues to expand (Carroll et al., 2009), and with this expansion comes a diversity of academic staff brought in to teach and manage the learning process. Consequently, there may a range of opinions on how the educational process should be perceived and for what ends, and this may lead to fragmentation of the organisational culture into sub-cultures and a potential undermining of the purpose and vision of the organisation at individual, groups, or department levels. This research shows that core factors of effectiveness identified in large scale studies elsewhere (Hobby, 2004, MacBeath et al., 1995, Scheerens, 2000) are to some extent shared by a population of teachers and middle-leaders drawn from a range of backgrounds and experiences, working in Higher Education in Oman. These factors, operating at the desired level are Expectations of Success; Professional Development, and Collaboration, though how exactly these core factors are conceptualised individually and collectively requires further research. Though to some extent these findings are hardly surprising as factors of effectiveness have been described as 'generic' and common-sense (Sammons et al., 1994), up to now, there has been no evidence to support such a conclusion within the multi-national contexts of HEIs in Oman.

Also of significance is that at the current, characteristic level, the findings suggest that fault lines between organisational members are deeper between roles than between departments or subject areas as the literature has suggested (Briggs, 2005, Clegg and McAuley, 2005, Lee, 2007)(pp. 26, 31.). This is especially noticeable at the current, operating level of the College. Revealing this disjuncture provides a better understanding not only of how different groups, irrespective of subject specialism or department, perceive the organisation but also of what they desire for this organisation. As a consequence, MUC leadership, however constructed, can target appropriate organisational groupings and the relevant issues that have led to division amongst the groups, in order to bind members together in a way that enhances effective schooling.

A limitation of the effectiveness literature, with its emphasis on outcomes, has been addressed by additionally referring to the literature on organisational cultures and sub-cultures and by underlining the reciprocal relationship between process and outcome. Effectiveness is not just about what is produced, no matter how widely such a term is interpreted but is also about the processes of building community, organisational structure and power hierarchies. Lastly, by combining effectiveness with focus groups and card sorts, the research has created an original tool for other institutions to apply. The research instrument provides a tool that allows sensitive, standardised, and appropriate data gathering across different sites and populations within a single organisation and, potentially, across multiple sites. Thus, a process of institutional self-evaluation and reflection within the sector may lead to improvement and the sharing of practice through the common language of effectiveness.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings show that although lecturers and middle-leaders in some ways share perceptions of how they would like the organisation to be, they hold divergent views on how it is currently characterised. The research has taken a broad snapshot of the organisation and uncovered what is seen as effective and ineffective practice but not why it is so. The first recommendation is for the organisational members to further explore key issues on which there is divergence and division. The first issue concerns how members measure success at personal, professional and pedagogic levels. The second area is that of hierarchy and autonomy and how formal and informal leaders can work together and to what extent decision-making can be collaborative and/ or distributed. A third key area of exploration is the extent to which the aspirations of members to develop socially and professionally are being met by the current organisation. Although there is consensus that the limiting of incentives and structures used to promote personal and professional growth is undesired, there is a gap between how lecturers and middle-leaders perceive the current organisational structure as achieving those aims and this impacts on how current practice is seen as effective. These explorations could be carried out through qualitative approaches such as focus groups and small-scale research that can be managed by the members themselves and allow interaction and communication economically and on an ad hoc basis,

such as Wednesday afternoons when classes finish. It is understood that the views of participants may change over time and that the participants may also change as personnel are promoted, leave, or new ones come into the organisation. However, this process is not time-specific but on-going, allowing for self-evaluation and growth at both organisational and personal levels to be flexible and cyclical.

A second broad recommendation is that organisation members further investigate staff perceptions of how effective practices align with other stakeholder perceptions (such as the Dean and shareholders), as well as those articulated through external bodies such as the affiliated university and the national and international accreditation organisations. The classroom does not exist in isolation from the organisation, nor the organisation from wider local, national and international contexts and disjuncture at any point along the line is likely to cause discomfort, disharmony and disaffection. This may be carried out through interviews and through the study of organisational documentation such as mission and vision statements.

As a final word on this thesis, Blaise Pascal wrote that ‘there are truths on this side of the Pyrenees which are falsehoods on the other’ (Pascal, 1995:294). When this researcher set out on this journey, it was hoped that the patterns sought would be as neatly evident as Pascale’s geographic distribution of truths, and as clearly ordered as a suit of cards from ace to king, with the result that the findings could be presented to the world with precision and brevity. Of course, the opposite has been true, each one of us is a kaleidoscope of interconnected viewpoints that turn as our lives turn, constantly throwing out new patterns of light and colour as we confront and absorb new experiences. How we interrelate and construct our world is a thing of wonder and complexity that this thesis has done only a small amount to expose and explain. However, it has for one brief moment looked into the human workings of an educational organisation in Oman, shed some light on the members that inhabit that world, their perceptions of the organisation in which they work, and raised further questions that may be of use to members of the organisation itself or to other researchers in the field. If the present study prompts others to follow-up on the areas

mentioned above, then its significance will be enhanced and the struggle to complete the thesis will have been worthwhile.

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## Appendices

## Appendix 1. Participant Record Sheet – ‘As Is’ Culture

Arrange the thirty- two cards on a table top, following the pattern drawn below. You will need to discuss and negotiate their meaning and their placement as a group.

Try to describe your organisation’s culture **as it is** now, rather than how you would like it to be. If you can’t agree, capture the experience of the majority of people in your group.

When you have finished, to provide a permanent record, write each card’s number in the appropriate place on the grid below.

It is vital that you follow the pattern in placing your cards. You can only have two cards on the top row, three on the next, and so on. This may require you to make some hard choices and prioritise.

<b>Name of Group:</b>					
1					More-characteristic of our organisation      Less characteristic of our organisation
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

## Appendix 2. Personal data form

Dear participant

I would be grateful if you could complete the details below to help in the research project. Completing the form will mean that you give consent for the data to be analysed and reported on.

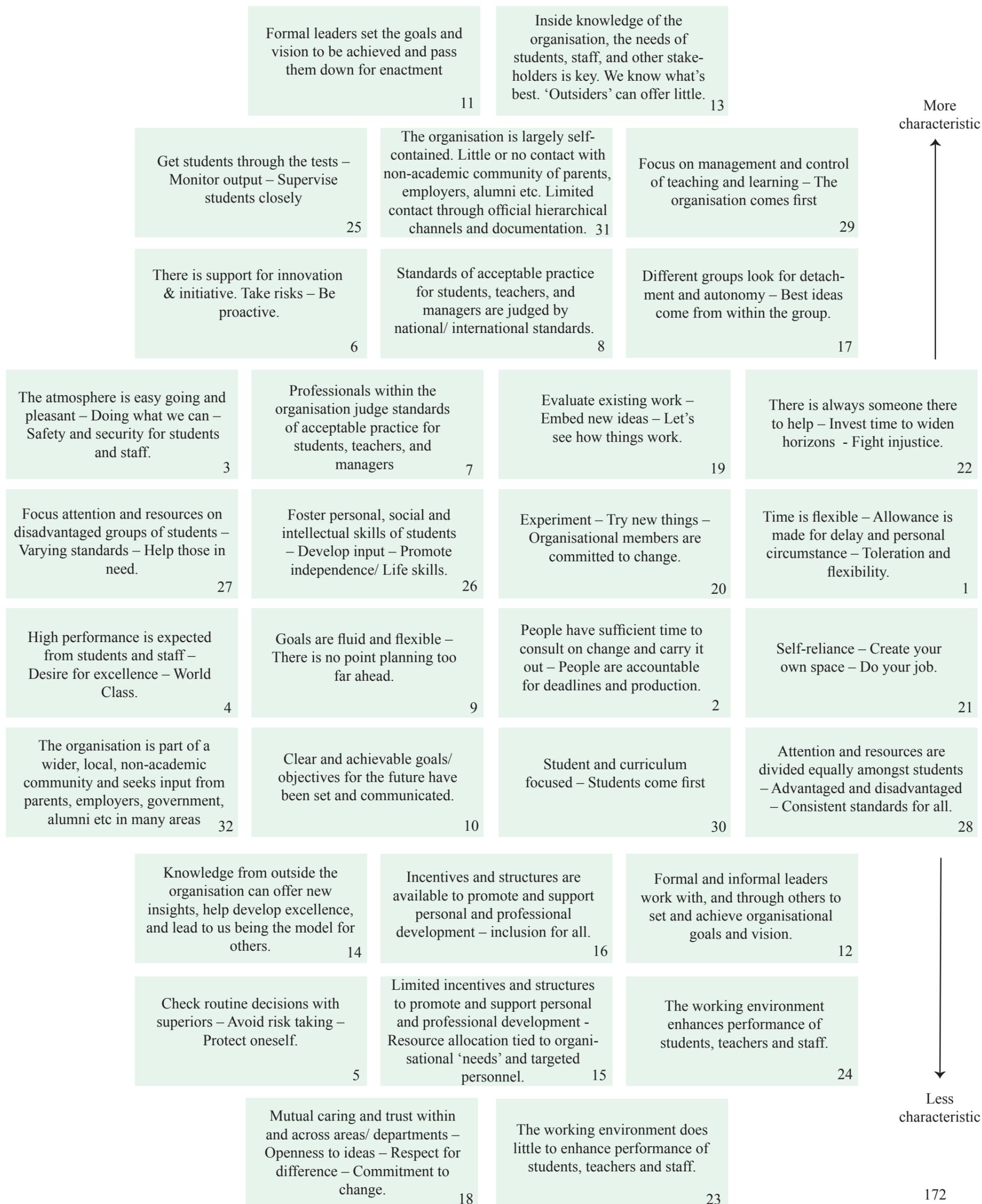
The data below will be used to help investigate values about teaching, learning and organisation held by members of the institution. No one will be referred to by name and results will be 'grouped' to protect privacy.

The aim is to find values held by lecturers and middle-leaders about effective teaching and learning practice. If references are made to individual characteristics within a group e.g. gender or age, they will be made without reference to names. Feedback will be given to participants on the findings and a journal paper may result from the workshops. If anyone has any questions please contact me: [andrewgthomas@hotmail.com](mailto:andrewgthomas@hotmail.com) or speak to me during the workshops.

Thank you  
Andrew Thomas

Name	Nationality
Age (please circle) 20-24 25-29 30-34 35-39 40-44 45-49 50-54 55-59 60+	Religion  Sect (if applicable)
Gender (please circle) M F	Email
Position title	Years in current position
Years in Oman	
Position before joining organisation	Location (country) of job before joining organisation
<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Subject</b>
First degree .....	Location of Institute (country) .....
Second degree (e.g. MA) .....	.....
Third degree (e.g. Doctorate).....	.....

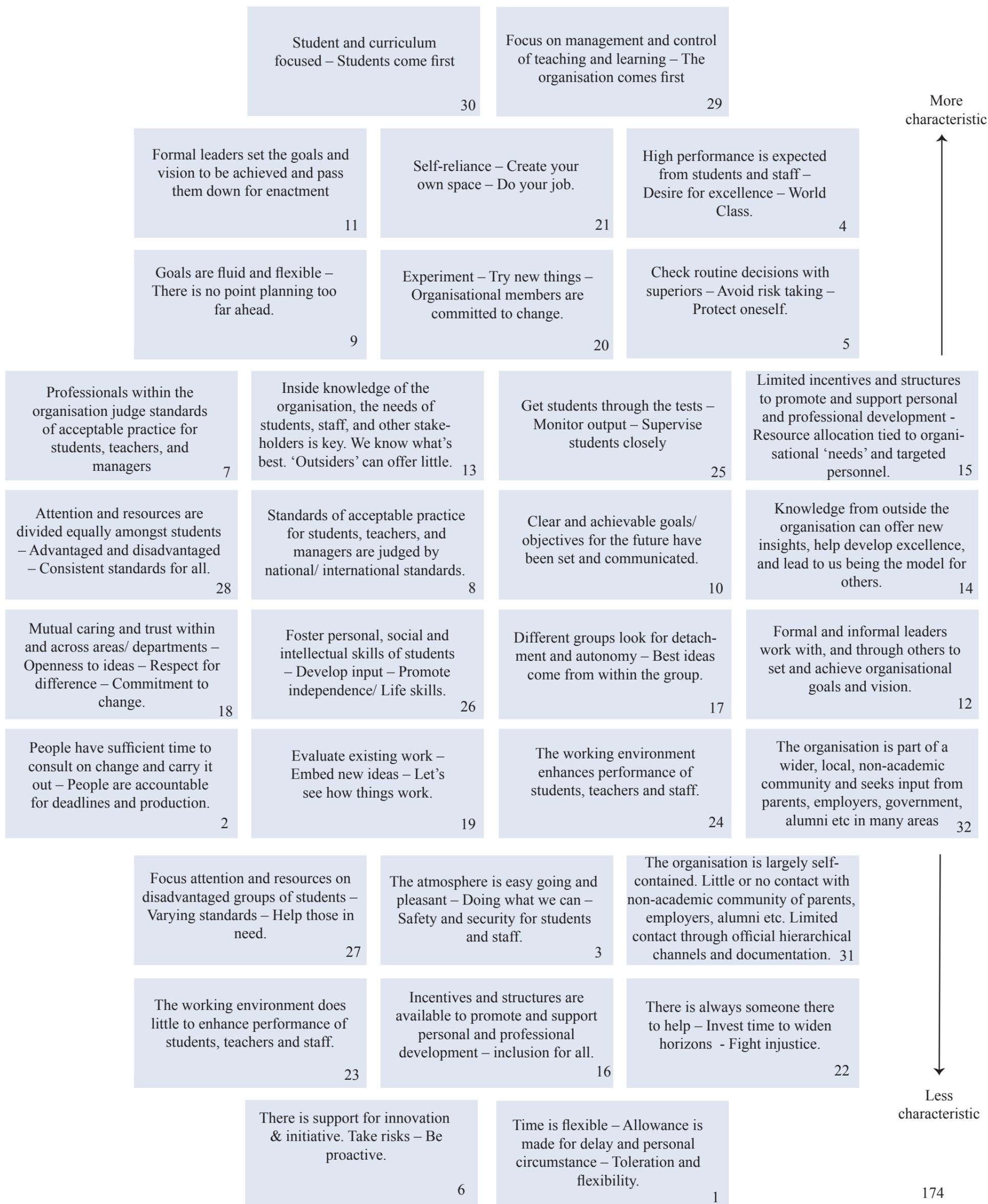
APPENDIX 3a  
FACULTY OF ARTS LECTURERS - MORE/LESS CHARACTERISTIC.



APPENDIX 3b  
FACULTY OF ARTS LECTURERS - MORE/LESS DESIRED.

	Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments – Openness to ideas – Respect for difference – Commitment to change. 18	High performance is expected from students and staff – Desire for excellence – World Class. 4		
	Experiment – Try new things – Organisational members are committed to change. 20	There is always someone there to help – Invest time to widen horizons - Fight injustice. 22	The working environment enhances performance of students, teachers and staff. 24	More desired ↑
	Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development – inclusion for all. 16	Formal and informal leaders work with, and through others to set and achieve organisational goals and vision. 12	Student and curriculum focused – Students come first 30	
People have sufficient time to consult on change and carry it out – People are accountable for deadlines and production. 2	Different groups look for detachment and autonomy – Best ideas come from within the group. 17	There is support for innovation & initiative. Take risks – Be proactive. 6	Clear and achievable goals/ objectives for the future have been set and communicated. 10	
The atmosphere is easy going and pleasant – Doing what we can – Safety and security for students and staff. 3	Standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers, and managers are judged by national/ international standards. 8	Self-reliance – Create your own space – Do your job. 21	Evaluate existing work – Embed new ideas – Let’s see how things work. 19	
Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students – Develop input – Promote independence/ Life skills. 26	Knowledge from outside the organisation can offer new insights, help develop excellence, and lead to us being the model for others. 14	Focus attention and resources on disadvantaged groups of students – Varying standards – Help those in need. 27	Inside knowledge of the organisation, the needs of students, staff, and other stakeholders is key. We know what’s best. ‘Outsiders’ can offer little. 13	
Attention and resources are divided equally amongst students – Advantaged and disadvantaged – Consistent standards for all. 28	The organisation is part of a wider, local, non-academic community and seeks input from parents, employers, government, alumni etc in many areas 32	Time is flexible – Allowance is made for delay and personal circumstance – Toleration and flexibility. 1	Focus on management and control of teaching and learning – The organisation comes first 29	
	Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment 11	Professionals within the organisation judge standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers, and managers 7	Get students through the tests – Monitor output – Supervise students closely 25	↓ Less desired
	The organisation is largely self-contained. Little or no contact with non-academic community of parents, employers, alumni etc. Limited contact through official hierarchical channels and documentation. 31	The working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff. 23	Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development - Resource allocation tied to organisational ‘needs’ and targeted personnel. 15	
	Check routine decisions with superiors – Avoid risk taking – Protect oneself. 5	Goals are fluid and flexible – There is no point planning too far ahead. 9		
				173

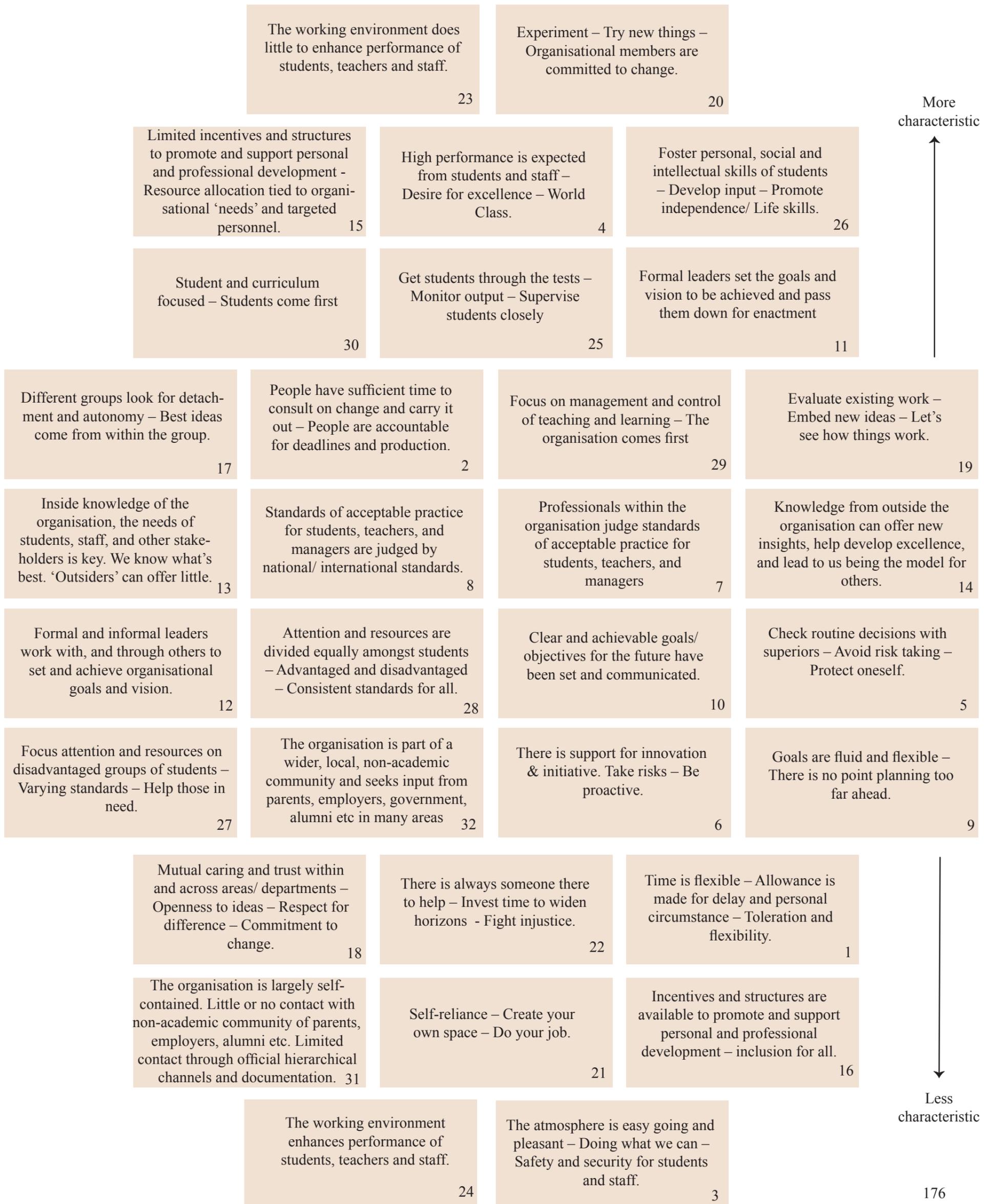
APPENDIX 4a  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS LECTURERS - MORE/LESS CHARACTERISTIC.



APPENDIX 4b  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS LECTURERS - MORE/LESS DESIRED.



APPENDIX 5a  
 FACULTY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY LECTURERS - MORE/LESS CHARACTERISTIC.



APPENDIX 5b  
FACULTY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY LECTURERS - MORE/LESS DESIRED.

	The atmosphere is easy going and pleasant – Doing what we can – Safety and security for students and staff. 3	The working environment enhances performance of students, teachers and staff. 24	
	The organisation is largely self-contained. Little or no contact with non-academic community of parents, employers, alumni etc. Limited contact through official hierarchical channels and documentation. 31	Self-reliance – Create your own space – Do your job. 21	Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development – inclusion for all. 16
	There is always someone there to help – Invest time to widen horizons - Fight injustice. 22	Goals are fluid and flexible – There is no point planning too far ahead. 9	Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments – Openness to ideas – Respect for difference – Commitment to change. 18
	Time is flexible – Allowance is made for delay and personal circumstance – Toleration and flexibility. 1	Check routine decisions with superiors – Avoid risk taking – Protect oneself. 5	Knowledge from outside the organisation can offer new insights, help develop excellence, and lead to us being the model for others. 14
	The working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff. 23		
There is support for innovation & initiative. Take risks – Be proactive. 6	The organisation is part of a wider, local, non-academic community and seeks input from parents, employers, government, alumni etc in many areas 32	Clear and achievable goals/ objectives for the future have been set and communicated. 10	Attention and resources are divided equally amongst students – Advantaged and disadvantaged – Consistent standards for all. 28
Professionals within the organisation judge standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers, and managers 7	Standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers, and managers are judged by national/ international standards. 8	Different groups look for detachment and autonomy – Best ideas come from within the group. 17	Inside knowledge of the organisation, the needs of students, staff, and other stakeholders is key. We know what's best. 'Outsiders' can offer little. 13
Formal and informal leaders work with, and through others to set and achieve organisational goals and vision. 12	Focus attention and resources on disadvantaged groups of students – Varying standards – Help those in need. 27	People have sufficient time to consult on change and carry it out – People are accountable for deadlines and production. 2	Focus on management and control of teaching and learning – The organisation comes first 29
	Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment 11	Evaluate existing work – Embed new ideas – Let's see how things work. 19	Experiment – Try new things – Organisational members are committed to change. 20
	Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development - Resource allocation tied to organisational 'needs' and targeted personnel. 15	Student and curriculum focused – Students come first 30	Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students – Develop input – Promote independence/ Life skills. 26
	High performance is expected from students and staff – Desire for excellence – World Class. 4	Get students through the tests – Monitor output – Supervise students closely 25	

More  
desired

Less  
desired

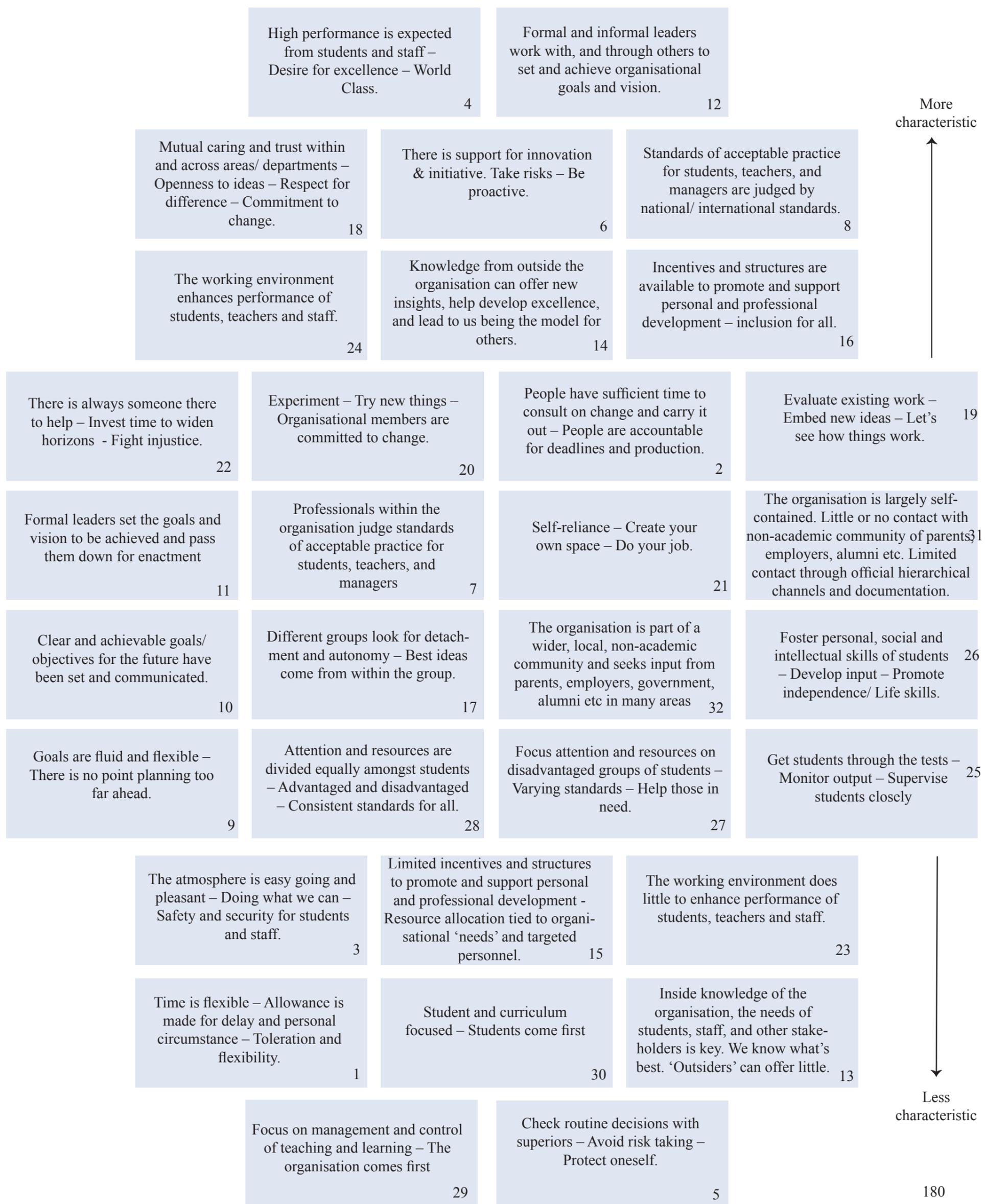
APPENDIX 6a  
FACULTY OF ARTS MIDDLE LEADERS - MORE/LESS CHARACTERISTIC.

<p>Mutual caring and trust within and across areas/ departments – Openness to ideas – Respect for difference – Commitment to change. 18</p>		<p>Standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers, and managers are judged by national/ international standards. 8</p>		<p>More characteristic ↑</p>
<p>Inside knowledge of the organisation, the needs of students, staff, and other stakeholders is key. We know what's best. 'Outsiders' can offer little. 13</p>	<p>High performance is expected from students and staff – Desire for excellence – World Class. 4</p>	<p>Formal and informal leaders work with, and through others to set and achieve organisational goals and vision. 12</p>		
<p>There is support for innovation &amp; initiative. Take risks – Be proactive. 6</p>	<p>Experiment – Try new things – Organisational members are committed to change. 20</p>	<p>Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students – Develop input – Promote independence/ Life skills. 26</p>		
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<p>Professionals within the organisation judge standards of acceptable practice for students, teachers, and managers 7</p>	<p>Student and curriculum focused – Students come first 30</p>	<p>The organisation is part of a wider, local, non-academic community and seeks input from parents, employers, government, alumni etc in many areas 32</p>	<p>Formal leaders set the goals and vision to be achieved and pass them down for enactment 11</p>	
<p>Time is flexible – Allowance is made for delay and personal circumstance – Toleration and flexibility. 1</p>	<p>People have sufficient time to consult on change and carry it out – People are accountable for deadlines and production. 2</p>	<p>Get students through the tests – Monitor output – Supervise students closely 25</p>	<p>Knowledge from outside the organisation can offer new insights, help develop excellence, and lead to us being the model for others. 14</p>	
<p>Clear and achievable goals/ objectives for the future have been set and communicated. 10</p>	<p>Focus attention and resources on disadvantaged groups of students – Varying standards – Help those in need. 27</p>	<p>Incentives and structures are available to promote and support personal and professional development – inclusion for all. 16</p>	<p>Attention and resources are divided equally amongst students – Advantaged and disadvantaged – Consistent standards for all. 28</p>	
<p>Check routine decisions with superiors – Avoid risk taking – Protect oneself. 5</p>	<p>Self-reliance – Create your own space – Do your job. 21</p>	<p>Limited incentives and structures to promote and support personal and professional development - Resource allocation tied to organisational 'needs' and targeted personnel. 15</p>		<p>↓ Less characteristic</p>
<p>Goals are fluid and flexible – There is no point planning too far ahead. 9</p>	<p>The working environment does little to enhance performance of students, teachers and staff. 23</p>	<p>Different groups look for detachment and autonomy – Best ideas come from within the group. 17</p>		
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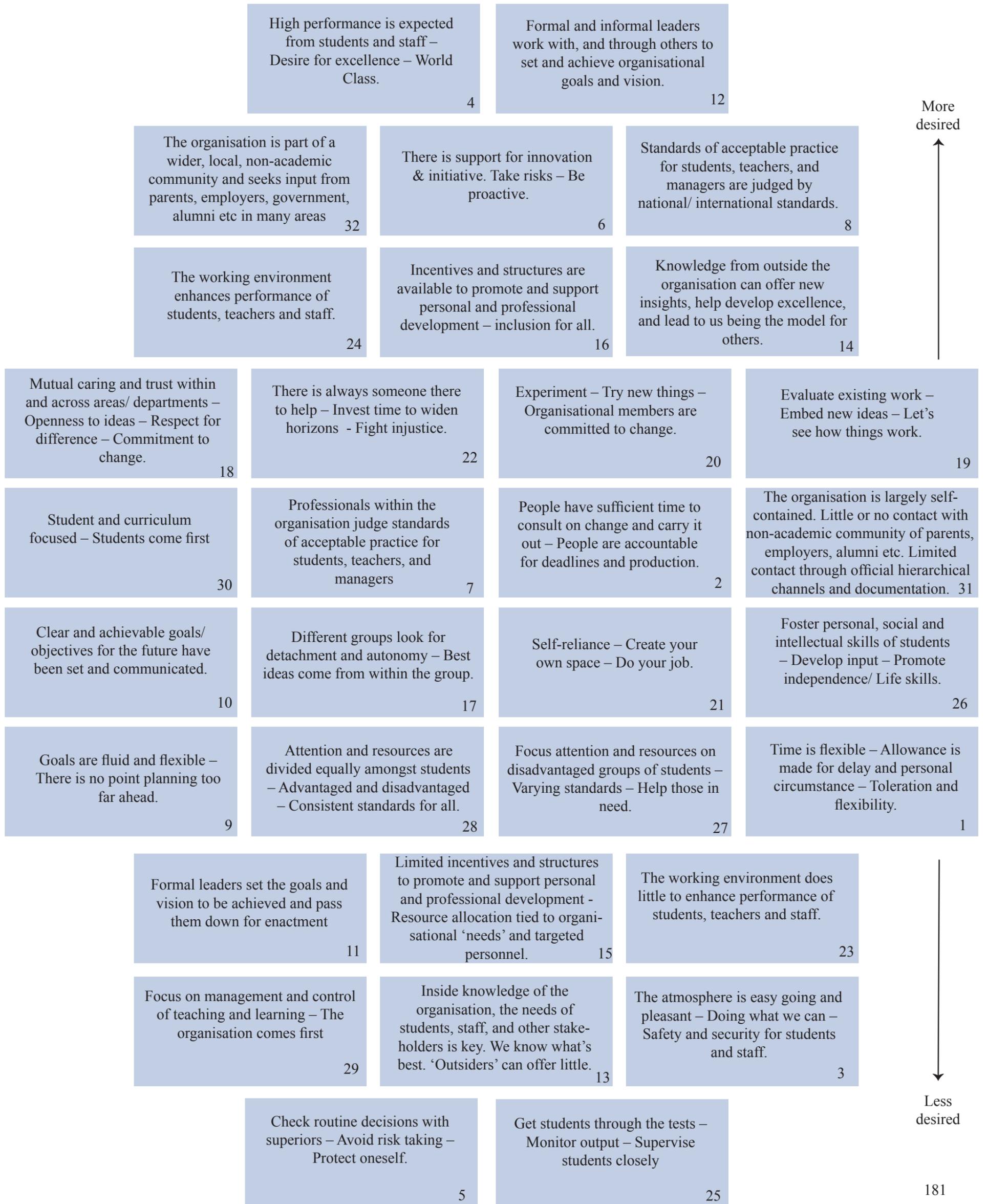
APPENDIX 6b  
FACULTY OF ARTS MIDDLE LEADERS - MORE/LESS DESIRED.

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	Clear and achievable goals/ objectives for the future have been set and communicated. 10	Experiment – Try new things – Organisational members are committed to change. 20	Foster personal, social and intellectual skills of students – Develop input – Promote independence/ Life skills. 26	
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APPENDIX 7a  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS MIDDLE LEADERS - MORE/LESS CHARACTERISTIC.



APPENDIX 7b  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS MIDDLE LEADERS - MORE/LESS DESIRED.



APPENDIX 8a  
 FACULTY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MIDDLE LEADERS - MORE/LESS CHARACTERISTIC.



APPENDIX 8b  
 FACULTY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MIDDLE LEADERS - MORE/LESS DESIRED.

