An assessment of the participatory role of Saudi university academics in organisational decision-making – a single case study

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Declaration

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

There is a growing trend towards participative decision-making leadership in organisations. Inviting members to participate in key organisational decision areas has become a more popular leadership style in recent years (Spillane, 2005). Scholars have argued that empowering staff in decision making has been found useful for both individuals and organisations in terms both of increasing levels of staff satisfaction and motivation and achieving higher performance levels through collaborative decision making (MacBeath, 2005; Harris, 2004; Goleman et al., 2002). Although there are a substantial number of studies on decision making in Western countries (Metheny et al., 2015; Ehara, 1998), very few have explored this subject in the Arab world, and even fewer in the higher education setting in Saudi Arabia. This study extends the work of Alenezi (2013), who only looked at the male context and suggested that further research explore both gender perspectives. Therefore, this study explores the decision-making process in academic departments and the participatory role of male and female academic staff in making departmental decisions in one Saudi Arabian university.

A mixed methods design was adopted, in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the staff of two academic departments within the chosen university. Four data collection methods – document analysis, observation, questionnaire and interview – were used, in a partially mixed sequential dominant status design in which minutes from four meetings were analysed and four departmental meetings observed in each department. A total of 53 questionnaires were completed by academic staff , after which 10 semi-structured interviews took place.

The data findings suggest that the levels of academic staff participation in departmental decisions were strongly influenced by aspects of organisational and departmental structure and departmental leadership; therefore, academic staff participation was seen as a reaction to leadership influences and other individual factors. The findings also suggest that levels of participation varied among members for several reasons.

Based on the research results, enhancing the levels of academic participation may be accomplished by limiting bureaucracy through delegating some responsibilities to appropriate bodies. Furthermore, members who are responsible for managing meetings are advised to attend courses in meeting management skills to ensure equal opportunities, while academic staff, particularly new members, are advised to develop their participation skills.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter begins by presenting the rationale for the research enquiry, followed by the study's significance. Next, the motivation for the study and its aim are explained, which is followed by a description of the study's context.

1.1 Rationale for the study

There is a growing trend towards participative decision-making leadership in organisations. Inviting members to take part in key organisational decision areas has become a more popular leadership style in recent years (Spillane, 2005). In reforms of various educational sectors, the theme of staff participation in decision making is becoming dominant (Short and Johnson, 1994; Conley, 1991). This leadership movement arose in response to the tradition style of leadership, in which decision making, concentrated in a few people at the top of organisations, was found to be related to problems such as low levels of staff satisfaction, poor implementation of decisions and weak commitment to and poor quality of decisions. Empowering staff in decision making has been found useful for both individuals and organisations in terms of increasing levels of staff satisfaction and motivation and in achieving higher performance levels (MacBeath, 2005; Harris, 2004; Goleman et al., 2002). Responding to trends and ongoing developments in organisational management, educational institutions are under pressure to change and become learning organisations by seeking knowledge through collaborative decision making (Spillane et al., 2001; Hord, 1997). It is also believed that sharing leadership in educational organisations contributes to the organisation's development (Harris, 2003).

While recent leadership trends support more engagement of staff in making organisational decisions, little is known about the perceptions and experiences of staff in relation to their participatory role in organisational decision making. Indeed, some concerns have been raised about the leadership style of senior leaders in enhancing or limiting the level of staff participation in organisational decisions, and about the issue of gender equality as it affects the level of participation in these decisions.

Western scholars have paid a great deal of attention to this issue, providing in-depth discussions that describe and seek to explain the impact of employee participation on organisational success (Singh, 2009). Beyond these theoretical assumptions and discussions, a number of empirical studies have been conducted in the Western context to measure academics' participation in higher education organisations (Metheny et al., 2015; Ehara, 1998). In contrast, regardless of whether or not Western theories are appropriate and applicable elsewhere, only a few empirical studies have been conducted on this topic in Arab countries, and far fewer in Saudi Arabia (Alenezi, 2013). Therefore, more research is needed regarding Saudi Arabian academics' participation in university decisions.

Responding to this need, a recent PhD study carried out by Alenezi (2013) at the University of Leeds compares academics' perceptions of their participation in university decisions at the University of Leeds and King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. This comparative study opens the door to deeper explorations of this and related topics in the Saudi context. The present study continues the journey by advancing Alenezi's work in a new setting and covering aspects that were not addressed in his study. For example, Alenezi suggests that more research is needed in the context of Saudi Arabia, so the present study explores academics' participation in departmental decisions – and their perceptions of those processes – in one Saudi university. This should offer a deep understanding of the issue, as the study focuses on mainly the Saudi context by comparing two academic departments within that one university. It is also notable that studies in Saudi Arabia have largely adopted male perspectives, so that the female view is lacking. This arises from the sex segregation in Saudi schools and as a result in workplaces that is a core feature of Saudi culture, which makes it difficult for researchers to gain access to both genders, leading to a lack of knowledge that requires a comparison of men's and women's perspectives on an issue. The current study intends to address this knowledge gap.

1.2 Significance of the study

Since research can be conducted to address "some condition of incomplete knowledge or understanding" (Booth et al., 2003, p. 228), the purpose of this research is to find out how academics participate in departmental decisions in Saudi universities, an area which has been under-researched, in order to understand the

issue in considerable depth and gain insight into it by comparing men's and women's perspectives. This study is expected to offer reflections on both theory and practice.

As regards the former, the study contributes generally to the literature on organisational decisions and more specifically to literature considering the Saudi context. Moreover, most previous studies have tackled the issue of academic participation in organisational decisions by applying a quantitative approach; this study, by using a mixed methods approach, provides insights that could not be gained by quantitative methods alone. This study is also a response to Metheny et al., (2015) call for more research worldwide to allow comparison of international perspectives. In terms of practice, this study will be of interest to academics within universities, since it investigates issues related to their professional role. Moreover, the study suggests ways of improving the practice of academics, academic departments and universities.

1.3 Motivation for the study

Three main factors lie behind my interest in this topic. The first is my personal experience of working as a lecturer at a Saudi university and noticing some interesting issues surrounding academics' engagement in departmental decisions, which led me to investigate the situation with an eye to any possible recommendations for improvement.

Secondly, my interest in the topic was enhanced by my Master's programme reading on the importance of staff participation in making organisational decisions. It became clear that participation is important for both the staff and the organisation itself, which will benefit from its staff's experience by reaching better decisions, while staff, it is suggested, will be more satisfied with their jobs when they are actively engaged in these decisions.

Thirdly, as I will be returning to the same job as soon as my studies are finished and may be acquiring new responsibilities such as leading a certain group, it will be very useful for professional reasons for me to understand the issues surrounding academics' participation in organisational decisions.

Therefore, I am an insider researcher in the sense of being a practising university lecturer in the Saudi higher education system and a member of the case study organisation itself. However, as suggested by Merton (1972), it is rare to be a complete insider, because "insiderness is not a fixed value: the researcher may be investigating aspects of the institution previously unknown to them, collecting data from strangers" (Trowler, 2016, p.5). Therefore, I am an insider in terms of researching the institution in which I work, but I am not a complete insider insofar as the data were collected from people unknown to me from other departments within the organisation. This point is developed in detail in the Methodology chapter; see page 38 for a discussion of its research significance.

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of this exploration is to give a picture of academics' perspectives on their participation in departmental decisions, which could benefit practitioners, top management and policy makers by increasing their understanding of the current situation with an eye to further improvements. The main focus of the research is on the concept of decision making. The research assesses the participatory role of academics in departmental decisions in order to gain an in-depth understanding of that role and of how such decisions are made. Hence, the research investigates the decision-making process in two academic departments within one Saudi university to find out who makes the decision, who is actively involved in the decision-making process and what types of contribution they make, to ascertain whether one group or person tends to dominate and, finally, to try to indicate the leadership style applied in each department. The study also measures the practice of involvement in decisions, in terms of both actual and desired levels of academics' participation in three domains: teaching, research and administration, all while comparing gender participation in the decisions. Following the results of this measurement, the research goes further to examine how these results can be explained and what factors might influence levels of participation.

1.5 Context of the study

The section begins by providing a brief account of Saudi Arabian culture and the country's governance structure, followed by relevant information about the Saudi higher education system.

1.5.1 The country

Saudi Arabia is a faith-based country, with Islam the dominant religion among its citizens. This means that both the citizens and the country's government must follow Islam's teaching and rules, which play a crucial role in the way the country is led (Vassiliev, 1998). As a result, people are influenced by Islamic laws in their daily lives and practices. For example, people believe that they should respect and follow leaders who are responsible for the country's affairs, as the Holy Quran states. Another feature of Saudi culture which stems from Islamic rules is the principle of "shura", meaning consultation, which suggests that, while leaders are encouraged to consult their subordinates when deciding on important matters, the leaders still make the final decision. These cultural features might influence the process of decision making at different levels in the country, including higher education institutions, in terms of who can make the final decisions and the style in which those individuals make them.

Moreover, as a conservative society, Saudi culture maintains segregation between genders (Muna, 1980). For example, for cultural reasons, men and women members are segregated within each institution and within each department, with men working on one campus and women on another; when department meetings are held, they operate as distance meetings, with men in one room and women in another room in a completely different building within the university. This is the case in co-educational universities which are managed and led by men, although teaching is carried out by both men and women. There are a few women's universities that are led by women and have only female students, but the majority of Saudi universities are co-educational, including the one the chosen for the case study.

Since the founding of the country, it has been administered by a king. The King, who is also the Prime Minister, appoints members of the Council of Ministers, and other royal family members, to decide on the country's issues, with the remainder of citizens not being involved in these processes (Alkhazim, 2003). These hierarchical and centralised features could be explained by the fact that at its founding a new country needs this kind of management to control it. However, later on, in agreement with Islamic teaching, an official consultative council was established in 1992. Its 150 members discuss those national matters that are referred to them by the Council of Ministers, offering suggestions to the King for him to consider when making

decisions. Until recently, all consultative council members had to be male, when the King decided to open the door to female members (The Shura Council, 2014). Establishing this council of consultation at the top of the country's government is a sign of change in the decision-making style across the country's sectors at the lower levels, including higher education institutions.

The country is currently experiencing many changes at all levels. For example, in April 2016, the government introduced its *Vision 2030* for the country's future, which aims to end the country's dependency on oil by empowering the private sector. The vision also aims to "change the government's role" from providing services to regulating and monitoring service, to streamline the bureaucracy in all public sectors and to institute transparent government eventually. In terms of education, the aim of the vision is to have five universities included among the top 200 in the League Tables. It wants Saudi students to gain high positions according to educational indicators by beating international averages. It strives to build an education system which matches market needs, thus requiring either a redesign of current undergraduate course offerings or the introduction of new ones or both. Moreover, it aims to develop early childhood education, refine the current national curriculum and revamp training for teachers and educational leaders. Finally, in terms of women's participation in the workforce, the vision aims to increase women's participation from 22% to 30% of the total workforce (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

1.5.2 Higher education

The case study chosen for the research is located in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which since its establishment in 1932 has undergone many changes and developments in all areas, including the education sector. Saudi Arabia, as a developing country, is now witnessing rapid growth in many areas, of which higher education is one. For example, the number of universities has increased enormously during the last 15 years, from just 8 universities in 1998 to 25 public universities and 42 private universities and colleges today. Among these institutions, there are four Islamic universities with distinct aims, centred around the preparation of Islamic scholars and support for Islamic research. All universities are administered by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2016).

At the university level, each university's council occupies the top position in the institution and is led in theory by the Minister of Education. Since the number of universities has increased, however, university rectors lead these councils in practice, then send accounts of their meetings to be approved by the Minister. University rectors are appointed by the King on the recommendation of the Minister, whereas faculty deans are appointed by the Minister of Education on the recommendation of the university rectors. Academics, meanwhile, are appointed by the university rectors as recommended by academic departments (Alkhazim, 2003).

Universities in Saudi Arabia follow the hierarchical system, within which units at the lower level of the hierarchy are expected to implement top management policies and planning decisions (Al Saleh and Alsaeed, 2014). However, the presumption of successful and smooth implementation has not always been borne out, because those at the operational level, such as academic staff, have not generally been consulted and involved in the decision-making process. This has caused implementation failures of decisions and policies, such as the failure to implement the National Commission of Academic Accreditation and Assessment policy (Al Saleh and Alsaeed, 2014). This hierarchical system is a reflection of the socio-political hierarchy described above, as Saudi universities are administered in line with wider social values and political practices.

The increase in the number of universities led to the King's establishment of the Council of Higher Education in 1994 to look after all higher education issues. These included creating the management structure of the universities, which at that time numbered only seven, and the formulation of higher education policies covering areas such as university staff, academic staff, university finances, etc. As the country had only been established in 1932, there were many matters to be considered and finalised, among them the issue of higher education. Therefore, in 1997, three years after the establishment of the council of higher education, the policy on academic staff was formulated by the council members; it is the sole overarching policy concerning academic staff in universities. It was formulated in partnership with other public organisations such as the Ministry of Civil Service before receiving final approval by the King (Alkhazim, 2003).. Because of the relevance of this policy to the present research, it is reviewed in the following paragraphs.

The policy is entitled *The Regulation of Saudi Academic Staff in Saudi Universities*. It considers matters affecting academic staff, starting with their appointment, and moves on to conditions for promotion, followed by their duties in the university, salary and reward issues, the holidays system, academic research leave and consultation, arrangements for attending and participating in conferences and, lastly, procedures for leaving the university, including the banishment system. Most if not all issues concerning academic staff are explained in this policy.

However, as this research focuses on academics' participation in making departmental decisions, their specific duties in this area are described. A short section of this policy focuses on the duties of academic staff working in the universities, which can be categorised as follows: teaching issues, research issues and administrative issues. In the first category, academics are required to teach students by delivering a specific number of lectures depending on the academics' positions; they are also required to encourage students to love learning and creative thinking and must provide students with the most current teaching materials.

In the second category, academics are required to be up to date in their majors and to engage actively in improving and developing their majors by conducting high-quality research. They are further required to participate regularly in well-known international conferences, both to share their own research and to benefit from others' scholarship. In addition, they must provide supportive information to students working on their own research projects.

In the third category, academics are required to take active roles in the main department meetings and on other occasions, such as meetings of committees at the department, faculty and university levels. In department meetings, academics are required to participate in deliberation on several matters, including: deciding on the teaching plan, determining teaching materials and references and modules for teaching; appointing and promoting academic staff; studying research projects from inside and outside the department; assigning lectures among academic staff and forming temporary and permanent departmental committees.

On the one hand, an examination of this policy shows that most if not all the roles of academic staff within their departments are explained and the procedures on each specific issue presented. However, on the other hand, it is also clear that many

details are not covered or mentioned, but remain areas of silence that allow for different interpretations. One final issue worth noting is that, as the policy clearly states, the final outputs of departmental meetings are regarded as suggestions which will then be discussed at the weekly faculty meeting, following which the faculty meeting suggestions will be approved at the university's top management level. It is thus clear that Saudi Arabia has a centralised education system in which decisions concerning the lower levels of the organisation are either made at the top, or at a minimum approved by top management.

Chapter 2: Critical literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically discusses topics related to organisational decision making and the role of staff in the decision-making process in order to establish a conceptual framework for the analysis undertaken. The chapter starts by defining the concept of decision making, then discusses theories on the subject. Next, the focus is narrowed to the topic of participation in organisational decisions and styles of participation, which is followed by a discussion of the influences on participation in decisions in the Saudi context and a presentation of the conceptual framework for the study's analysis. Then, previous empirical studies of academics' participation in higher education institutions' decisions, both worldwide and in Saudi Arabia, are reviewed.

2.2 Definition of decision making

As a starting point, it is crucial to define the concept of decision making, which is the main concern of this study. However, because of the complexity of concepts in social science, there are no often no single agreed-upon definitions of key terms; a number of definitions can be found for many important concepts, and decision making is no exception. Definitions of the term fall into two broad categories. The first kind tends to present the steps taken when making decisions in practice, rather than general statements that explain the term, such as Fraser's (1988) definition, who prefers to broaden the concept beyond merely stating that it is a process of making a choice from among alternatives to include steps such as "defining the problem, generating alternatives to solve problems, evaluating the alternatives, selecting the best alternative, putting the best alternative into effect, and then evaluating the results" (p.88).

In like manner, Schermerhorn et al. (1998, p.243) define decision making according to the practical steps taken when making decisions, highlighting five such steps: defining a problem or opportunity, identifying alternatives, choosing an appropriate course of action, implementing it and, finally, evaluating the results of the decision taken and taking corrective action if needed.

In the second category, decision making is defined as the process of choosing an action from among several alternatives, which implies that an individual or

organisation is faced with a situation in which a number of actions are actually possible, one of which is likely to be optimal in dealing with the situation, whether the situation is a problem or an opportunity. Examples in this category are the definitions provided by Daft (1994, p.251) – "the process of making a choice between two or more alternatives" – and by Huczynski and Buchanan (2013, p.961): "the process of making a choice from among a number of alternatives". Definitions in the first category can be subsumed under the processes referred to in second-category definitions; taken as a whole, they all help to shape what is meant by decision making in this study.

2.3 Decision-making theories

There are certain relevant theories that might help to elucidate the mechanism for making departmental decisions in a Saudi university. Theories of decision making can be classified as either classical or behavioural (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2013). In the former, decision makers adopt a rational model: they follow a sequential process to arrive at the final desired decision that leads to the optimal outcome. According to Bazerman and Moore (2008), the rational model of decision making comes under what is called "systems 2 thinking" which "refers to reasoning that is slower, conscious, effortful, explicit, and logical" (Bazerman and Moore, 2008, p.3).

However, the reality of working life can make it very difficult or even impossible to apply this model to everyday decisions. There are two reasons for these difficulties. First, it is unrealistic to expect to find every possible alternative for a given issue. Second, the full outcomes of every alternative can only rarely be considered, due to the sheer number of possible alternatives. Further, the assumption of the rational model that all information is accurate and available free of charge is misleading. Finally, following the rational model of decision making requires sufficient time to consider all alternatives and their outcomes, but this amount of time might not always be available or might be prohibitively expensive. As a result, because organisations in general are complex in terms of their goals and environments, this ideal model fails to explain clearly how decisions are made in reality (March, 1993; Zey, 1992). However, the rational model might still be a useful and effective mechanism for making decisions, especially when they are significant, as in strategic planning, when the decision can affect the organisation positively or negatively over the long term.

By contrast, behavioural theory pays attention to the actuality of making decisions; it considers how decisions are made in the course of daily work. “Bounded rationality” is a model that comes under behavioural theory, as described by Simon (1997). The main characteristics of this model are the absence of a complete definition of the issue to be resolved and the impossibility of generating all alternatives for tackling the problem or predicting their consequences. Finally, there is a strong possibility that the decisions eventually adopted may be influenced by both political and personal factors.

Hence, in this model, instead of seeking to optimise the decision-making approach, decision makers look instead for a “satisfying” alternative. This is what generally occurs in real-world environments, at both the individual and organisational levels (March, 1993). This model could be appropriate for explaining the practice of making academic department decisions in Saudi universities, because issues discussed at the departmental level are more likely to concern operational matters which need to be decided upon in a short time.

Most organisations follow systems 2 thinking when making decisions, whether they follow the rational or bounded rational models; however, the stages of decision making can vary widely. A review of the literature reveals that scholars do not agree on one set of decision-making stages or steps, but have different views. These sets can be classified by the number of stages that each model comprises. For example, two scholars have identified four steps in making decisions. Simon (1977) proposes four stages: intelligence, in which the issue will be identified; design, in which alternatives will be generated; choice, in which the appropriate alternative will be selected; and finally, a review of the chosen decision after implementing it.

Beach and Connolly (2005) also identify four stages: understanding the problem, generating possible solutions, evaluating the solutions generated and, finally, selecting the most appropriate solution. These two approaches have three stages in common and one that differs: in Simon’s model the distinct stage is reviewing and evaluating the chosen decision after its implementation, whereas the distinct stage in the Beach and Connolly model is evaluating alternatives before choosing the optimal one, which might occur in the choice stage in Simon’s model.

Other scholars suggest five stages in making the decision, such as Lipham and Hoeh (1974, p.34): “identifying the problem, determining solution requirements and alternatives, choosing a solution strategy from alternatives, implementing the solution strategy and finally determining performance effectiveness”. Using the same number of steps, Bratton et al. (2010) have suggested the following: understanding the problem, describing all alternatives, evaluating them, choosing the appropriate one and finally following up to evaluate the decision. Table 1.1 compares these approaches to the stages of decision making.

In my view, the steps suggested by Bratton et al. include the most significant to be taken when deciding upon any major matter, as the steps emphasise generating all alternatives, and evaluation is critical during the decision process for both alternatives and final decisions. However, this model is too ideal and difficult to implement by the members of an organisation, especially at departmental levels; hence, these steps best serve as a good example of a rational model. The stages suggested by Beach and Connolly (2005) represent more realistically the actual process of making departmental decisions, as all alternatives cannot be always generated. Therefore, the application of both the bounded rationality model and the Beach and Connolly stages should help in understanding decision-making practices in Saudi universities.

Table 1.1 Different stages of the decision-making process

Simon	***Beach & Connolly***	***Lipham & Hoeh***	***Bratton et al.***
Intelligence	understanding the problem	identifying the problem	understanding the problem
Design	generating possible alternatives	determining solution	describing all alternatives
Choice	evaluating generated alternatives	choosing a solution	evaluating alternatives
Review	selecting the most appropriate solution	implementing the solution	choosing the appropriate alternative
----------	----------	determining performance effectiveness	evaluating the decision

2.4 Participation in decision making

In narrowing the focus to discuss employees' participation in these decisions, we find that there is no agreed definition of such, just as is the case of decision making itself. However, participation in general has been defined as the process of sharing organisational decisions by superiors and subordinates (Sagie and Koslowsky, 2000). In a more comprehensive definition, Glew et al. (1995, p.402) describe it as "a conscious and intended effort by individuals at a higher level in an organization to provide visible extra-role or role-expanding opportunities for individuals or groups at a lower level in the organization to have a greater voice in one or more areas of organizational performance". This definition implies that in any organisation there is a hierarchy that might allow joint decisions in some organisational matters, while others will remain the province of the top of the hierarchy.

The following question remains: Does employee participation matter? In fact, scholars have emphasised the importance of staff participation in organisational decision making, because organisations have discovered that employees are their most critical asset. This awareness encourages organisations' leaders to be more flexible in order to keep up with a changing and competitive environment (David,

2005). Flexibility has many facets; one is employee participation in decision making, which is sometimes considered the reason for organisational success (Singh, 2009). The success comes from the generation of new ideas and the provision of valuable perspectives by employees and their managers. Hence, in order to learn these ideas and obtain different perspectives, management should involve staff in the work environment, which will also increase staff commitment.

This involvement should help to provide organisations with more effective employees, which may lead to more effective organisations. Because of the importance of employee involvement, it is suggested that managers allow their staff members a high degree of participation so as to obtain benefits such as enhanced performance, a good overall environment and high standards of employees behaviour (Cohen et al., 1997). In the following paragraphs a number of advantages and disadvantages of participation in decision making are discussed.

First, staff involvement in decision making has been identified as a crucial provider of successful management, particularly in the educational field (Mehta et al., 2010). Successful management reflects a number of advantages of participation, which can be divided into two main categories: organisations' benefits and individuals' benefits. In the former category, employee participation in decisions should play an important role in facilitating implementation of the decisions taken (Mehta et al., 2010), because engaging staff in making decisions gives them a sense of ownership which motivates them to carry out those decisions, at least to a certain extent (Bat-Erdene, 2006). In the words of Kreitner, "those who play an active role in group decision making and problem solving tend to view the outcomes as 'ours' rather than 'theirs'" (1999, p.234).

Other organisational benefits of staff participation include gaining different perspectives on specific issues, because individuals have different experiences, knowledge and interests which help them to look at a problem and tackle it from diverse perspectives. It provides the opportunity for further discussion and reveals more suitable decisions by identifying potential drawbacks among alternatives (Simsek et al., 2005).

Staff themselves can also benefit from the participation process. For example, individuals can be trained during the process by engaging with experienced

participants, which will increase their knowledge and experience and enable them to participate more effectively in the future. Indeed, this is a form of personal development which should satisfy the employees by providing them with new skills (Martin and Sherry, 1999) and benefit the organisation over the long term by training employees at no additional cost (Hashim et al., 2010).

In practice, these benefits overlap and interact, with organisations and staff benefiting mutually from this engagement. When staff take part in decisions and facilitate the process of implementation, which is an organisational benefit, they gain satisfaction at the same time, which is an individual benefit that in turn motivates them (Fullan, 2008) to work harder, which is both an obviously organisational benefit and an individual benefit through the development of skill and the continuation of learning. Taken together, these actions lead to what is called organisational learning.

Organisational learning, or what is sometimes called the learning organisation, has been defined as "an organisational form that enables individual learning to create valued outcomes, such as innovation, efficiency, environment alignment and competitive advantage" (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2013, p.173). It is clearly on the basis of this definition that organisations consider employees' learning to be an investment through which individuals are expected to add value to the organisations by innovating or suggesting creative ways to achieve organisational goals. One method of organisational learning and consequently of employee learning is to involve employees in the decision-making process, first by training them in decision-making skills by giving them the opportunity to meet experienced staff members and then obtaining the greatest contribution possible from them by involving them in providing creative ideas and strengthening the decisions reached through discussing the problem from different angles.

However, organisational learning cannot always be implemented smoothly; factors such as organisational culture and structure can either inhibit or enhance the learning process (Argyris and Schön, 1996). For example, organisations with hierarchical cultures are usually not supportive of learning because of their approach to leading and managing (Jones, 1996). Hence, in order to create an environment of learning involving both organisations and their employees, interaction is the first step needed.

This can be done by changing the management style (Adler et al., 1999), such as by providing more scope for employees' involvement in organisational decisions (Coghlan, 1987). Action learning theory also holds that this active involvement in dealing with and solving problems is one way of learning (Gilmore et al., 1986).

Despite these advantages of staff participation in decision making and the prospect of organisational learning, the approach has two drawbacks, one of which is related to time. Participation can be time-consuming and thus delay decisions being reached; in some cases, time is a crucial factor and a quick decision is required (Alam, 2010). The other drawback is that group decision making does not guarantee high-quality decisions, because they might be made by participants with the loudest voices rather than through deep and thoughtful discussion by all (Carmeli and Schaubroeck, 2006). Despite such disadvantages, Whitaker observes that leaders, by applying appropriate leadership styles, can obtain the maximum benefit from staff participation and overcome its drawbacks by addressing its problems and enhancing its advantages (1993).

2.5 Style of participation in decision making

While subordinates' participation in decision making plays a vital role in the process, their level of participation varies from one organisation to another. Vroom and Jago (1988) provide a useful model which falls into the category of prescriptive models of decision making. Such models help to identify the most appropriate style for a decision-making process, in terms of how much involvement by leaders and employees is critical for reaching successful decisions and what type of participation should be adopted. This model is also useful for identifying which style of participation subordinates perceive in their actual practice, and whether their leaders follow the mechanism of this model to reach effective decisions.

The model offers five styles of participation, which vary depending on the degree to which leaders have the full power to make decisions or whether they share or even delegate the power. These styles are: leaders decide alone, leaders consult individuals, leaders consult a group, leaders collaborate with staff in deciding or, finally, leaders delegate the full power to employees. For employees, the first style means no participation and the last one means total participation, with the other three styles falling between these extremes.

In each style, leaders, their subordinates or both share the decision or make it independently. In the first style, leaders are the only participants in decision making, with employees playing no role. This can occur when leaders are experts on the problem and have all the information needed to decide upon the most appropriate course of action. However, when leaders have insufficient information or expertise in relation to an issue, they might consult their subordinates individually to obtain necessary information and advice, either by informing them about the problem or not. Then, the leaders make the final decision on their own.

However, in the event that leaders prefer to listen to their subordinates, they will usually consult a group by explaining the problem to employees and providing them with complete information on the matter. In this way, both leaders and employees will be able to generate and discuss certain solutions. At the end of the process, leaders will consider the solutions recommended and decide on their own on the best solution to address the problem. Although in this style – the consultative style – leaders make the final decision themselves, they at least hear employees' voices and are influenced by them to a certain extent, in contrast to the first and second styles. Al-Yahya (2009), after conducting a study in Saudi Arabian public institutions, concluded that the majority of employees rank their participation as consultative.

In the fourth style – which is facilitative in nature – the situation is explained and information provided by the leaders to the group; solutions will then be discussed and negotiated by employees and their leaders to arrive at an appropriate decision, made by the group and leaders together, with the voice of employees definitely heard. In the final style, leaders might prefer to delegate all responsibilities to their employees by providing them with whatever they might need to do the job properly and explaining any boundaries beyond which the employees cannot go. In this fifth style, the group of employees will make the final decision without the influence of leaders.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) suggest a model based on a continuum of leadership behaviour. It identifies seven different types of behaviour that can be applied by leaders when making organisational decisions. The managerial styles in the model range from leaders' making and announcing decisions themselves by relying on their authority to allowing staff wide latitude to make the decisions.

Between these extremes, managers can sell the decisions by identifying the problem and explaining their preferred decisions, and then trying to persuade staff to accept the decisions instead of just announcing them. Moreover, managers could present their ideas regarding decisions and invite staff to ask for further explanation, thus enabling staff to explore and understand the implications of the decisions.

Managers could also present tentative decisions on identified problems, but leave them open to modification in line with staff contributions. Another possible form of behaviour by managers is to present the problem, receive suggestions from staff and then make the decisions themselves. Here, staff are given some degree of freedom in making or influencing the decisions. In the final two behaviour types, managers provide more freedom for staff to make the decisions, either by defining the problem and setting limits within which decisions can be made or by permitting a group to make the decisions on some tasks but with some limits prescribed in advance. Both models can be used later in explaining leaders' behaviour in the decision-making process, although the latter model provides additional paths that leaders might follow.

However, perceived participation might or might not suit the staff within an organisation and could to some extent affect the level of satisfaction of participants; Alutto and Belasco (1972) thus provide a model to measure the discrepancies between actual and desired levels of involvement in decision making. Their model contains three categories: decisional deprivation, decisional equilibrium and decisional saturation. In the decisional deprivation category, teachers feel that they are not involved in the process as much as they would like, so they want to participate more in decisions related to their professional concerns, as distinct from decisions on administrative matters. Teachers falling into the decisional equilibrium category feel that they are participating as much as they wish to; they are thus satisfied with their level of involvement and desire no more. In stark contrast to decisional deprivation, in the decisional saturation category teachers feel that they are overly involved in decision making, and actually desire less. This model can be used in this study to understand and analyse participants' involvement.

However, greater or lesser degrees of desire to participate might depend on the type of decision. Decisions in organisations can be categorised in several ways. According to Daft (1994), they can be divided into programmed and non-

programmed decisions. The former are arrived at in a routine manner; they are repetitive decisions which might be made daily and in line with established procedures of the organisation. By setting such rules, the organisation can delegate these decisions to subordinates, who can be easily held accountable for unexpected decisions. The existence of specific rules sets limits on innovative ideas and reduces flexibility in decision making.

By contrast, non-programmed decisions are those which are not frequent and whose consequences for the organisation are usually of high importance. In addition, the situation is usually not well understood or defined. For these reasons, this type of decision is made at the top level of management. In this situation, leaders or others at top management level are responsible for making these decisions; therefore they should be creative and capable of generating new ideas for tackling the issue.

In other categorical schemes, decisions in organisations are divided into three types: institutional, managerial and technical (Parsons, 1960). Institutional decisions are made at the top level because they concern important matters with long-term effects, such as strategic planning. This type, being a non-programmed decision, is not likely to be delegated. However, tactical and administrative decisions that address matters such as resource management lie between the two extremes. Some organisations make them at the top level, while others delegate them to lower levels as a form of decentralisation. Technical or operational decisions come under programmed decisions and are made in day-to-day contexts.

2.6 Influences on the levels of participation in decision making

Participation levels in departmental decisions can be influenced by a combination of factors. From a broad perspective, national culture can influence the way institutions are managed and led. Institutions as a whole also influence the level of academic participation in departments' decisions, according to the management system applied by a given university, within which decisions are either centralised or decentralised. Finally, in the smallest unit of the university, the department, the level of participation could vary from one member of staff to another and from one type of leadership style to another, as applied by different department heads.

2.6.1 Cultural influence on participation

Understanding the culture surrounding any organisation is vital to understanding its decision-making process. Scholars have often linked the study of decision making in general, and participation in it in particular, with culture. Participation in decision making is influenced directly by culture at both the organisational or national levels, so the relationship between culture and participation in decision making at a Saudi university is worth investigating. A number of scholars emphasise that studying culture is very important; Hofstede (1984) provides a theoretical framework showing how we can understand a particular culture or differences across cultures.

In the educational field, Dimmock and Walker (2000) emphasise the importance of understanding national cultures when undertaking educational leadership and management research. They suggest six dimensions of national culture; however, the most relevant dimension to consider for the present study is the dimension of power concentration versus power dispersal, which is widely discussed when participation in decision making is at issue (Sagie and Aycan, 2003). Steers et al. (2010) propose a model which shows that cultural differences produce different approaches to employees' participation in organisational decision making. In cultures that believe in power distribution, managers and their employees have equal opportunities to take part in making decisions. However, in other cultures which do not believe in power distribution, organisational decision making is reserved exclusively for people at the top levels of an organisation, with no participation from other employees, although on certain occasions managers might ask employees for their advice.

For example, Hofstede (1991) reports that there is high power distance in Arab countries, and other studies concentrating on the Saudi cultural context support his findings. Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) analyse Saudi culture and agree that there is high power distance in Saudi Arabia, which can be explained by the fact that Islamic societies believe in hierarchy and authority. This is a good example of one of Sagie and Aycan's (2003) three possible explanations for the impact of culture on employees' participation in decision making: in this case, the belief that top management has the right to decide, so that participation by others in decision making might infringe on that right.

Another explanation is that people at the top are thought to be more knowledgeable due to their higher levels of education, and so are expected to make the most effective and right decisions. Saudi Arabian culture could also be an example of this outlook, as a result of which less educated and uneducated people are neither interested in participating nor expected to participate in national decisions, and so leave all such matters to those at the top. However, the last explanation, fear of punishment if people at lower levels disagree with these decisions, might not be the case in the Saudi context, especially considering new media and the country's rapid growth (Sagie and Aycan, 2003). Altogether, most studies report that Saudi Arabian culture displays a high power distance, which in turn affects organisational culture, because cultural features at the national and organisational levels are interrelated (Hofstede, 1984).

Hofstede's framework is a controversial work which has been criticised by some scholars due to methodological issues such as the research method, sampling and the question of generalisation (Jones, 1996). Despite such criticism, it is valuable for its examination of cultural aspects in which the case study is located as a guide to deeper understanding and explanation of the phenomena under study.

2.6.2 The influence of organisational culture on participation in decision making

Moving on to organisational culture, which can be defined as "holistic, historically determined, related to things like rituals and symbols, socially structured, created and preserved by the group of people who together form the organisation, soft and difficult to change" (Hofstede, 1991, p.19), we find in it "the deeply rooted values and beliefs that are shared by [its] personnel" (Sun, 2008, p.1). Some scholars believe that the most efficient way to understand the culture of any higher education institution is to investigate the system operating within it (Dimmock and Walker, 2000; Tierney, 1988). Therefore, the potential influence of institutional culture on individuals' participation in departmental decisions in the Saudi Arabian higher education system will be investigated.

Organisational culture is influenced by external and internal factors; accordingly, the setting of higher education institutions is also affected by those factors (Schein, 2010). External factors include any influence from outside the organisation, such as political and economic conditions, while internal factors include the organisation's

history (Tierney, 1988) and personal productivity (Akin and Hopelain, 1987). In the context of Saudi universities, the hierarchical system dictated by the Saudi government is an external factor influencing organisational culture, with the ministries and organisations under them, including universities, following the government's wishes. These features of the Saudi system clearly show that a centralised system operates in the country.

The leadership style applied in the departments may also play a vital role in the level of staff participation in decision making. For instance, in a more decentralised system in which authority is distributed so as to include lower levels, the opportunity for staff participation is greater, while in a centralised system the opportunity for participation might be limited to the group at the top level of management (Mohrman et al., 1978). However, not only might the leadership style within institutions reduce the level of participation, but broader factors might also do so. For example, higher education institutions might encounter limiting forces when their principals are under certain pressures, regardless of the leadership systems applied at their institutions (Naz et al., 2013). These pressures could come from political parties within the government or from the government itself (Ehara, 1998).

As the centralised system plays a critical role in shaping the strategy of decision making applied in Saudi universities, it might be claimed that the participation of academics in decision making is not significant. Most decisions are made exclusively at the high management level, with academics' participation limited to proposing ideas when they are in fact consulted (Alharbi, 2007). Therefore, in most cases decisions are made or at least approved by the highest level of university management; however, academics as members of departments across the university might be consulted about these decisions in order to pursue organisational goals, as suggested by instrumental management philosophy (Leana and Florkowski, 1992). A number of studies show that management in Saudi Arabia tends to be consultative rather than participative when decisions are made (Muna, 1980). This consultative style is consistent with "shura", the Arabic word for consultation, which accords with the broad national ideological approach.

General guidance and rules are provided by the Ministry of Higher Education; top management is expected to run the universities according to these rules. Other

guidance and rules are provided by the university to those at its lower levels, including academics; the features of bureaucracy are on clear display in this system. Academics at the departmental level who do not hold management positions are not expected to participate in major university decisions, such as setting new policies. These will be made at the top of the hierarchy with limited or no participation from lower-level academics, as understood from the policy on academics' duties (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014). This situation might be explained by the fact that top managers need to restrict decision making in order to ensure their total control of the organisation (Zabojnik, 2002). Although delegating responsibility to the lower levels can help produce high-quality decisions to a certain extent, it might cause a loss of authority at the top, which is not yet preferred or even acceptable in Saudi university culture. Therefore, the formal model is the dominant leadership style applied in Saudi universities, as it is popularly applied in universities worldwide (Churchman, 2006).

Bush (2011) has identified certain features of this model, two of which clearly appear in the leadership of Saudi universities: hierarchical and bureaucratic features by which the lower levels of the hierarchy, including academics, are accountable to the top level. However, it has been argued that some problems might emerge from applying this leadership style, such as limiting the scope of participation in departmental matters and affecting the pace of change and innovation (Alamri, 2011). Hence, other leadership styles might be worth considering by university leaders, such as a transformational leadership style which encourages managers to motivate staff and engage them in establishing a creative and innovative university culture (Scott and Bruce, 1994).

2.6.3 Departmental leadership and staff participation in decision making

Structure is admittedly an important determinant of staff participation in decision making, both from an organisational and national cultural perspective, for example, according to differences in 'power-distance' (Hofstede, 1984) and the degree of centralisation. Institutional culture can therefore shape the leadership approach applied by heads of departments (Gibbs et al., 2006), centralised systems reducing the scope for departmental leadership and participatory decision making (Middlehurst, 1993). Thus, in a centralised system like that of Saudi Arabia, the scope of department leadership is expected to be limited.

However, the *agency* of individual departmental leaders is also a critical feature in enhancing or limiting staff participation in decision making, as departmental leaders differ in how they lead the departments. Factors such as personality, skills and status, play critical roles in determining the departmental leadership approach (Tucker, 1992). Regarding personality, Huczynski (2004) has applied the psychology of personality-type classifications to an understanding of how personality can influence decision making, drawing attention to 'the subtlety of human differences' (p.161) that question the cultural determinism implied by national classifications. They are evidenced in several leadership behaviours including the autocratic, democratic, directive, supportive and bureaucratic styles (Tucker, 1992) that may or may not be appropriate to specific contexts according institutional goals and desired outcomes (Delener, 2013).

In addition to personality, differences also reflect the skills that departmental leaders have acquired. Appropriate skills are sometimes lacking because promotion has been based on excellence at teaching and research, rather than leadership (Wolverton et al., 2005) that requires the skills to work both with higher levels of the university as well as with peers in the same department. Satisfying both levels is a difficult task and one of the greatest challenges for department heads (Griffith, 2006). It demands skills in maintaining good relationships with colleagues while exercising authority, along with effective communication and team leadership (Lucas, 2000).

There is a significant body of Western research evidence that identifies the leadership skills and qualities required in higher education, including the engagement of staff through participative decision making. For example, Bryman (2007), through a systematic review, provides thirteen main leadership behaviours associated with departmental leadership effectiveness, one of which is "allowing the opportunity to participate in key decisions\encouraging open communication". Also, Lucas (2000), combining a review of the literature with her experience, identifies twelve principles of leadership effectiveness, one of which is collectiveness of decision making. Harris et al. (2004), by investigating five American universities, suggest four factors that contribute to leadership effectiveness, one of which is collaboration and shared vision, while McArthur (2002) argues that democratic leadership should be practised by department heads to involve academic staff with the process of decision-making.

The literature also points to the importance of managing the needs and expectations of their staff, whose qualities have the potential to enhance or limit the level of participation. Experienced staff, for example, are more likely to participate in decisions, as they tend to be more skilful and knowledgeable (Truong et al., 2017). Gender is another factor, women generally participating less than men in organisational decisions (e.g. see the Canadian research of Denton and Zeytinoğlu, 1993), an observation that can be explained by the fact that women are quite new to the leadership positions and comparatively few in number. Leaders also have to manage staff who are reluctant to participate in decision making; for example, in decisions related to administration, which require them to spend more time away from their scholarly duties and research, which are important to their promotion prospects (Dykes, 1968). Many have a preference for participating in matters that "affect their own work units and their own jobs", rather than "broader matters of policy" (Floyd, 1985, p. 67).

A limitation of these research studies is that they are based almost exclusively on Western contexts. More research is therefore needed to verify whether the emphasis given to leadership for engagement and staff participation in decision making is equally significant in the Saudi higher education context. A recent small-scale qualitative study, investigating effective leadership behaviours by female department heads in Saudi Arabia, found the engagement of staff through consultation to be a significant behaviour associated with departmental leadership effectiveness (Gonaim and Peters, 2017). The research is admittedly limited in scale and scope, but nevertheless supports the claim that individual leadership agency, as well as the constraints of structure in determining participation in decision making, is an influential factor in determining the nature and extent of participative decision making in non-Western contexts. The focus of this PhD research study will shed further light on this issue.

2.7 Conceptual framework

Literature on staff participation in decision-making helps to provide a framework of analysis for my research findings. In Figure 2.1 I have collated four factors that could affect participants' levels of participation in departmental decisions. Within this framework, national culture and governance have a direct influence on the way the university is led. For example, in a monarchy, centralisation is dominant in managing public sector institutions, which influences how departments within each institution are led and managed, limiting the freedom of those who directly managing those departments. The participatory role of academic staff could thus be affected by the values of the centralised system through its reduction in opportunities for participation or its limitation to some areas related to departments. However, leadership styles of the departments vary as to potential increases or decreases in participation levels, depending on the leadership strategy applied by department heads. The level of participation can also vary according to academic staff themselves, in terms of their ability, knowledge, experience, gender, position and willingness to participate. Hence, although the scope of participation could be influenced by national and institutional culture, departmental leadership and differences between members are also critical to enhancing or limiting the levels of participation.

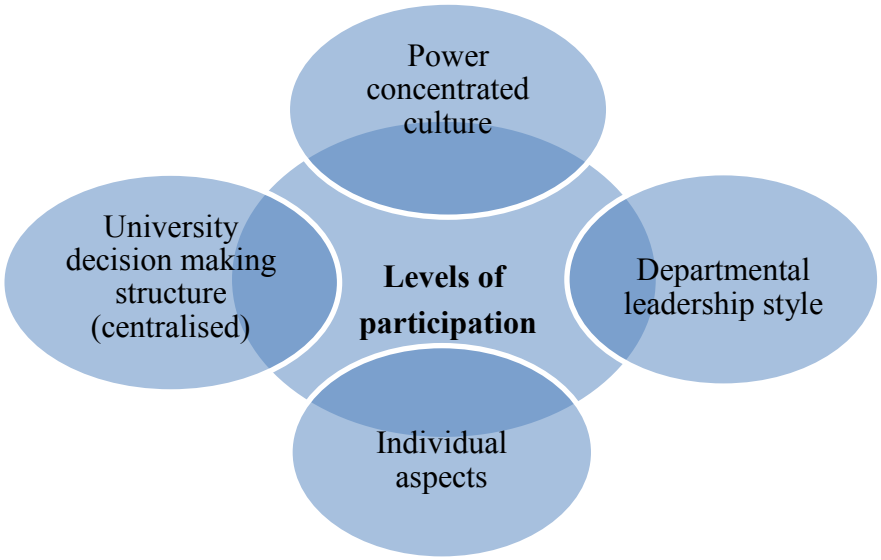


Figure 2.1 Influence on employees' participation in decision making

According to Steers et al. (2010), in cultures like Saudi Arabia that are characterised by high power distance, both managers and employees believe in hierarchy, with organisational decisions kept at high management levels and no power transferred to lower-level employees. Employees at the lower level are expected to implement high-level decisions with no participation in the process of making them. The only way employees can participate is by providing advice to their managers – if the managers seek any – which means that the managers follow a centralised decision style. However, Steers et al. (2010), in developing their model, did not analyse all of the world's cultures, so it can be argued that another decision style might be applied in Saudi organisations: namely, the consultative decision style, derived from the Islamic idea of shura, in which managers actively seek employees' advice but will make the final decisions unilaterally. Any such framework is subject to revision based on the study's empirical findings.

2.8 Previous studies of participation in higher education institutions

A number of studies of employees' participation in organisations have investigated several aspects of participation, such as organisational and individual performance, job satisfaction and the effectiveness of decisions. However, fewer studies of educational institutions, specifically higher education institutions, can be found, with fewer still focusing on the Saudi context. These studies address three main themes: job satisfaction, leadership styles and types of decisions.

In the first category, most research done on participation in decision making has focused mainly on or at least discussed the theme of job satisfaction. For example, Maloney (2003) studies the relationship between participation in decision making and job satisfaction among faculty at 12 colleges. The research findings indicate that there is a relationship between participation and faculty member job satisfaction and that there is no difference in terms of gender and working experience. Generally, participants indicate that their participation has not matched what they actually want; they desire a higher level of involvement. Bat-Erdene (2006) studied academic staff participation in decision making in Mongolian public universities and the relation between that participation and job satisfaction. He found that the actual participation

of faculty members was less than what they desired and that their actual participation was related to job satisfaction; however, their desire to participate was not related to job satisfaction. The findings of both these studies emphasise the relationship between participation and job satisfaction.

By contrast, in a recent study of academic staff participation in decision making among faculties at faith-based universities in the USA (Metheny et al., 2015), several variables were examined. Metheny et al. found no significant difference in terms of gender, but in terms of age and working experience, he found that the actual participation of older and more experienced members of staff was more than they desired. In terms of qualifications, he found that staff with bachelor's degrees desired more participation. Notably, in this study no relationship was found between job satisfaction and academics' participation in decision making. Generally, the study's findings suggest that staff were satisfied with their actual participation and did not desire more involvement.

In the second category, attention has been paid to participation in decision making and how the level of involvement might be influenced by different leadership styles. Anwar et al. (2008) examined the level of inclusion of academics in the procedures of a Pakistani university. The study found that academics were isolated and as a result lacked power to participate in the decision-making process. This isolation stemmed from the leadership style applied in this Pakistani university and its structure, which does not allow much room for participation in decision making, even though academics were willing to play a role in this area.

Hawthorne (1996) studied decision making in higher education in Taiwan, examining examined nine decision areas with which universities deal and finding that most decisions in higher education were made at the top management level. However, she did note that the process of making decisions had shifted from "centralised-autocratic" to "centralised-consultative", so that faculty might be consulted about decisions (p.75). This means that even in a centralised educational system, faculties and their members can be consulted. The study further implies that university management can respond to changes in the broader environment and can change for purposes of improvement. Accordingly, the present study will investigate the Saudi context with the aim of providing useful suggestions and implications.

In the third category, Mehta et al. (2010) compared the actual and desired levels of participation in decision making in Indian universities. Their study showed that faculty members were not participating as much as they desired in technical decisions, but did enjoy sufficient participation in other decision types. Additionally, in a study comparing the governance of US and Japanese universities, Ehara (1998) showed that Japanese universities had been influenced by the American system. In terms of academics' participation in decision making within a faculty, the study found an acceptable level of involvement in both countries, although it was greater in American universities. While academics in the US had greater freedom and scope in their jobs, academics in Japanese universities were isolated from certain decisions such as those concerning financial issues, which were made solely by top management.

In his recent study, Alenezi (2013) compared the level of participation in decision making by academics at one British and one Saudi university in four types of decisions: teaching, research, financial and administrative. His findings indicate that academics in the British university participate actively in most decisions related to faculty matters, including financial issues. By contrast, he found that academics in the Saudi university participate less in decision making and desire more involvement in all aspects of decisions related to their department.

These few studies conducted worldwide on academics' participation in decision making in higher education institutions provide valuable insight into the issue. However, since less has been done in the Saudi context, it is worth conducting a new study to understand in depth how decisions are made in a Saudi university and any role that academics may play in them. The present study will help to fill gaps in the literature in several respects. For example, Metheny (2013) suggests that further studies should be conducted at a faith-based university; in addition, while the majority of previous studies were quantitative, Metheny suggests conducting qualitative studies to explain emerging patterns.

Moreover, Alenezi (2013) suggests carrying out further studies in the context of Saudi higher educational institutions, thus helping to understand the issue more clearly and in greater depth. He also recommends that variables such as gender differences in terms of perceived decision making be investigated and re-examined,

since certain cultural barriers have made it difficult in previous studies to conduct interviews with women. In the current study, an attempt is made to interview women, giving full respect to culture and religion; the mechanism of interviews is discussed in the Methodology chapter. Women's perspectives will be compared with men's, making it possible to convey Saudi academic reality from both sides.

2.9 Summary

Discussing Saudi culture at both the national and university levels makes clear that power distance, bureaucracy, centralisation and a consultative decision style are the main features of Saudi university culture; taken together, they have a strong effect on academics' involvement in decision making. However, changes are always taking place, so, in response to the current pace of worldwide growth, the development of technology and the advance of globalisation, there are signs of change in Saudi culture. For example, it is notable that new opinions have begun to be delivered vociferously in the electronic media by people who are not at the top of government bodies, taking issue with the government's approach to matters of national import. In time, as a result of this emerging trend, both national culture and organisational cultures, including those found in universities, might be affected.

These signs of change, along with the importance of the concept of decision making in relation to the degree of involvement in decisions in the university setting, the idea of organisational learning and effective decisions, the increased attention paid by researchers to this issue and a personal interest in the subject have combined to prompt me to investigate decision making in the context of a Saudi university. It is of interest both as knowledge development and as practical improvement, because I teach at that Saudi university, so issues of development and innovation will arise and be faced in the course of finishing this study. The methodology of this exploration is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter starts by posing three research questions, which are followed by a discussion of the rationale of the research inquiry and design, in which qualitative and quantitative methods are used. Next, the issue of sampling is discussed, followed by a description of the research procedure, including the piloting stage. Then, the issues of data collection and analysis are discussed. The chapter concludes by addressing the authenticity of the research and ethical issues.

3.2 Research aim and questions

The aim of the investigation was to explore the practices surrounding the decision-making process in Saudi higher education in the context of academic departments. The research strove to assess the participatory role of academics in departmental decisions in a Saudi university, in order to understand the current situation in considerable depth and gain insight into the issue by examining both men's and women's perspectives, an exercise which should yield some recommendations for improving or otherwise modifying the practices of a Saudi university and its staff. This aim was underpinned by the following three research questions:

1: How are departmental decisions made in a Saudi university?

This question seeks an explanation of the process of making departmental decisions in terms of how and by whom decisions are made.

2: To what extent are academics currently participating in Saudi university decision making, and how far does the current level of participation match academics' desired levels of participation?

In answering this question, the study should measure the current level of academics' participation in departmental decisions and allow a comparison with what they desire in terms of participation. Moreover, it should show the extent to which certain decision domains influence the level of academics' participation and how their gender affect that level.

3: How can the levels of staff satisfaction in the participatory process in departmental decision making in the Saudi higher education context be explained?

The investigation of this question should disclose the causes of the current situation and the reasons for a greater or lesser degree of desired participation.

3.3 Research philosophy

Exploring the research philosophy is critical to determining research methodology. It provides an idea of which research design can be adopted, what evidence is needed and what possible interpretive approaches are available. The research philosophy can also extend its benefits by highlighting the limitations of a particular approach, allowing the researcher to be creative in selecting research methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Research assumptions are concerned with the research paradigm, which has been defined as "a set of assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge and the goals and aims of the research process" (Maione, 1997, p.2). Hence, ontological, epistemological and methodological issues are discussed in order to explain the research paradigm (Charmaz et al., 2003).

This study's ontological position is that multiple realities exist for the research issue; academics at different levels of seniority have different perspectives regarding their participation in departmental decisions and the process of making decisions in general, as structured through their own experiences and their thoughts (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Interpreting these different realities should help reveal in depth the process of decision making and thus aid with assessing academics' participation in Saudi university decisions.

As for this study's epistemological perspective, it is based on the view that interacting with academics in Saudi university is the most suitable way to gain information about decision making and academics' participation. In seeking knowledge on this issue, the researcher played a critical role by engaging with academics to investigate their experiences in relation to participation in university decisions (Heron and Reason, 1997). According to the ontological and epistemological stances of this research, the interpretive paradigm is the most useful one for the study's purpose.

3.4 Research design

The research design concerns the plan, process and strategy integrated in a scientific manner to address the research problem and fulfil the research aims (Scott, 2012; Lankshear and Knobel, 2004). The research design, which includes methods selection, is influenced by factors such as research objectives, available time and resources, number and positions of participants and the philosophical assumptions

underlying the research (Scott, 2012; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). There are two broad approaches – qualitative and quantitative – which can be used in investigating any phenomenon (Ritchie et al., 2013). There is wide debate over which of these approaches is more appropriate and effective in the social sciences, with the proponents of each approach believing their favoured method to be superior (Krantz, 1995). However, the present study of the phenomenon combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to address the research questions, thus benefiting from the strength of each approach while overcoming their individual limitations.

3.4.1 Mixed methods

The research enquiry called for mixed methods that combine qualitative and quantitative data because of the advantages gained by applying the languages of both words and numbers, and so overcoming the weakness of using a single research method, whether quantitative or qualitative (Creswell, 2014). Broadly speaking, there are two critical advantages in combining the methods. One consists of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the intended object of study; the other is validating and verifying the findings from each tool (Sandelowski, 2003).

Hammersley (1996) provides three useful concepts to justify the use of mixed methods: triangulation, facilitation and complementarity. Triangulation provides the opportunity to check data from one source with another, facilitation concerns using the data from one approach as a source for the other and complementarity involves obtaining different information from different sources of data in order to complement each other. Hence, a mixed methods approach provides the best fit for addressing the research questions, making it possible to obtain the strongest evidence possible. In the case of this study, the mixed methods approach was used for all three of these reasons.

For example, analysing documents and observing meetings – discussed below – complement each other in answering the first research question. In combination, they also facilitate refining the focus and finalising the study's survey, which measures participants' involvement in departmental decisions with reference to the second research question. This measurement is triangulated by conducting interviews with selected participants to check the results of the questionnaire and explain some emerging patterns so as to answer the third research question.

Yet, despite these strengths of mixed methods research, there are two potential difficulties in its effective implementation. The first is applying both qualitative and quantitative methods and understanding the appropriate way to mix them for a single researcher (Hibberts and Johnson, 2012). This challenge has been overcome by my having enrolled in four research methods modules and taken several workshops to acquire the ability and understand the appropriate way to conduct the study. The second is that mixed methods can be expensive and time-consuming. Accordingly, a specific design frame has been chosen within which to conduct the study, as explained in the next paragraph.

3.4.2 Case study

As the aim of this study is to understand a specific phenomenon in the area of decision making, namely academics' participation in Saudi university decisions, case study design is particularly suitable for deep investigation (Thomas, 2013). According to Yin (1994), the case study can be a highly appropriate strategy for understanding organisations in general and for understanding their processes and ways of making decisions. The case study also allows in-depth analysis through the flexibility provided by multiple methods (Johnson and Christensen, 2004).

Comparative methods within a single case study (Gerring, 2007) are also used, but since the research aim is to gain rich information through in-depth analysis of the particular case and because the chosen case has a large number of units, the focus is on investigating only two academic departments, forming an embedded case study design rather than a holistic study of the case. By focusing on sub-units within the case study, significant features can be explored, allowing the findings to be compared both at the sub-unit level and with previous studies' findings (Springer, 2009).

The case study is an educational management enquiry conducted in Saudi Arabia during the academic year 2015 into a stimulating aspect of university management – academics' participation in departmental decisions in a Saudi university – in order to provide information for practitioners, policy makers and theoreticians who are interested in this issue (Bassey, 2012).

3.5 Research process and procedures

In order to answer the research questions, critical steps in the application of mixed methods were identified, following the typology called partially mixed sequential dominant status design, in which qualitative and quantitative methods are applied sequentially (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Four instruments – document analysis, observation, questionnaire and interview, of which three are qualitative and one quantitative – are used sequentially in order to address the research questions. The research was conducted in three stages, each of which answered one of the research questions, as depicted in Figure 3.1 and described below.

This first stage identified the type of decisions discussed in each department and whether or not decisions were actually made, by analysing the minutes of four meetings from each department. The findings from the analysis of the meeting minutes helped reveal what matters department meetings dealt with, and sharpened the focus of the method of observing meetings to reveal additional information that could not be gained by simply analysing documents. Next, four sequential meetings in each department were observed, focusing on certain behaviours such as who made the decisions and how they were made. The findings provided by these methods helped in finalising the design of the research survey.

The second stage involved measuring the current and desired levels of staff participation in departmental decisions. This stage made it possible to identify the discrepancy between current and desired participation levels. Some issues which emerged from this and the first stage were taken into further consideration in the next stage.

The third stage explored the levels of satisfaction with academic participation in departmental decisions. Semi-structured interviews with different academic staff in terms of seniority and gender provided additional insight into the degree of satisfaction with participation.

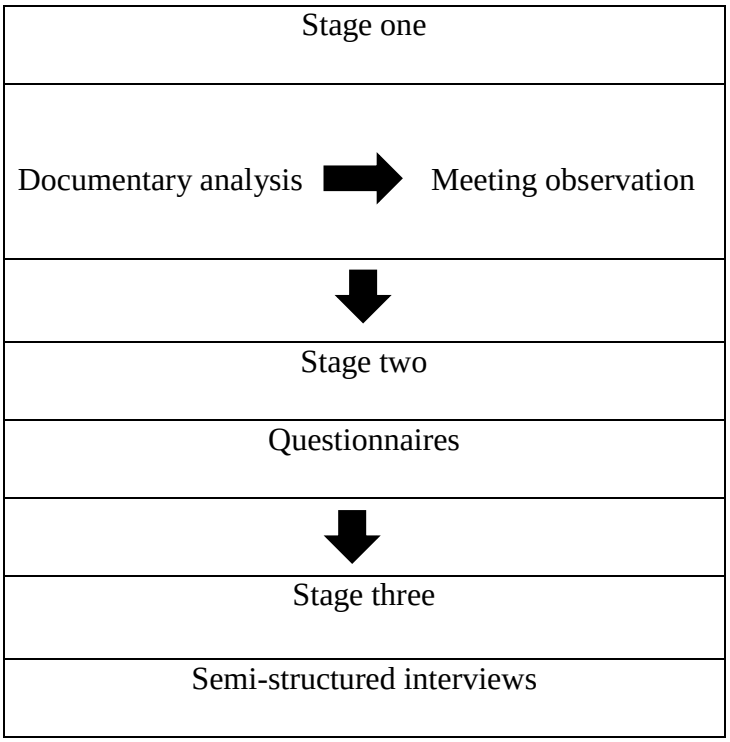


Figure 3.1 Partially mixed sequential dominant qualitative status design

3.6 Sampling of the case study and participants

It is simply crucial to determine the strategy of sampling in any research project (Cohen et al., 2011). Among a number of sampling strategies found in Patton (2002), purposive sampling was used because it serves the goal of this research to understanding the phenomena under study in greater depth (Holloway, 1997). Therefore, in terms of the selection of the university, as the focus of the study was on higher educational institutions, a particular Saudi university was deliberately chosen as a case study. The chosen case study is one of the well-established universities in the country. It has about 20 faculties encompassing about 50 academic departments. It is a co-educational university having both male and female students and staff. However, they are segregated for cultural reasons. The university is widely managed and led by men, like other co-educational universities in the country, unlike the all-female university which is managed by women only.

This choice is appropriate because the chosen institution is one of the Islamic universities in Saudi Arabia, and Metheny (2013) recommends conducting new studies in a faith-based university. Moreover, the university was among the few that devote themselves to both teaching and research, which is of help in exploring

academics' participation in different decision areas. Furthermore, having previously worked at this Islamic university was an advantage for me to understand its culture and in making it possible to collaborate with female colleagues to facilitate communication with women participants, since hearing the female voice is one of the key research aims.

However, being an insider has both benefits and potential drawbacks. The benefits of researching the organisation at which I work are sharing background knowledge with the respondents which helps to gain an in-depth understanding for data explanation and having access to respondents, especially female respondents who have been previously under-represented in this kind of research. Because of cultural factors in Saudi Arabia, women have not been studied in similar research in that country, so female experiences and knowledge has been marginalised, as Harding suggests (1987), being an insider can help to shine a light on their views. The drawbacks of being an insider can include seeing actions as normal because of familiarity with the environment, although this was not the case in this research, as the observed site – departmental meetings – was a new place; I had not previously attended departmental meetings. Another potential problem of being an insider is interview bias with respondents if they know the researcher; in this study, however, I have no connection with the chosen departments, so all the interviewees were strangers (Trowler, 2016).

Secondly, within the chosen university, two academic departments were specifically selected for the study because they share a number of key features. The subjects of both departments are in the social sciences; both provide undergraduate and postgraduate courses; both have male and female members; and both are led by men as only male members are eligible to serve as heads of the department. The number of female members is also smaller than that of male members in both departments.

One advantage of this choice is that both departments provide both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, offering a wide range of issues surrounding teaching and research. Another is that the departments both have male and female academics, which makes possible the comparison between genders which is a key purpose of this study.

As to sampling of participants, all members of the two departments were targeted in the survey to measure the overall level of participation. However, in deciding on interview participants, five volunteer participants were selected purposively in each department, their gender being critical to the selection criteria; hence, two females from each department were selected to gain insight into female perspectives. It is noteworthy that only two women volunteered from Department A and three from Department B. In terms of male participants, three participants with different levels of seniority were purposively selected to gain information from different perspectives in this respect.

3.7 Data collection methods

The subject of data collection methods is concerned with techniques such as surveys and interviews (Blaxter et al., 2010). As outlined in section 3.4.1, a mixed methods design was followed, in which document analysis, observation and semi-structured interviews were all used to collect qualitative data, with a survey employed to collect quantitative data. All methods were designed and developed according to the research needs. The four research methods are explained in detail in the following sections.

3.7.1 Documentary Research

To answer the first research question, some relevant documentation was initially analysed to obtain valuable information about the studied context and culture. It has been suggested that analysing documents helps in understanding how institutions work and what factors guide decisions. According to Fitzgerald (2007), document analysis can be used as an initial and primary data collection strategy for case studies in the field of educational management and leadership. While there are several types of documents, records of academic departments' meetings were analysed for the present research (Fitzgerald, 2007). Minutes of four meetings in each department were also analysed. The meetings were not selected chronologically; rather, they were chosen deliberately from the previous semester (2014) to obtain a wide range of minutes that encompassed the beginning, middle and end of a semester and thus offered a broad sense of the issues that would be discussed during a full semester.

As the purpose of the analysis was to obtain as many details about the decision-making process as possible, rather than simply quantifying the issues discussed at the

meetings, a thematic analysis was employed. Thematic analysis helps to identify and report themes and issues in great detail (Boyatzis, 1998). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest following four steps in analysing the data: familiarising oneself with the data, coding, developing themes and, finally, revising the themes. Thus, I read and reread the meeting minutes to familiarise myself with the data. Next, the kinds of issues raised in the meetings were coded, which led to categorising them later into the three different domains of teaching, research and administration. The various issues were revised and placed in the correct category. The data were also coded regarding whether or not decisions were made in these meetings and who raised the issues, as a result of which new themes were developed. Furthermore, a constant comparative methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) approach was used to compare minutes of other meetings within each department and between the two departments.

3.7.2 Observation

The second method of answering the first research question consisted of observing meetings within the two academic departments in order to understand the practice of decision making in a Saudi university and to confirm the findings from the analysis of meeting minutes. According to Williams (1994), observing meetings is an important tool in educational management research because it enables researchers to observe the decision-making process in its natural setting and look closely at the engagement of the meetings' participants in the process. Observation as a data collection method helps in documenting participants' behaviour through both watching and listening (Harvey, 1998). Observation is also useful for collecting rich types of valuable data that cannot be collected by other tools such as questionnaires and interviews, because the behaviour of people in real time might differ from what they report in surveys and interviews (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Moreover, observation is considered an effective tool for collecting data on interactions between observed participants (Morrison, 1993). Accordingly, observation is an appropriate method for assessing the participatory role of academic staff in departmental decisions and exploring the process of making those decisions during meetings.

3.7.2.1 Observation design

For this study's purposes, the main focus of meeting observation was on the process of making departmental decisions and academics' engagement in it. To sharpen this

focus, a meeting observation schedule has been prepared, based on the framework suggested by Williams (1994). Attention was particularly paid to issues related to the process of making decisions, including whether decisions were made, who made them and how, what the contributions of the meeting's members were, was there any dominant group, how the meeting was managed and the gender participation levels (see Appendix 1).

3.7.2.2 Administration and analysis of observation

In order to gain more accurate and detailed findings from meeting observations, I attended a total of eight sequential meetings, four in each department, with notes taken during each. While meetings at academic departments are held every week during academic semesters at a specific day and time, observing meetings in sequence, week after week, provided me the opportunity to observe the progress of issues in the meetings, to observe members' participation in the process of decision making and to see whether each meeting was dominated by only a few participants. Analysing sequential meetings thematically helped to assess the participation of academics over a period of time and allowed a comparison of management styles in the two departments. The notes on observed behaviours were later written up as short stories that captured both members' interactions during the decision-making process and leadership behaviours. The analysis of these behaviours and the roles played by the members in the meetings was guided by Belbin's team role theory (2010) and Williams's functional roles theory (1984), but also drew on the research findings. Further explanations of each theory are provided in Chapter 5.

3.7.3 Questionnaire

Surveys are increasingly used in social science research (Rea and Parker, 2012) to measure participants' attitudes and perceptions (Black, 1999). They can generate data in the absence of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2011) and reach a large number of people within the target population, beyond measuring the current situation and allowing examination of any relationships between different variables (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore, since academics' attitudes towards their level of participation in organisational decisions in different decision areas were sought, both closed and open-ended questions were included.

3.7.3.1 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was designed on the basis of the second research question, the purpose of which is to gather evidence about the level at which participants currently participate in departmental decisions and whether that level matches their desired involvement. In constructing the survey, several steps were taken. First, the related literature was reviewed in the light of my experience as an insider. Together, these sources helped with drafting the provisional survey, which has three main decision domains: teaching, research and administration, each of which contained a number of items. The provisional survey was later adjusted according to the analysis of both meeting minutes and meeting observations. Finally, the questionnaire design was based on data drawn from a focus group interview.

Vaughn et al. (1996) state that focus group interviews can be used to develop a research instrument, so a single focus group interview was conducted in order to develop the study's questionnaire. Interviewing a group of people generates more information due to the fact that participants stimulate each other's thoughts and remind them of forgotten issues (Morgan, 1998). Four participants were recruited for the focus group, two from each department. Holloway (1997) suggests involving no more than four participants at one time to manage the focus group by the researcher. The participants were contacted after they were selected during observation of meetings, due to the degree of their activity observed in meetings.

The time of the focus group was arranged to suit all participants; one of the participants volunteered to host the focus group and the others agreed. Participants were reminded of the focus group one day in advance. However, at the scheduled time, one of them could not attend due to an urgent task that he needed to finish. Therefore, the focus group interview was conducted with only three academic staff members. It lasted 45 minutes; we discussed the issues on which academic staff participated in making decisions. A structured interview approach was used, with 53 items in the provisional survey read to the participants; they were asked to agree or disagree about the relevance of the items to their work and to allocate items into the correct domains.

The focus group interview data revealed some differences and similarities with the provisional survey. The findings suggested three domains be included in the survey –

teaching, research and administration – with a total of 26 items. The data suggested adding three more items, rewording a number of items and deleting others. Notably, all items concerning department budgets and other financial issues were suggested for deletion from the survey, as academic staff do not deal with these matters at all at the department level.

A five-point Likert scale, as suggested by Oppenheim (1992), was used to rate participants' actual level of participation and their desired level of engagement in various departmental decisions within the three main decision domains of teaching, research and administration. The survey covers a total of 26 decisions divided as follows: 10 on teaching issues, 4 on research issues and 12 on administrative issues. Besides the five-point Likert scale, the survey included three open-ended questions that allowed participants to reflect on their role in making departmental decisions, since interviewing all participants was not possible (Davies, 1983). Finally, the survey contained a section to be completed by participants who were willing to be interviewed; it allowed them to provide their contact details to the researcher (see Appendix 2).

3.7.3.2 Piloting the questionnaire

Piloting a research instrument is as crucial as designing the instrument itself. Through this process, some unimportant items or questions can be removed and any unclear questions rewritten. In addition, piloting provides the researcher with valuable comments about the general shape of the instrument. Therefore, a draft of the questionnaire was discussed with my supervisor, who provided me with valuable comments and suggested some modifications which helped in finalising the questionnaire (Muijs, 2012) by identifying unclear items which were then rewritten. Later, the questionnaire was distributed for piloting purposes among similar participants, asking them to fill in the survey and supply feedback. They found that most of the items were clear, although one participant suggested rewording two items for greater clarity.

3.7.3.3 Questionnaire translation into Arabic

Since Arabic is the dominant language among the research participants, the researcher translated the questionnaire from English into Arabic. The accuracy of this translation was critical to strengthen the validity and reliability of the

questionnaire (Behling and Law, 2000). Therefore, both the Arabic and English versions of the questionnaire were sent for verification to a colleague at Leeds University who is a specialist in translation between these two languages. The feedback received confirmed the accuracy of the translation.

3.7.3.4 Administration of the questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was distributed to all academic members of the two departments in order to answer the second research question. A total of 90 questionnaires were distributed, divided equally between the two departments. However, as the study population comprises both males and females, the questionnaire was distributed in two different ways for cultural reasons. For males, hard copies of the questionnaire were handed out personally by the researcher after the third observed meeting in each department, which was culturally more effective and increased their likelihood of being completed. Participants were informed that they could bring their completed questionnaires to the next meeting or give them to the department secretary. In the following week, I collected only a few questionnaires from both department secretaries: three from Department A and four from Department B, while not a single participant returned the questionnaire during the final observed meeting. I gently reminded them about the questionnaire and provided each of them with another copy, as some asked for new ones. This time, some participants asked me to wait in the common room while they filled in the questionnaire in their offices; two from Department A and one from Department B. The following week, I visited the departments again at meeting time to collect any handed-in surveys from the secretary and to meet the participants and remind them once more about filling in the questionnaire. This time I found more copies at the secretary's office: eight from Department A and five from Department B, while a few participants asked for new copies of the survey to complete. One week later, I went to the secretaries of both departments to collect any handed-in surveys, of which there were three Department A and two from Department B.

For the female participants, one male member of Department B introduced me to a female member, to whom I sent copies of the questionnaires to be distributed to and collected from female members. She kindly distributed them among female participants. Two weeks later I reminded her to collect the surveys, and one week later she collected 11 copies and sent them to the department secretary, from whom I

collected them. However, in Department A, the Deputy Head kindly volunteered to send the copies to the female branch and ask its members to fill in the survey. I reminded him of the matter after two weeks had passed; by the following week, 14 copies were ready for collection from the department secretary.

3.7.3.5 Questionnaire data analysis

The questionnaire data were coded and entered in an Excel spreadsheet first and then imported into SPSS v. 22, which is the most appropriate software programme for data-driven social science research. As the type of data was ordinal and the sample size was not too large, the normality of the data could not be assumed, so non-parametric tests were used (Allen and Bennett, 2010). Simple descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations (SDs), were calculated to describe the current levels of academics' participation in their departmental decisions; the same was done with desired levels of participation in both departments. The current and desired levels of participation in the three decision areas in both departments were analysed by calculating the means and SDs, after which the decision areas were ranked according to their mean scores to allow for the calculation of the gap between the current and desired levels of participation. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which is ideal when the purpose is "to compare two related sample of ordinal (ranked) data" (Allen and Bennett, 2010, p.249), was used to show the significance of the difference between current and desired levels of participation in all decisions in the three domains in both departments. As one of the study's interests was comparing male and female participation, results of a Mann-Whitney U test, which is ideal when the purpose is "to compare two independent samples of ordinal (ranked) data" (Allen and Bennett, 2010, p.238) were used to reveal any similarities or significant differences between males and females regarding current and desired levels of participation in both departments. The same test was also used in comparing Departments A and B in terms of current and desired levels of participation. This is how the closed questions were analysed. However, in the case of the open-ended questions, participants largely did not respond except for a few words and incomplete sentences, which gave no scope for meaningful analysis. This limitation was addressed through interview data.

3.7.4 Interviews

Interviews were the final stage of data collection. They are a useful tool for capturing participants' views and experiences regarding a specific issue (Kvale, 2007). Interviews as a research tool are powerful and flexible for collecting in-depth information on the investigated phenomena; they are particularly effective in finding out people's feelings and experiences (May, 2011). In order to answer the third research question, academics at different levels of seniority were the subjects of semi-structured interviews. They were asked about certain themes and patterns that appeared in the data analysis of the previous stages of the research. These follow-up interviews helped to explain the important issues that emerged from document, observation and questionnaire analysis.

In this study, the main reasons for using interviews as a data collection method were that interview data can reveal rich information regarding the phenomena under research and allow for comparative analysis between participants as to how satisfactory they find their levels of participation. Interviews can also provide deeper insights and corroborated evidence which enhance the validity and reliability of the data findings (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Among the three main types of interviews – structured, unstructured and semi-structured – the last was selected. Semi-structured interviews capture the strength of the other two types by offering both a specific focus guided by a prepared list of questions and the flexibility to ask new questions according to the interviewees' answers (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to ask about certain themes that required more explanation and to offer participants the space to expand on their opinions, with prompts having been prepared to clarify some answers.

3.7.4.1 Interview design

The purpose of the interviews was to explain the levels of satisfaction with participation in issues that emerged from the findings of the other methods employed in this study. Accordingly, an interview schedule was developed (see Appendix 3) based on analysis of the findings of the first and second stages, in order to answer the third research question.

3.7.4.2 Piloting the interviews

However, before conducting the interviews, I took two steps to ensure the validity of the interview schedule. First, two copies of the Arabic interview schedule were sent to two academic staff colleagues working at a Saudi university to seek their opinions on the interview questions, as these academics were from a similar population as the interviewees. As a result, some tweaks were suggested in terms of rewording for greater clarity. Second, it has been suggested that in piloting an instrument it is better to conduct the piloting with a population similar to the research population (Turner, 2010). Therefore, two preliminary interviews were conducted with two Saudi academic staff to see whether the questions were clear and whether the data obtained could help to address the research questions. Piloting the interview gave me an opportunity to practise interviewing and avoid mistakes in advance of the actual interviews (Wragg, 2002). In the first interview, I realised that I was not confident enough in prompting, as the interviewee carried on speaking during the interview, but this skill improved during the second interview. Both interviews, especially the second one, revealed valuable information, as the interviewees had worked in academia for a number of years.

3.7.4.3 Administration of interviews

In conducting interviews, it is recommended that certain important considerations be borne in mind. First, the interviewer should ensure that the recorder is working properly before and during the interviews. During the interviews, the interviewer should avoid asking two questions at the same time, but rather should ask one clear question so as not to confuse the interviewee or leave questions unanswered. Furthermore, the interviewer should make a clear transition from one topic to another. Finally, it is vital to ensure that the time allotted to the interview is invested in fulfilling the aim of the interviews, by controlling the process on occasions when the interviewee talks about another topic (McNamara, 2009).

Telephone interviews were conducted. This is one of the interview types (Coleman, 2012) which enable the researcher to conduct interviews at an affordable cost, compared to travelling for in-person interviews. A telephone interview also makes the dialogue more open and relaxed compared to face-to-face discussion. It has further been argued that the telephone interview is an effective method on occasions when arranging face-to-face interviews would be difficult (Coleman, 2012). In the

case of this research, since hearing the female voice was one of the key research aims but cultural factors made it difficult to conduct face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews were conducted with both male and female participants to obtain equivalent responses.

3.7.4.4 Interview sampling

Some participants expressed their willingness to be interviewed by filling in the final section of the survey with their contact details. A total of two females and four males volunteered in Department A, and three females and five males volunteered in Department B. Most of the volunteers currently have or had managerial positions. Therefore, purposive sampling was used for the interviews, for which participants were deliberately selected according to their gender so as to hear from both, as well as by their level of seniority among volunteers from each department. Thus, in order to permit in-depth analysis, a total of 10 academics – five participants in each department – were selected: two female and three male.

Arrangements were made with participants either by phone call or text message; three missed the arranged times so that new arrangements were made. I conducted the telephone interview at home to ensure that no interruptions would occur on my end. Taking McNamara's recommendations into account, the interviews were recorded. They lasted for different amounts of time, ranging from 25 to 40 minutes.

As the interviews were recorded, the next step was transcribing them. Transcribing enables the researcher to transform spoken words into written words, which makes analysis and pattern recognition easier (Kvale, 2007). The transcription process is demanding in terms of time, human resources and cost (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006). For example, it has been suggested that a one-hour interview recording requires about six hours of transcription (Britten, 1995). The interview records were self-transcribed, which was very useful in helping me to become more familiar and engaged with the data than if they had been transcribed by a professional transcriber. It took me about eight hours to transcribe every recoded hour, which supports the claim that qualitative research can be time-consuming.

3.7.4.5 Translation of the interview data

As interviews were conducted and transcribed in Arabic, it was necessary to translate them into English, so I translated the transcriptions of the interview data from Arabic

into English, which enabled me to become even more engaged and familiar with the data before beginning the actual process of coding. Finally, in order to ensure the translation's validity, a random sample of the original Arabic transcript, along with my translated English version, was sent to a colleague who specialises in translation between the two languages to check the translation's accuracy; he found a high percentage of accuracy.

3.7.4.6 Interview data analysis

The interview data were analysed manually after being translated into English. Manual coding was used due to the relatively small amount of data that made manual analysis manageable. I began the process of analysis by familiarising myself with the data through transcribing and translating. The transcripts were printed in tables containing three columns, with the transcript on the left side with coding, emergent themes in the middle column and the right side open for memo writing. The next step was reading and rereading the transcripts several times, highlighting stimulating and rich information. Later, on the basis of important quotes, the initial coding was constructed; it was revised many times until the final codes were determined (see Appendix 4). Later, by applying the thematic analysis approach, which is considered to facilitate organisation and description of the data in greater detail, themes were developed (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Besides thematic analysis, the constant comparative approach, which allows comparisons to be made between interviews (Dye et al., 2000), was used to compare academics' perspectives on their participation in departmental decisions, since differences between the two departments and among the different members of each department were both sought.

3.8 Authenticity

Authenticity is the cornerstone of a research project, as it reflects both the quality and value of the research outcomes (Cohen et al., 2011). Hence, it is of vital importance to ensure the validity and reliability of research, because these elements are the foundation of any study's authenticity (Bush, 2012). It is equally crucial that the two concepts are taken into account for both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

Reliability concerns the ability to replicate the results of a research project (Hartas, 2010), whereas validity concerns the issue of the representativeness of the research

results to what is being investigated (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Validity and reliability are suggested for use with both quantitative and qualitative methods, although they are applied differently in each approach (Cohen et al., 2011). Applying them for qualitative methods has been found by some researchers to be problematic (Bush, 2012), so the concept of trustworthiness has been suggested as an alternative for qualitative methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the research project (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, in this research validity and reliability are used for the quantitative measurement tool, while the concept of trustworthiness is used for the qualitative methods.

In terms of quantitative data, one way to ensure reliability in the questionnaire is through the procedure of testing-retesting (Bernard, 2000). To do so, Youngman (1994) suggests three ways in which the reliability of a questionnaire can be ensured: first, comparing questionnaire findings with other resources, which was accomplished in this study by triangulating the questionnaire findings with observations and interviews, which gave similar results. Second, the findings were cross-checked with the pilot findings, which also evinced similar results. The third testing method involved questioning the respondents directly in the interviews; their answers matched the questionnaire findings. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest the need to ensure the internal consistency of the questionnaire items, so Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency. The results are satisfactory if the value of Cronbach's alpha is larger than the minimum acceptable level of 0.7 (Allen and Bennett, 2010). Cronbach's alpha for the 10 teaching items was 0.851, 0.759 for the 4 research items and 0.860 for the 12 administration items.

Both internal and external validity were assessed (Bush, 2012; Roberts et al., 2006). The former, which concerns the accuracy of findings, in representing the investigated phenomena (Bush, 2012), was ensured by adjusting the tool to the context of the study (Roberts et al., 2006) by following several steps. First, I undertook a review of the relevant literature and previous tools concerning similar issues. Second, I analysed both meeting minutes and meeting observations, which combined to facilitate the development of the questionnaire. Third, through a focus group interview, I asked respondents for their views of the provisional questionnaire. Finally, I piloted the questionnaire before it was administered to the full sample. External validity, which concerns the ability to apply the findings to other people or

organisations (Roberts et al., 2006), is limited in this case study due to the population size; however, it can be obtained through replication of the study approach in other cases (Yin, 1994). In addition, the description of the case study and its procedure allow for transferability to other contexts.

For the qualitative data, trustworthiness was assessed by ensuring credibility (referring to the presentation of a true picture of the phenomenon under research), transferability (referring to the applicability of the findings to other contexts), dependability (referring to the consistency of the findings if the study is repeated), and confirmability (referring to the extent to which the findings reflect the participants' views) (Shenton, 2004). In order to ensure overall credibility, two forms of triangulation were used: methodological and data triangulation. In the former, document analysis, observation, questionnaire and interview approaches were all used, which permitted cross-checking of data between the instruments employed. In addition, the use of document analysis and meetings observation facilitated the design and sharpened the focus of the questionnaire; the questionnaire results also helped to sharpen the focus of the follow-up interviews. Using the findings from all study instruments in a complementary technique both enriched the study's findings and enhanced its credibility.

For data triangulation, data were collected from different perspectives for different categories of respondent, such as the Faculty Dean, the Deputy Head of a department, and both genders of academics. In addition, two academic departments, as embedded units within the case study, were chosen to provide a wider range of perspectives and offer a chance to compare perspectives and verify results against different groups (Guion et al., 2011).

The third step in establishing a study's credibility is through techniques such as member checking, which can help to ensure that the data obtained are accurate and present the participants' actual thoughts. Therefore, a random sample of two participants had the opportunity to check the transcripts of their interviews and to add to, explain and agree or disagree with their contents (Cho and Trent, 2006).

Concerning transferability, the study's boundaries were inscribed by location (Saudi Arabia), number of institutions (two academic departments within a university), the number of participants (53 for the survey, 10 for the interview, 3 for the focus group

interview), research methods (mixed methods including documentary analysis, observation, survey and interviews) and the length of data collection (during 2015). These boundaries will help readers to relate the study's results to their own positions, making it possible to transfer the results to other contexts (Shenton, 2004). Through these descriptions of the process and results of the research, naturalistic generalisation can be achieved (Stake, 1995), because readers can generalise the results by assessing their applicability to their own situations.

In terms of dependability, the instruments and design of the study were explained in detail, allowing readers to follow the research process easily and as a result to repeat the study in other contexts. In addition, a detailed account of the operational process of data collection was provided, enabling readers to understand fully what was done in terms of fieldwork. Dependability can also be ensured in the case study, which uses multiple qualitative methods such as observation, documentary analysis and interview, by comparing the results with those of previous studies using the same methods (Yin, 1994).

Finally, although I played a critical role in relation to the study's participants, especially in the interviews, by constructing meanings during the research process, confirmability can be established by emphasising the critical methodological role of triangulation, which ensures that the effect of researcher bias is reduced and that the research results reflect the participants' actual experiences and opinions. Therefore, the results of interviews were triangulated with those of the survey and the observations. Confirmability was also ensured through transparency of the data analysis by presenting extracts of data followed by their interpretations.

3.9 Ethical issues

As to ethical issues surrounding the execution of this study, an ethical review form is an important requirement for conducting any research study (Polonsky, 1998). Therefore, the ethical review form was sent to the Ethics Committee of the University of Leeds to be considered by the committee members, after which ethical approval was given. Ethical forms and permissions from the volunteer university, units and participants were all obtained. Permissions were also obtained from both departments, which were to be provided with samples of the meeting minutes. Second, as recommended by Polonsky (2005), all participants were volunteers, and

thus had the right to withdraw at any time up to the point of writing up the results. All participants were provided informed consent forms for their signatures, along with information sheets explaining the purposes of the research.

In addition, all data were kept confidential; the use of the data did not extend beyond the research purposes. Transcribing and translation were done by the researcher, which also maintained confidentiality. The issues raised and viewpoints expressed by individuals were not discussed with others in any identifiable ways. In addition, to ensure participants' anonymity, their names and any job descriptions by which they could be recognised were modified. Moreover, both the volunteer institution and its embedded units were kept anonymous, with the participant departments referred to as Department A and Department B (Crow and Wiles, 2008).

3.10 Summary

This chapter has discussed in detail the research methodology that was employed to achieve the aims of this research. The chapter covered a wide range of aspects of the research methodology, which can be summarised as follows: the chapter started with a statement and extended explanation of the research questions; the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research were then discussed. The chapter then explained the rationale of the research design, in which a mixed methods approach was used, given its appropriateness to the research purpose. In this design, four methods of data collection were used, which is believed to increase the validity of the research. The case study design was found suitable for investigating the research questions by targeting a single case study, with two embedded units to allow room for more exploration and comparison. The chapter then explained the research data collection procedure, in which a sequential technique was used. In addition, issues of data collection and data analysis were discussed. Finally, the authenticity of the research was established and ethical considerations were presented.

Chapter Four: Documentary analysis

Minutes of Sample Departmental Meetings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the minutes of meetings from two academic departments are analysed. Through this analysis, the chapter highlights and explains what kinds of issues were discussed at each meeting, making it possible to indicate any dominant type that arises regularly in such meetings. In addition, the chapter explores whether or not decisions are made at the department meetings level, who presents the issues to the meetings, and who benefits from the decisions. The chapter ends with a comparative analysis of the two departments. Data is drawn from the analysis of the minutes of eight meetings from the two departments, with four from each department. The departments are referred to as Department A and Department B to ensure data confidentiality.

However, before going into detail about the meeting minutes, it is worth offering a general sense of how academic department meetings work in Saudi universities so as to clarify the decision-making process. First, universities in Saudi Arabia are under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education, now called the Ministry of Education, where most of the rules and policies regarding the operation of the universities are explained, including those at the departmental level. Another key point is that decisions reached in the meetings at the department and faculty levels are considered recommendations rather than final decisions, with final approval required by top management, although when a recommendation is given by the department it is usually a strong sign that the decision will be approved by top management, as the department follows the stipulated rules in making its decisions and recommendations. The last key point is that each department can create embedded committees for various relevant issues, some of which can be sent to ad hoc committees for discussion and recommendations on the issues.

In order to make sense of the analysis, some contextual information on both departments is provided. The subjects of both departments are in the social sciences, and both provide under-postgraduate courses. The departments have male and female members; however, only male members are eligible to serve as heads of the

department, as the university in general managed by male members. The number of female members is smaller than male members in both departments.

In an exploratory look at the meeting minutes, I found that they varied in terms of the number and type of issues discussed. This can be explained by the fact that during each semester there are peak times such as the beginning and end of the semester. In both departments, the issues in the meeting minutes can be broadly divided into two main categories: internal and external issues, the former being raised by people within the department and the latter placed on the agenda from outside the department. Both internal and external issues can be further divided into two main categories: those requiring decisions and those not requiring decisions. The issues can also be categorised according by domain: teaching, research or administration. These classifications and certain others will be taken into consideration in the detailed analysis of the meetings.

4.2 Department A

Table 4.1 shows all the external issues discussed in the four meetings in Department A, and whether each required a decision. Most (75%) of the external issues did not require decisions; only a quarter of such issues did require decisions. In that group, the department was expected to propose decisions, but due to the small number of such issues, they cannot be categorised for analysis. For example, in order to prepare and plan for the subsequent semester, the department was asked how many students it could accept in the parallel programme for that semester. The department suggested a precise number of students that they could accept, taking into account that academic staff are full-time employees and that these extra hours should not affect their primary working time.

As to the external issues that did not require decisions but still contained messages to academic staff, they indicated various courses of action that affected individual academic staff. These issues can be classified into three categories: encouraging, informing or reminding and seeking ideas. In the first category, a number of announcements encouraged academic staff to undertake a particular activity, such as participating in upcoming conferences to be held at or outside the university. These exhortations came from the university's top management level, and served as

reminders for academic staff to continue developing themselves so as to be up to date in their areas of specialisation.

In the second category, academic staff were informed and reminded about university rules and procedures. For example, it was announced that academic staff should be on time for lectures, which implies that the university was monitoring lectures and might have noticed some tardiness among academics in arriving at lectures. Another example of informing academic staff was an announcement of a specialist drugs research organisation, which is the only source that can be referred to in the university's research in this area. In this announcement, some features of centralisation in the university were clear. In the third category, suggestions and creative ideas were sought from academic staff regarding the faculty Open Day to be held during the following semester, which implies staff engagement in the work environment.

Table 4.1 shows four key features. First are the issue domains: teaching, research or administrative. Nearly 40% of total external issues were administrative, the same percentage were research, while only about 20% involved teaching. The small percentage of external teaching issues can be explained by the fact that these are to some extent internal matters which mostly emerge and are discussed within a department. By contrast, the high percentage of administrative issues can be explained by the fact that rules and policies are formulated at the top in the centralised Saudi system. Meanwhile, the high percentage of research issues can be explained by the fact that research issues do not concern the department itself but also involve other parties, because one of the university's research aims is sharing knowledge.

Table 4.1 also shows who raised each issue, which could explain some questions about the issues observed in the meeting minutes. For example, all external decision-requiring issues were raised not by the university's top management level but by middle management levels or other low levels of the hierarchy. The department has the full power to discuss these requests and make decisions about them. On the other hand, when issues were raised by top management level, they did not require decisions because they were either encouragements by the university's Rector, his deputy or the Research Faculty Dean to do something, such as participating in

conferences, or notifications of some new rules and procedures, such as the announcement by the Rector regarding the specialist drugs research organisation. However, when the issues were raised by middle management level, such as the Faculty Dean, his deputy, or the Information Technology (IT) Department, they tended to consist of seeking out ideas or requesting an explanation of a given procedure.

Table 4.1 shows how frequently each issue arose. For example, announcements and messages of encouragement for academic staff to participate in upcoming conferences were announced four separate times by different people: the Rector, his deputy, or the Research Faculty Dean. The Rector or his deputy made the announcement about conferences held outside the university, while events held inside the university were announced by the Research Faculty Dean. Each of the other external issues was only raised once, which shows the wide range of external issues that arose at the various meetings.

Fourth, Table 4.1 shows the kinds of decisions reached on those issues requiring them. For example, two out of three external issues required yes-or-no decisions, while the other kind resulted from a discussion of an issue requiring the meeting to study the situation and come up with a more substantive decision on the matter. An example of this is the Faculty Dean’s deputy’s query as to how many students the department could accept in a parallel programme in the subsequent year; as a result, the teaching capacity of each member was discussed and the acceptable number of students was identified.

Table 4.1 External Department A's issues

Department A (External issues requiring decisions)				
Issue domain	On what issue	Who raised the issue	How frequently	Decision
Administrative	A request for an academic staff member from Department A to act as a part-time consultant in another faculty	A faculty within the university	1	Yes
Total administrative issues			1	
Teaching	A request from a person who wanted to enrol in the department's programme	A person	1	No
	Asking how many students the department could accept in a parallel programme the following year	The Faculty Dean's deputy	1	Specified
Total teaching issues			2	
There were three (3) total external issues requiring decisions				
Department A (External issues not requiring decisions)				
Issue domain	On what issue	Who raised the issue	How frequently	
Research	Four separate announcements and encouragements for academic staff to participate in upcoming conferences to be held at or outside the university	The Rector twice, the Deputy Rector once and the Research Faculty Dean once	4	
	An announcement of a specialist drugs research organisation that is the only source that can be referred to in the university's research in this area.	Rector	1	
Total research issues			5	
Administrative	Seeking suggestions and creative ideas from academic staff regarding the faculty Open Day to be held during the next semester	Faculty Dean	1	
	Announcement for academic staff that they should be on time for lectures.	Deputy Dean of the Faculty	1	
	An explanation of the procedures and rules for applying to attend and participate in conferences.	Deputy Rector	1	
	An explanation of the new electronic system for academic staff to use when applying to attend conferences	IT Department	1	
Total administrative issues			4	
Teaching	Describing the mechanism for postgraduate students' assessment and the problems with the current assessment method, with details to be provided later by the Head of the department	Deputy Dean of the Faculty	1	
Total teaching issues			1	
There were ten (10) total external issues not requiring decisions				

Table 4.2 Internal Department A's issues

Department A (Internal issues requiring decisions)				
Issue domain	On what issue	Who raised the issue	How frequently	Decision
Teaching	Requests for study deferral	PhD students	3	Yes
	Requests to recruit panels for PhD students' vivas	Academic staff	6	Yes
	Requests for graduating postgraduate students' results	Department Head	5	Yes
	A request for deciding on ten PhD students' comprehensive exam results	Department Head	1	Yes
	A request for recruiting panels for MA students' vivas	Academic staff	1	Yes
Total teaching issues			16	
Research	Requests for authorisation to attend international conferences	Academic staff	6	Yes
	Requests for approval of PhD students' proposals	Research Committee	6	Yes
Total research issues			12	
Administrative	A request for maternity leave for one semester	Academic staff	1	Yes
	Deciding on the mechanism for supervising postgraduate students who study in a parallel evening program, for which extra pay would be given	Department Head	1	Specified
	A request for promotion after obtaining an MA certificate	Academic staff	1	Yes
Total Administrative issues			3	
There were thirty-one (31) total internal issues requiring decisions				
Department A (Internal issues not requiring decisions)				
Issue domain	On what issue	Who raised the issue	How frequently	
Research	A reminder of all the research titles that have been approved by the department's research committee	Research Committee	1	
Administrative	Updating the department on preparations for holding a conference that had been announced weeks earlier	Academic staff	1	
There were two (2) total internal issues not requiring decisions				

Moving on to the internal issues in Department A, Table 4.2 shows all internal issues discussed in the four meetings and whether the issues required decisions. Most of the internal issues – 94% – required decisions, with just under 6% of total internal issues not requiring decisions. In the latter category, issues for the purpose of updating or reminding staff about previous decisions were raised, such as updating the department on preparations for holding a conference that had been announced weeks earlier in a department meeting and a reminder of all the research titles that had been approved by the department's Research Committee. Although these issues did not require decisions, they could help in clarifying future decisions on related issues.

Moving on to internal issues that did require decisions, the meetings' participants came up with decisions on all issues raised in each meeting; as a result, there were no issues deferred to subsequent meetings or sent to a specialist committee for further discussion. Making decisions on most internal issues was straightforward, due to the fact that university policies and procedures for most issues are well explained in the policies and procedure guide, especially those regarding students and academic staff. For example, there were three requests for study deferral, on which decisions were made following a prescribed procedure whereby such requests are accepted when the requirements are met and otherwise rejected.

Table 4.2 shows four key features, starting with the issue domains (teaching, research or administration). Only about 10% of total internal issues were administrative, about 40% were research and about 50% were teaching. The small percentage of internal administrative issues could be explained by the fact that these are to some extent external issues, which largely emerge and are discussed at high levels of management. The high percentage of teaching issues could be explained by the fact that these kinds of matters arise within the department itself and could occur on any working day. The high percentage of research issues could also be explained by the fact that such issues are important in this department, as the department offers postgraduate courses for both MA and PhD students, and so is expected to discuss research matters in the department meetings.

Second, Table 4.2 provides information on another important aspect of the analysis, namely who raised each particular issue, which could answer some questions regarding the issues observed in the meeting minutes. For example, nearly half of the

issues were raised by academic staff, such as requests for authorisation to attend international conferences. However, despite the fact that they raised the issues, not all the issues concerned only themselves; some also concerned their students, such as requests to recruit panels for PhD students' vivas. The Head of the department raised about 20% of the issues, all but one of which were student-related matters. The only issue the Head raised concerning the department was the need to decide on the mechanism for supervising postgraduate students who attend a parallel evening programme, for which extra pay would be given. Department committees also raised about 20% of the internal issues, all of which came from the Research Committee and concerned student research matters. Finally, only about 10% of the internal issues were raised directly by the department's students themselves; they consisted of requests for deferral of studies.

However, although a minority of the issues were raised by the department's students, two thirds of total issues concerned students. These were equally divided between research and teaching matters, such as graduating postgraduate students' results, recruiting panels for PhD students' vivas and deciding on 10 PhD students' comprehensive exam results. The remaining third of the issues concerned the department and its staff, such as deciding on the mechanism for supervising postgraduate students, which was raised by the Department Head, and a request by one member of staff for maternity leave for one semester.

Third, Table 4.2 shows how frequently these issues arose; some were more frequent, such as requests for authorisation to attend international conferences, requests to recruit panels for PhD students' vivas and requests for approval of PhD students' proposals. Each of these was raised six times in the analysed meeting minutes. An issue of lower but still high frequency was the request for graduating postgraduate students' results, which was raised five times. Requests for study deferral were raised three times, while each of the remaining issues arose only once. The most frequent issues could indicate the main interests of the department, for which research issues appear critical.

Fourth, Table 4.2 shows the kinds of decisions reached on those issues that required them. The decisions made on all such issues were of the yes-or-no type, except one issue for which all the decisions were yes (approved). The only issue that did not

require a yes-or-no decision was the issue raised by the Department Head about deciding on the mechanism for supervising postgraduate students in a parallel evening programme, for which extra pay would be given; the meeting's participants came up with a mechanism to apply in this case. Almost all decisions of the yes-or-no type followed obvious procedures and guides provided by the top management levels, whereby if the requirements for each issue were met the decision would be yes; otherwise, it would be no. However, the other types of issues required discussion among the members in order to reach decisions.

4.3 Summary of Department A

Most external issues in Department A were within the not-requiring-decisions category, including issues raised by the top management level to inform or remind academic staff of university procedures and rules or to encourage academic staff to participate in various events. However, issues raised by the middle level of the hierarchy consisted of explanations and requests for ideas. By contrast, the small minority of internal issues classified as not requiring decisions were raised by academic staff and department committees in order to update and remind the department of certain matters.

This difference in the number of internal and external matters not requiring decisions could be explained by the fact that in any organisation, the top management levels (regarding the external issues) are expected to make certain announcements informing the lower levels of new rules and procedures, new strategic plans and other related issues that middle management should bear in mind when running their departments or units, so it is not surprising to see that most external issues do not require decisions. Furthermore, in a centralised system like the educational system in Saudi Arabia, top management is expected to make more announcements of what should be done in certain areas. By contrast, at the operational level, the department is not expected to issue announcements to itself, its staff and its students, but more often to decide on its daily issues.

However, in comparing internal and external decision-requiring issues, a completely opposite distribution of issues can be seen, with the majority of internal issues classified as requiring decisions, while only a small minority of external issues are so classified. This could be explained by the fact that organisations in general, and more

specifically departments and units, deal with their own matters every day to ensure that they run smoothly, whereas less support for this purpose is expected to come from outside the department.

Regarding the issue domains, it is clear that research issues are equally important internally and externally, indicating that the university generally, at both higher and lower levels, pays attention to these issues. This shows that the university's goal is not only to teach students but also to produce research. In terms of who benefits from the outcome of the issues, approximately two thirds of the issues concerned the department's students, with the rest concerning either the department or its staff, which is unsurprising given that universities are unimaginable without students.

All internal issues requiring decisions were approved; the decision was yes for all of them, which implies that all people within the department have access to the university guidelines and procedures and only pass requests on to meeting organisers once all requirements are met; however, not all decision-requiring external issues were approved. Finally, it can be concluded that the department has autonomy in making its decisions, but only within the rules formulated at the top management level.

4.4 Department B

Table 4.3 shows all the external issues discussed in the four Department B meeting minutes. It also shows whether the issues required decisions. Most external issues – 75% – did not require decisions, so only 25% of total external issues did require decisions. The department discussed those external issues and came up with decisions in response to the requests. For example, the department was asked by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies about the possibility of accepting a student in the parallel MA evening programme who wanted to change his current course. The meeting decided to send this request to a specialist committee within the department to study the case and render a decision.

Moving on to the external issues that did not require decisions but could possibly help in making some future decisions, we can categorise these issues as follows: encouragement issues, informational issues and invitation issues. In the first category, both academic staff and students were encouraged to participate in upcoming conferences and exhibitions. For example, an announcement was made to

postgraduate students encouraging them to participate actively with their research projects in an upcoming exhibition about employment and business. In the second category, both academic staff and students were informed about procedures such as the requirements that should be met to secure agreement for academic staff to work outside the university. In the last category, academic staff were invited to submit their research applications for grants.

Table 4.3 External Department B issues

Department B (External issues requiring decisions)				
Issue domain	On what issue	Who raised the issue	How frequently	Decision
Teaching	Asking how many students the department could accept in the parallel programme next year	Deputy Dean of the Faculty	1	Specified
	Asking about the possibility of accepting a student in the parallel MA evening programme who wanted to change his current course	The Dean of Postgraduate Studies	1	Deferred
Total Teaching issues			2	
There were two (2) total external issues requiring decisions				
Department B (External issues not requiring decisions)				
Issue domain	On what issue	Who raised the issue	How frequently	
Administrative	An announcement about the requirements to be met to secure agreement for academic staff to work outside the university	The Rector	1	
Total Administrative issues			1	
Research	An invitation for academic staff to submit their research applications for grants	The Dean of the Research Faculty	1	
	Announcements of upcoming conferences and encouragement to academic staff to attend and participate in them	The Dean of the Research Faculty	2	
	An encouragement for postgraduate students to participate actively with their research projects in an upcoming exhibition about employment and business	The Dean of Employment Services and Business Initiative	1	
Total research issues			3	
Teaching	An explanation of the mechanism for dropping modules for new students	The Postgraduate Faculty Dean	1	
Total teaching issues			1	
There were six (6) external issues not requiring decisions				

Table 4.3 shows four key features, the first of which is the issue domains: teaching, research or administrative. Nearly 50% of total external issues concerned research, about 40% involved teaching and only 10% were administrative. The high percentage of research issues could again be explained by the fact that research issues do not concern the department itself but rather outside parties, because one of the aims of research is sharing knowledge. The relatively high percentage of teaching issues could also be explained by the fact that half the issues were classified as requiring decisions, and it is the department that is assigned responsibility for those decisions.

Second, Table 4.3 shows another important aspect of the analysis, namely who raised each issue, which could answer some questions regarding the issues in the meeting minutes. For example, all external issues requiring decisions were raised not by the university's top management level but rather by middle management. This could imply that the department has autonomy and complete power to discuss these requests, which are closely related to the department's daily work, and to make decisions on them. An example is the request by the Deputy Dean of the Faculty to know how many students the department could accept in the parallel programme in the next year.

On the other hand, when issues were raised by top management level, decisions were not required, because here the department was being informed about particular procedures by the university's Rector, which could imply features of a top-down management style, as in the case of the announcement about requirements to be met to secure agreement for academic staff to work outside the university. However, when issues were raised by middle management, such as the Dean of the Research Faculty or the Postgraduate Faculty Dean, they tended to consist of encouragement to participate in conferences, invitations of some kind or explanations of certain procedures, such as the mechanism for dropping modules for new students.

Third, Table 4.3 shows how frequently these issues arose; for example, the announcements and encouragements for academic staff to participate in upcoming conferences were each announced twice by the Research Faculty Dean. All of the

other external issues were only raised once, which shows the diversity of external issues arising in the meeting sequence.

Fourth, Table 4.3 shows the kinds of issues that required decisions to be made. For instance, one of the two external issues required yes-or-no decisions, but the meeting did not decide on the issue during its main meeting time, preferring to send the request to a committee that deals with this kind of matter. This was the only issue discussed so far that participants deferred to a later meeting. The other decision reached was the result of a discussion of an issue that did not require a yes-or-no answer, but rather asked department members to study the situation and arrive at a decision. An example of this type of issue is the request by the Deputy Dean of the Faculty to know how many students the department could accept in the parallel programme the next year; as a result, the teaching capacity of each member was discussed, following which the acceptable number of students was identified.

Table 4.4 Internal Department B issues

Department B (Internal issues requiring decisions)				
Issue domain	On what issue	Who raised the issue	How frequently	Decision
Teaching	Requests for graduating postgraduate students' results	Department Head	15	Yes
	A request to drop modules for the first semester	MA students	1	Yes
	Requests to recruit panels for PhD students' vivas	Academic staff	1	Yes
	Requests to recruit tutors for postgraduate students	Department Head	2	Yes
	Requests for study deferral	PhD students and MA students	5	Yes
Total teaching issues			24	
Research	Requests for approval of PhD students' proposals	The department's Research Committee	12	Yes
	Requests for authorisation to attend international conferences	Academic staff	8	Yes
	A request for a field trip to two countries to collect data and obtain references	PhD student	1	Yes
	Requests to discuss two students' proposals	Department Head	4	Specified
Total research issues			25	
Administrative	A request for promotion after obtaining a PhD	Academic staff	1	Yes
	A request by an academic staff member to leave the university and work elsewhere in the public sector	Academic staff	1	Yes
	A request for the possibility of referring all PhD proposals to the Research Committee for discussion and recommendations, rather than discussing them in the meeting	Department Head	1	Yes
	A request for renewing a contract with a retired professor for one year	Department Head	1	Yes
Total Administrative issues			4	
There were fifty-three (53) total internal issues requiring decisions				
Department B (Internal issues not requiring decisions) had no examples of issues				

Moving on to the internal issues in Department B, Table 4.4 shows all internal issues discussed in its four meeting minutes, and whether the issues required decisions. All the internal issues required decisions, which means that there were no internal issues not requiring a decision discussed in any of the four meeting minutes. Focusing on decision-requiring issues, 13 different kinds of issues were discussed in the meetings. Unlike external issues, the internal ones involved no deferrals, as these decisions were mostly straightforward and could be arrived at by following university procedures.

Table 4.4 shows four key features, the first of which is the issue domains: teaching, research, or administration. Only about 8% of total internal issues were administrative, about 47% involved research and about 45% dealt with teaching. The small percentage of internal administrative issues could be explained by the fact that these are external issues that generally emerge and are discussed at high levels of management. However, the relatively high percentage of both research and teaching issues could be explained by the fact that such matters emerge from the department itself and can arise on any working day, as the department provides postgraduate courses for MA and PhD students containing some taught modules alongside their research projects, so it is to be expected that teaching and research matters would be prominently discussed in department meetings.

Second, Table 4.4 sheds light on another important aspect of the analysis, namely, who raised each issue, which could explain some questions surrounding the issues in the meeting minutes. Most (43%) of the total internal issues were raised by the Department Head, only two of which concerned the department directly: a request for renewing a contract with a retired professor for one year and a query about the possibility of referring all PhD proposals to the Research Committee for discussion and recommendations, rather than discussing them in the main meeting. However, most of these issues concerned student matters; examples include requests for graduating postgraduate students' results, requests to discuss students' proposals and requests to recruit tutors for postgraduate students.

The department's Research Committee raised about 22% of the total issues, including a few requests for approval of PhD students' proposals. Academic staff raised about 20% of total internal issues, all but one of which were individual

matters like requests for authorisation to attend international conferences, a request for promotion after obtaining a PhD and a request by an academic staff member to leave the university and work elsewhere in the public sector. Finally, only about 13% of internal issues were raised directly by the department's students: most were requests for deferral of their study, while one case was a request for a field trip to two countries to collect data and obtain references.

However, although only a minority of the issues were raised by the department's students, just over three quarters of the total issues were about students' matters, divided between research and teaching issues like graduating postgraduate students' results, recruiting panels for PhD students' vivas and requests for approval of PhD students' proposals. The remaining quarter of the issues concerned the department and its staff, such as the possibility of referring all PhD proposals to the Research Committee for discussion and recommendations rather than discussing them in the main meeting, an issue raised by the Department Head, and requests for authorisation to attend international conferences.

Third, Table 4.4 shows how frequently these issues arose. Some issues came up more frequently, such as requests for graduating postgraduate students' results and requests for approval of PhD students' proposals, which were raised 15 and 12 times respectively. Issues raised less frequently but still at a high rate included requests for authorisation to attend international conferences, requests for study deferral and requests to discuss students' proposals, which were raised eight, five and four times respectively. The remaining issues were raised mostly once, except for one that came up twice. Some of the frequently raised issues may indicate the main interests of the department, for which research issues and teaching issues appear very critical.

Fourth, Table 4.4 shows the kind of decisions reached on those issues requiring them. The decisions made on issues requiring decisions were mostly of the yes-or-no type; all these decisions were approved. Only four issues, all raised by the Department Head, did not call for yes-or-no decisions; they required discussion about approving students' proposals. The meeting participants discussed all four proposals and came up with a list of suggestions for improving them. Almost all yes-or-no decisions followed obvious procedures and guides provided by top management levels, according to which if the requirements for an issue were met, the decision would be

yes; otherwise, it would be no. However, other types of issues required discussion by the participants to reach a decision, such as the students' proposals.

4.5 Summary of Department B

Most external issues in Department B were within the not-requiring-decisions category, having been raised at the top management level to inform and remind academic staff about university procedure and rules or to encourage them to participate in various events. By contrast, all the internal issues did require decisions.

In addition, research and teaching issues, both external and internal, were the dominant issues discussed in the meetings, with very few administrative issues arising. This could be explained by the fact that critical administrative issues, such as university planning for department budgets, are discussed at the top management level of the university; within a centralised system it is realistic to find most of the departments' issues concerned with teaching and research matters, which form the main core of the departments' duties and activities.

As to external issues, there was no dominant body of the university that regularly raised such issues. However, most of the internal issues were raised by the Department Head, who raised 43% of total issues presented in the four meetings, which could indicate his leadership style.

4.6 Comparative analysis of Departments A and B

4.6.1 Similarities

Starting with external issues, in terms of whether the issues required decisions**,** most external issues in both departments did not require decisions, as they consisted of issues raised by the top management level to inform or remind academic staff about university procedures and rules or to encourage academic staff to participate in certain events. However, issues raised by the middle level of the hierarchy consisted of explanations, invitations and seeking ideas. Features of cartelisation could to some extent be noticed in the leadership and management style of the university, in the sense that the lower level of the hierarchy was simply informed about certain procedures formulated at the top levels.

However, those few external issues that required decisions were also evidence of the department's autonomy, in that each department was able to arrive at its own

decisions. For example, when Department A was asked by another faculty for an academic staff member from the department to serve as a part-time consultant in that faculty, the department made its own decision, rather than being given an order or being notified by the top management level.

In terms of what issues they discussed, there were a few found in both departments' minutes: requests from people who wanted to enrol in the department's programme, requests to know how many students the department could accept in a parallel programme the next year and, finally, messages of encouragement for academic staff to participate in upcoming conferences to be held at or outside the university. Despite the similarity of these issues, they differed in how frequently they arose. For example, the first two issues were discussed once in each department and required decisions, whereas the last issue did not require a decision but arose frequently; announcements of the issue in the two departments occurring a total of six times. Looking at the issue domain – teaching, research or administration – research issues are discussed more often in both departments, which could be an indication of top management level interests, as these issues emerge from the top and middle levels of the university, who should have the same goals.

Moving on to internal issues, in terms of whether the issues required a decision, the vast majority of internal issues in both departments did require decisions, with very few or no issues arising that did not. This could be explained by the fact that internal issues are the core of the departments' activities, so they require decisions for departments to run smoothly. However, the paucity of issues not requiring decisions could imply that issues about the development of the department, creativity, suggestions and new ideas were not likely to emerge in either meeting. This situation could be hampering the departments' development, unless they were discussed informally outside the department or were not included in the meeting minutes.

In terms of what issues they discuss, there are a few issues that the departments have in common: requests for study deferral, requests for authorisation to attend international conferences, requests to recruit panels for PhD students' vivas, requests for approval of PhD students' proposals, requests for graduating postgraduate students' results and requests for promotion after obtaining a PhD or MA. None of these shared and common issues are for the benefit of the departments themselves;

rather, they are all about the interests of academic staff and students. On the basis of these shared issues regarding the issue domain, the two departments clearly pay attention to both teaching and research issues, as they both offer taught programmes and take on the supervision of PhD students. This is supported by the frequency of occurrence of these issues; for example, there were a total of 14 requests for authorisation to attend international conferences and 20 requests for graduating postgraduate students' results in the two departments combined.

In terms of type of decision, decisions were made in both departments on all the issues, the vast majority of which were yes-or-no decisions, and all were approved. The few remaining issues were discussed and resulted in either recommendations or specific agreements.

4.6.2 Differences

Despite the similarities outlined above, there are a number of differences between the two departments. Comparing the number of issues discussed in each department shows that the issues in Department B were more numerous than in Department A, which may be explained by the fact that Department B has more academic staff members, offers more courses and has more students enrolled. For example, there were 15 requests for graduating postgraduate students' results in Department B, compared to only 5 such requests in Department A.

In terms of the issues discussed, although the departments have some shared issues, they have more issues that differ; these differences are natural, since they depend on the different circumstances surrounding each meeting. For example, Department A saw a request for maternity leave for one semester, an issue obviously arising for the specific reason of pregnancy; on the other hand, Department B saw a request by an academic staff member to leave the university and work elsewhere within the public sector, which might have been caused by that particular person finding a better job. Despite these differences in particular issues, there were no critical differences surrounding the issue discussed in the two departments.

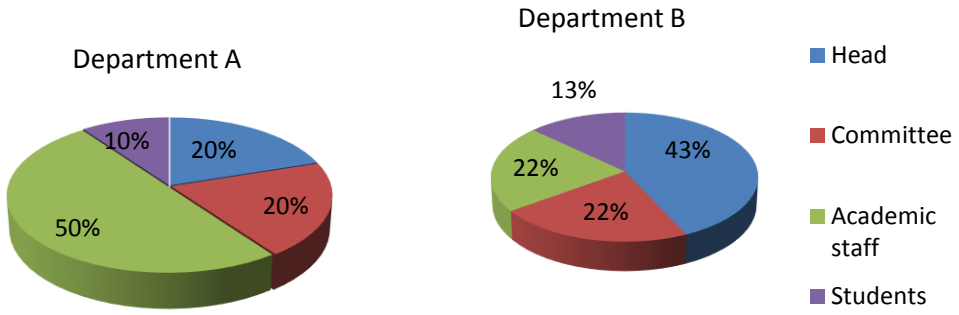


Figure 4.1 Comparison of distribution of who raised the issues in each department

In terms of who raised the issues, Figure 4.1 shows that half the issues in Department A were raised by academic staff members and concerned them directly or, in the vast majority of cases, their students. By contrast, only 22% of the total issues in Department B were raised by academic staff; they mostly concerned academic staff directly, with just a very few concerning their students. This could mean that academic staff in Department A engaged more in the meetings and their issues. However, the Head of Department B raised 43% of the total issues, which is a high percentage among all categories in the department. This could be a sign of the leadership style of the Head of Department B, at least to some extent. By contrast, only 20% of the total issues discussed in Department A were raised by its Head, which might indicate that he follows a more distributed leadership style.

One indicator of the leadership style of Department B's Head is that he raised issues regarding students' proposals which had already been discussed by the Research Committee in Department A. In a later meeting, Department B's Head raised the possibility of referring all PhD proposals to the Research Committee for discussion and recommendations, rather than discussing them in the main meeting. This example could explain the high percentage of issues raised by this leader, who controls most issues in his department. However, it cannot be determined with certainty from the analysis of the meeting minutes alone whether academics participated in the meetings or how they were led. Therefore, a fuller explanation will depend on complementary evidence gathered from empirical sources, which will

be discussed in subsequent chapters. Specifically, in the following chapter, the concepts of how these meetings are managed, how decisions are made and who makes them will be explored by analysing the data observed in eight meetings of the two academic departments.

4.7 Summary

In each department's meeting minutes, a number of internal and external issues can be found, among which internal issues were more heavily represented in each case. It was also found that both departments' meetings dealt with different domains of issues: research, teaching and administration, of which the majority were research and teaching matters. Moreover, none of the eight meeting minutes showed any budget- related issues, which appear to be discussed only at the top management level.

In addition, for the most part, decisions were made in both departments' meetings, at which almost all requests were approved. This could be explained by the fact that clear procedures for most issues related to academic departments were provided by the Ministry of Higher Education, which makes it easy for those making the requests to meet each one's requirements before submitting them to the department meeting. In contrast, there were very few discussions of an issue for which the procedures had not been explained by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Finally, although both departments follow the same procedures, there were some differences in their leadership styles. Department B's Head raised almost half the issues in his department, whereas the academic staff in Department A raised most of its issues. This could be a sign that Department B's Head employs a very centralised leadership style, while Department A's Head is more distributive in his approach. However, these indications of leadership style cannot be definitively confirmed by analysing the meeting minutes, unless they are supported by other findings, which are discussed in the following chapters that deal with observing meetings and the interviews.

Chapter Five: Observations analysis

5.1 Introduction

After analysing a number of meeting minutes, I have gained a general idea of the type of issues arising in each department and those that were dominant. However, other issues of interest to this research could not be examined solely by looking at the meeting minutes. Therefore, the aim in this chapter is to examine more closely the process of making departmental decisions, including by whom decisions are ultimately made, who is actively involved in the decision-making process and what kinds of contributions they make, ascertaining whether there is any dominant group or person and, finally, offering an appraisal of the leadership style applied in each department.

For these purposes, a total of eight meetings were attended, four in each department. They were sequential meetings, which enabled more accurate observation of both the overall process and of individuals. In analysing them, I paid attention to the roles played by participants in the meetings, using both Belbin's team role theory and Williams's functional roles theory. In addition, the analysis focuses on any gender differences in decision-making participation. However, before going into the analysis, it is worth offering an outline of how the departments' academic meetings operate.

Meetings at academic departments are held every week during academic semesters, at a specific day and time. Outside of the semester, especially in the summer break, the responsibility for making departmental decisions is fully delegated to the Head or a deputy in each department, with only urgent issues needed to be decided. Academic staff are paid a supplement to their salary for each meeting they attend, which is a means of motivating them to attend and encouraging more active participation in departmental governance.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. First, observations from Department A are analysed and discussed, followed by an analysis of observations from Department B and then by a section comparing the two departments.

5.2 Analysis of Department A

Four sequential meetings were attended over a seven-week period, due to the two-week midterm break when the university was closed and to the cancellation of the department's meeting in one week because there were not enough issues to discuss. The members were invited to the meetings by email and were told when a meeting was cancelled. The analysis focuses on time, agenda, inclusivity of meetings, leadership of meetings, participants' roles and the decision-making process.

5.2.1 Managing time and agendas

Meetings in Department A start at 10:00 am every Monday, a time known to all department members. However, although the time is specified, the meetings did not always start punctually. Three out of four meetings started 10–15 minutes late for different reasons. The first late start was due to the delay in finishing one of the department's committee meetings, which was held at 9:00 am and ran long for some reasons. As a result, the chairperson did not enter the meeting room until the committee had given him its meeting's report, which was included in the department's main meeting agenda. On another occasion, there was a problem with the phone used to communicate with female members, resulting in a 10-minute delay while that was fixed. However, on the last occasion, although members were seated and female members were on the phone, the Head did not commence the meeting on time, which could have resulted from the fact that members kept greeting each other after the mid-term break and the Head preferred not to stop them.

The four meetings lasted for different amounts of time, depending on each meeting's agenda with no time stated for ending the meetings. For example, in a long meeting, some members were observed leaving before it was over due to other commitments such as lectures. The longest meeting lasted for an hour, while the shortest meeting only lasted for less than 13 minutes; the other two meetings lasted for about 30 minutes each. In addition, there was no mention of how much of the meeting time each issue should take, although the Head kept trying to control the time spent on each issue by managing participation and encouraging members to keep their comments brief.

These findings can be explained with Tropman's theoretical concept of participant trust. He offers suggestions to manage participant trust, which has two aspects: the

rules of temporal integrity and the rules of agenda integrity. The first aspect is addressed here, while the other is considered later in analysing the meeting agendas. There are three rules of temporal integrity: starting the meeting on time, ending it on time and providing an expected time sequence for each issue (Tropman, 2003).

Analysing the time management in these meetings and looking at the first of the three rules (starting on time), this rule was not been met in three of four meetings in Department A. The second rule, which is ending the meeting on time does not strictly apply, as there was no stated time for ending the meetings, with the result that each meeting ended at a different time, depending on when it started and its agenda. Finally, the third rule was also not met, as there was no anticipated amount of time allocated to each issue.

Non-compliance with this temporal integrity rule explains some of the behaviour observed in the meetings. For example, three members came late to different meetings. This could be due to not starting the meeting on time, allowing members to come late in the belief that it would not start on time. The result was that they missed some of the discussion of issues raised in the meeting, besides disturbing other participants. By not meeting any of these temporal integrity rules, Department A failed to create participant trust.

The agendas were always sent to the members of the meetings electronically one day in advance, enabling them to examine them and be prepared. At the top of the agenda was its title, which consisted only of the meeting number, and did not include items like key issues and secondary issues. Therefore, members could not determine the goal of a meeting from the agenda heading unless they read through the entire agenda in detail. Hence, departmental meeting titles have no meaning except for future reference purposes.

However, in regard to the presentation of the items on the agenda and their clarity, the vast majority of the issues were presented in very clear language, enabling the reader to understand fully what was at stake in an issue. There were counter-examples, such as the ambiguous and incomprehensible description of an issue as “the decision of circumstances committee”, with no mention of what issue the committee decided upon; this was explained later in the meeting.

In terms of the types of meetings, there were no explicit aims or types for any of the meetings, but analysis of the meeting issues suggests that there were a few types in each individual meeting, with one type dominating. Accordingly, the vast majority of the issues in all meetings only required approval from the department; indeed, the decisions could almost be known in advance, either by following certain procedures and guidelines or by delegating the decisions to the department's committees, who would decide on the issues, then send their decisions to a later full meeting for approval. One might describe meetings of this type as approval meetings, which allow the issues to start their journey through other top meetings within the university.

This type, which was predominant in all four meetings, was accompanied by other types which arose on only a very few occasions. For example, two issues were of an advisory type. In one case, the chairperson sought members' opinions of a mechanism that he planned to implement concerning the assignment of postgraduate students' supervisions. With another two issues, the secondary type was problem solving, such as the issue of developing the department's programmes by introducing new offerings, thus enabling the department to keep running, as there would be no need for all the academic members under contract if the number of enrolled students decreased. This planning step examined two different possibilities: updating the current programme or introducing new offerings.

Regardless of the classification of meeting types, the agendas offered no division between important and unimportant issues; the agenda could start with an issue of one type, turn to another type, and then revert to the first type. The issues discussed in a meeting thus depended on their order in the agenda, which in turn was a matter of when they were sent to the Department Head. All issues were discussed in order, following the agenda, with no jumping to a specific issue. On a few occasions, at the end of the meetings when all the agenda issues had been discussed, it was notable that the Head introduced new issues for discussion and decision making that had not been included in that meeting's agenda.

In examining the extent to which the rules of agenda integrity were observed, Tropman (2003) suggests two rules to follow: dealing with all the issues on the agenda, and not dealing with any issues that are not on the agenda. The first rule was

fulfilled very well, as not a single issue was omitted; all agenda items in all four meetings were discussed in the same order that they appeared on the meetings' respective agendas. However, the chairperson did not follow the second rule as carefully, as he brought to the meetings four issues that were not included in the agendas. This affected the agendas' integrity, as one of the issues was very important for all members and their votes on it mattered.

Bringing up issues that were not included in the agenda could be considered to represent flexibility on the part of the chairperson, who tried to avoid delaying discussion of the issues by presenting late-arriving issues to the department at the earliest possible meeting rather than postponing them to the following meeting. However, despite this advantage, this behaviour also has clear disadvantages, one of which is the effect on participant trust, since participants could not rely on the meetings' agendas, which showed only part of the picture rather than a full account of what was to be discussed in the meetings. Hence, this practice could cause disagreement and conflict between the chairperson and other members, especially when the members who did not attend the meeting or left early for any reason were interested in these issues and would have preferred to participate in deciding on them if they had known the issues were to be discussed.

5.2.2 Inclusivity of meetings

Department A consists of 56 academic staff members: 34 men and 22 women (Table 5.1). However, not all of them are eligible to attend the weekly meetings; those eligible are those with PhDs, such as assistant professors, associate professors and professors. Approximately half the members are not eligible to attend, which excludes them from learning how meetings work until they earn PhDs, causing a lack of participation in the meetings that is discussed later on this chapter. Only six female members were eligible, to attend out of 22 female academic department members. By contrast, 21 out of 34 male members were eligible. Although there was not an enormous difference between the total number of female and male members (roughly 40% and 60% respectively), the difference is more striking when comparing eligible female members with their counterparts, as only about 20% of female members are eligible, meaning that the dominant percentage of meeting participants consisted of male members, of whom 60% are eligible.

Table 5.1. The number of academic staff in the department and meeting attendance in Department A

Total number of academic staff in the department		
Male		Female
34		22
Eligible to attend meetings		
21		6
Meeting number	Attendees	
	Male	Female
1	16	6
2	16	6
3	15	6
4	15	6

The number of female academic members is close to the number of male members, although the university is generally led by men. This suggests that there is not a significant gender gap in the department, though the number of male members is slightly higher. However, in terms of eligible members, the gap between eligible males and females is clear, although this might not be the case in the very near future, as serval non-eligible females are expected to become eligible in one or two years' time.

5.2.3 Participants' roles in the meetings

Members in the meetings played different roles, depending heavily on the kinds of issues discussed. Therefore, to guide the interpretation of the observational data regarding members' roles, Belbin's and Williams's theories of team roles are used to help understand the roles they played. As some roles occurred repeatedly, the intention is to give an observational example of each role, using them as references throughout the interpretation. The following seven scenarios are analysed in this section. Each scenario is first analysed on its and then followed by an analysis of the roles played by meeting participants, using Belbin's and Williams's theories.

Before beginning that process, it is worth clarifying the roles, according to each theory. Belbin's theory lists nine roles: coordinator, shaper, plant, specialist,

implementer, resource investigator, completer, monitor evaluator and team worker (Belbin, 2010). Williams's functional roles theory lists 12 roles, divided into two types: the first group is "task" roles and the second is "maintaining the group" roles. The former has seven types – proposing, building, presenting information, seeking information, testing and clarifying, keeping the group on course and summarising – while the second group includes supporting, gatekeeping, harmonising, tension releasing and showing attention (1984).

5.2.3.1 Examples of observational roles

Scenario number one: (Commencing the meetings)

Chairperson: "Hello everyone and welcome to our weekly department meeting. First of all, we would like to congratulate our two colleagues Saeed and Yasser who were just promoted to become associate professors; we would also like to congratulate our colleague Majid who was recruited to one of the senior management positions in the faculty". All members congratulated their colleagues. "Well, let's look at the meeting agenda. The first issue is a request from a student asking to drop this semester's modules; therefore, the department agrees to him dropping the modules according to the university guideline". All members listened without interrupting or commenting on the issue. "The second issue is a request from Dr Salah to attend a conference in Australia; the department agrees that he may go as he has fulfilled all the requirements". All members listened without interrupting or commenting on similar issues, except on one occasion when Huda reminded the staff to look twice at the updated recommended conferences list provided by the university to avoid rejections, which had happened to her.

Findings from scenario number one indicate that the Head welcomed participants and recognised others' achievements. These actions by the chair explain the reverse: respect shown by meeting attendees to the chair, with no interruptions of or disagreement with him. The chair can be described as the coordinator, as he acted as

the meeting leader, reading the items on the agenda one by one, sometimes explaining the issues or giving further details on them. As an observer, I fully understood the issues, since the Head explained them very well. In the case of items that required no action from the members, the Head summarily read out the decision, as in the agreement to the requests in scenario one, whether from the department's students or academic staff, then moved on to another issue. In this type of issue, the chair played an informative role while the other members played the role of receivers. The information-giving role was played by Huda, who shared information regarding the updated list of recommended international conferences.

Scenario number two: (The department's committees)

Chairperson: *"The seventh issue is looking at the department's Postgraduate Committee report regarding approving PhD students' proposals. The committee agreed to the following proposals: 1, 2, 3 ……, therefore the department agreed to the committee's decision". All members listened without interrupting or commenting on similar issues, except once, when Ahmad said: "Excuse me; I suggest changing the title of one proposal to ……" A member of the committee replied: "The committee finished studying the proposals and agreed on these reported titles and research questions, so I do not think they need more consideration. Additionally, any changes will delay the decision and require studying them at the next committee meeting". The chairperson*: *"Well, it is a valuable comment that you have raised; however, as the committee studied these proposals, we will approve their decision".*

Scenario number two suggests that the chair of the meetings practised a distributed leadership style, as he delegated some of the department's duties to committees within the department for decision. Beyond that, he played the a supporting role by recognising Ahmad's contribution, describing it as valuable and paying attention to what he said. He played a harmonising role by managing the indication of

disagreement between Ahmad and the committee member through action that nicely defused any discord.

Scenario number three: (Problem to solve)

*Chairperson: "Issue number four: we received a letter from the faculty dean inviting us to nominate one of us to represent the department in the faculty judgemental meeting to solve a problem that the department is currently facing with another department regarding teaching a module"; he then explained the issue (*Note: this issue and all the others were explained very well by the chair, so I fully understood them). *Abdullah commented: "Well, actually we need to know the history of the problem in order to defend our department in the faculty meeting". He then gave a history of the issue in chronological order and explained why it had emerged at this time, finishing his speech by saying, "I wanted just to give an overview about the problem that could help us to understand and solve the issue'. Majid responded, "We must win the argument, so we could develop our programme". Fahad and Ali then built on Majid's idea and came up with some suggestions, to which the Head replied: "Well, we were asked to nominate one of us, so what do you think". Fahad, Ali and Ahmad all suggested Majid at the same time, after which some other department members supported the idea. Consequently, the Head turned to Majid and said "Well, you will represent us in the meeting"; Majid replied, "Okay".*

Findings from scenario number three suggest that Abdullah can be described as an information presenter or specialist. For instance, when the department faced a problem with another department over teaching a module that each department believed was related to its own discipline, he gave a history of the issue in chronological order and explained why it had emerged when it did. This useful information and background surely let other newly recruited members understand the issue clearly. It also helped to explain the other department's view and where it was coming from in order to prepare for a further discussion with the Faculty Dean, who

had asked the department to nominate a member to attend a meeting to resolve this matter.

Scenario number three also suggests that three other roles were played by the Head. He was the gatekeeper in managing members' contributions with no interruptions. Additionally, as he did not have a suggestion, he sought information and ideas from the meeting participants, and then he played the role of keeping the group on course by listening to attendees' suggestions while still managing the meeting time and achieving its objectives by concluding the discussion and asking members to nominate a member of staff to represent the department.

Majid could be placed in the proposing or plant type, as he was imaginative and came up with solutions. For example, he suggested developing the current departmental programme. Finally, Majid was a shaper, in that he started speaking after the Head read the issues and laid out the problem; regarding the module issue, the first thing Majid said was, "*We must win the argument*" in scenario number three.

Scenario number four

(Decision to make)

Chairperson: "The tenth issue is deciding on a mechanism for distributing supervision of PhD students". He explained the issue clearly, then said, "To treat this I suggest the following…" and explained his mechanism, later asking the members for their thoughts. A member of staff asked for more clarification about a case that might happen, and the Head explained it. "Well", he then announced the decision: "The department agrees on the suggested mechanism for supervising students".

Scenario number four suggests other roles played by the chair. For instance, he played a proposing role by announcing the issue, explaining it and offering his own suggestion. Moreover, the Head was in charge of testing and clarifying what had been said by other members; so he reminded the members of others' suggestions upon which to build. The distribution of supervision was a good example of testing and clarifying, since on this issue he ensured that all members understood the mechanism by clarifying its process and answering some questions. For example, a

member asked: “If a student’s proposal is of interest to me and I would like to supervise that particular student would it be possible?” The Head replied, “Yes you can, but it will not be counted in your load”. Finally, he summarised his proposal and announced the decision.

Scenario number five: (Planning)

A week later, as a consequence of the problem discussed in scenario number three and Majid’s suggestion, the chairperson said: “The first issue is developing the department programme. The intention is to develop our programme to generate more lectures and more supervision hours for the department members, which also might help to secure renewal of their contracts in the future”. The Head explained the current issue, which was the lack of lectures, and how the programme could be expanded. He proposed developing it by ensuring that all the modules in the programme were taught by members of Department A, not by members of other departments. To this end, the Head appointed five members to work on this issue, their job being to study the current programme, removing any modules that were not taught by Department A members and generating new ones. Here, the appointment of the work team was made by the Head himself, while information surrounding this matter was sought from all members. Majid then suggested not only improving the current department programme but also establishing new programmes within the department as part of a development plan. Then, three other members built on Majid’s idea. Ahmad said: “Great, if opening new programmes is considered, I suggest starting a programme specialising in …….”., after which Ali immediately said: “This will allow us to open a programme in ...”., while Fahad concluded the contributions by saying, “We also could open a programme in ……”. The chairperson said “We will wait for the development programme committee’s work; then, we will start working on the plan of opening new programmes”.

Scenario five suggests that the chair was an information presenter or specialist, since on some issues he gave detailed information by explaining the current situation or the consequences of a given decision. The findings also suggest that Majid played a proposing or plant role; he suggested establishing new programmes within the department as part of a development plan. His suggestion was taken into consideration, so that at the next meeting the department discussed ways of developing the department's programme and appointed a few members to carry out the task. Majid was the second most active member in the meetings, playing three different roles. Another three members, Fahad, Ali and Ahmad, can be described as building; they did not offer any suggestions initially, but they did at least comment on the issues raised and suggested some methods to develop the arguments. For example, in scenario numbers three and five, when Majid suggested developing the current programme and establishing new programmes, these three members contributed by suggesting possible new programmes.

Scenario number six

(Sharing experience and closing the meeting)

Chairperson: "The final issue on today's agenda is a report from Dr Abdullah regarding a conference that he attended last week in the USA". Dr Abdullah: "Hello everyone; it is my pleasure to share with you my experience and the themes that were discussed at the conference". He then summarised his participation and some other participants' presentations. Members thanked him and the chairperson thanked the members for coming to the meeting, wishing them the best in their jobs. Before the end of the meeting, Lolo asked for clarification of an issue that had arisen in the previous meeting, so the chair explained it to her.

Abdullah, in scenario six, shared with his colleagues his experience at the conference he attended; here, he played an information presenter role. This culture of sharing knowledge between the department members has obvious advantages in keeping all members up to date in the knowledge regarding their field. Finally, Lolo was an

information seeker, since she asked for clarification of a point discussed in a previous meeting.

Scenario number seven

(Faculty announcement)

The chairperson read an announcement from the Faculty Dean about ensuring the quality of academic departments. He then referred to Professor Majid, as a specialist working on the total quality project in the university, to explain the requirements for academic staff in order to meet the total quality standards of the department. He also gave his views by disagreeing with the faculty announcement, which emphasised that ensuring and fulfilling the department's total quality standard will be a condition of agreeing to academic requests to attend conferences. On the latter issue, the chair said, "Well, you have heard what the faculty said, so when you want to attend a conference please ensure that you follow what Majid explained earlier about ensuring the total quality of the department".

Scenario number seven identifies Majid as a specialist, since he was presenting information in an area that he knew well. For example, he was asked for his thoughts on total quality management at the department level, and commented on the single announcement discussed in the four meetings about ensuring department quality management; here, he explained to the meeting participants what had to be done by the department, including the academic staff. The findings also suggest that on a few occasions the chair handed temporary control over to academic staff members to talk about and explain issues to the other members and provide any updates on them, since these members were in charge of tackling these issues after being appointed by the Head, perhaps in previous meetings; this suggests that the Head applies different leadership styles in the meetings.

5.2.3.1 Analysis of participants' roles in the meetings

Reading through these scenarios, it is clear that Department Head, as chairperson, was the main player in the meetings, adopting significant roles in all of them. Table 5.2 shows the roles played by active members in the terms used in Belbin's and Williams's theories. The Head was a multi-role participant; he played a total of 11 roles, 10 of which are described by Williams's functional roles theory and one by Belbin's team roles theory. The second most active member was Majid, who played five roles, three of them found in Belbin and the other two found in Williams. The six other members each played a single role, three of which adopted the building role found in Williams's theory. Two other members played the presenting information role found in Williams, while the last one played Williams's seeking information role. Because of the related leadership responsibilities, the chairperson played most of the maintaining the group roles in Williams's theory.

Some of the roles presented in both theories were not identified in the meetings at all, or were only identified on one occasion, making it difficult to claim that that role was played by a particular attendee. From Belbin's theory, for example, the investigator, monitor, team-worker and completer roles were not identified, while the implementer role could have been played by those who were appointed by the Head to perform certain tasks, but their implementation could not be observed, as it was to take place outside the meeting. As for Williams's theory, all the achieving tasks roles were identified, while only one out of five maintaining the group roles was not identified at all (tension releasing).

Table 5.2. Department A's active members and their roles

- Members' roles reflecting on Belbin's team role theory

	Plant	Resource investigator	Co-ordinator	shaper	monitor	Team-worker	implementer	Completer	Specialist
Chairperson	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	-
Majid	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	Yes

- Members' roles reflecting on Williams's functional role theory
- A: Task achievement roles

	Proposing	Building	Presenting information	Seeking information	Testing and clarifying	Keeping group in course	Summarising
Chairperson	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Majid	Yes	-	Yes	-	-	-	-
Abdullah & Huda	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-
Ali, Ahmad & Fahad	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-
Lolo	-	-	-	Yes	-	-	-

- Members' roles reflecting on Williams's functional role theory
- B: group maintenance

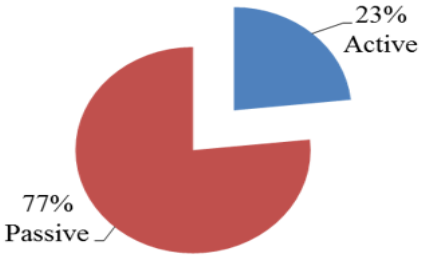
	Supporting	**Showing attention**	**Harmonising**	**Gatekeeping**	**Tension releasing**
Chairperson	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-

The findings suggest that Williams's theory was very useful in interpreting participants' roles in the meetings, though it did not cover all the observed roles. The findings also indicate that Belbin's theory is limited in interpreting the members' observed roles in this context, although it was seen on a few occasions. The only role that was observed but was not mentioned in either theory was the role of silent listening.

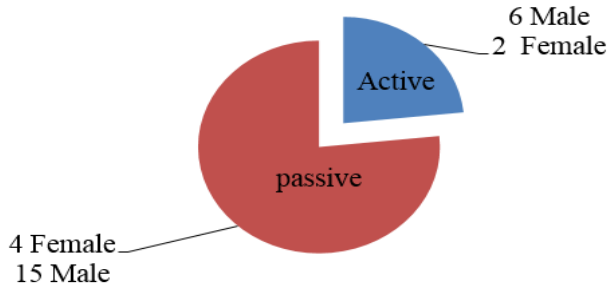
Apart from these eight active members, the remaining attendees were quiet during the meetings. Therefore the majority of members remained silent and let their more active colleagues discuss the issues, unless they were directly asked to speak by the Head. However, the silent attendees were not all alike. Some kept silent but were noticeably absorbed in the discussion, while others showed no interest at the meetings and were looking at their phones while issues were discussed. This silent

behaviour allows the active minority in the group to influence the decisions, as they share their ideas and bring them up for discussion.

This silence could be the result of many factors, such as a lack of interest in the issues being discussed, a lack of preparation, or a simple lack of knowledge on the part of attendees as to their roles in such meetings. Arguably, one factor was lack of experience in attending meetings, as academic staff members are not eligible to attend these meetings until they hold a PhD, and thus lack the opportunity to learn from meetings for the first 10–15 years of their careers. Female members were silent except on two occasions, when Huda reminded her colleagues about recommended conferences in scenario number one and when Lolo asked for clarification of an issue that had arisen in a previous meeting. However, female attendees, including Huda and Lolo, were not involved in any issue that required discussion and ideas.



Pie chart 1. Percentages of passive and active members



Pie chart 2. passive and active members in terms of gender

Figure 5.1 Passive and active members overall and in terms of gender in Department A

Hence, it could be said that the Head and five other members were the only active and thus influential players in the meetings when a discussion was occurring. The remaining members were not influential and in some cases may not have even been interested in the meetings. Figure 5.1 shows two pie charts. Pie chart 1 shows the percentage of active members who contributed in the meetings, making up 23% of total meeting attendees, whereas the majority of the members were passive. Pie chart 2 shows that, of a total of eight active members, six were male and two were female. By contrast, there were of 19 passive members in total, 4 female and 15 male; two thirds of female members were passive, while three quarters of male members were passive.

Those passive members can be regarded as supportive of what was proposed by the chair. When it came to a vote or agreement on some issues, they always voted with what was suggested without discussing it further. On the one hand, members of this type and the role they play might be welcomed by meeting chairs, as they do not make any trouble. However, they may not be helpful to the department itself, as they largely did not contribute to the meeting discussions of issues, though the general atmosphere appeared supportive.

5.2.4 Decision-making process

Observing the meetings revealed that all but two of the issues required decisions. The processes of deciding on issues requiring decisions varied with the issue itself. Table 5.3 shows three different types of departmental decisions and the different decision makers.

Table 5.3. Types of decisions and who made them

	Types of decisions	Who makes the decision
1	(procedural decision) →	Individual/ Head
2	(Contrived collegiate decision) →	Group/ Committees
3	(Impromptu decision) →	Unanimity, Individual and Voting

The first type shown in Table 5.3 is procedural decisions, which consist of issues that can be easily decided upon according to the university guidance for managing academic departments. This guidance encompasses issues related to academic staff and students. For instance, when students or staff had any requests, they had to ensure that they fulfilled all the requirements outlined in the university's guidance, or their requests would not be sent to the department meeting for a decision. However, if they met all the requirements, the Head announced their requests in the meeting and gave his decision, which relied on the university guidance and procedures.

There were a total of 36 issues discussed in the four observed meetings. Table 5.4 shows all the issues included in the four meeting agendas that did not require any participation from the academic staff who attended the meetings. Out of 36 issues discussed in the four observed meetings, 24 were procedural and could be decided simply by following the procedures and guidance provided by the university, with an explanation of how the decisions were made. In terms of issue domains, there was no dominant domain within this type of decision making, although research-related decisions had a slightly higher frequency than teaching and administrative issues.

Table 5.4. Issues decided upon by the chairperson of the meeting, relying on university guidance and procedures

Issue domain	Procedural decision	Frequency
Research	Viva examiners	3
	Conferences	6
	Field trip	1
Total research issues		10
Teaching	Agreeing on results	4
	Agreeing on comprehensive exam result	1
	Study deferral	1
	Dropping modules	1
Total teaching issues		7
Administrative	Sacking student	1
	Promotion	6
Total administrative issues		7
Total	……	24

In the meeting, while the Head read out these issues and announced his decisions, all other members were silent or looking at their phones, showing no interest in this kind of issue, because they had nothing to do with them, they were all approved and they obviously met requirements and followed procedures. Scenario number one is an example of this type.

The second type, as shown in Table 5.3, is contrived collegiate decisions, which consist of regular issues subject to no precise guidance and procedures provided by the university, since those decisions depend on the views and opinions of the members, who are the experts in this context. These expert members are appointed by the Head to serve on a number of different committees within the department. Issues related to the committee experts are referred to them by the Head for a decision, which is then sent to the department meeting for approval. Generally, as the committees have discussed and decided on these issues, they also do not require any discussion at the main meetings; instead, the Head announces them at the meetings and tells other attendees about the committee's decision, which is then approved.

Table 5.5 shows all the issues included in the agendas of the four meetings that were brought to the main meetings after committees had discussed and decided upon them. 6 out of 36 issues in the four meetings fall within the type of decision decided upon by expert committees. Research-related issues constituted the dominant domain for this type, covering five out of the six issues, leaving one issue for the teaching domain and not a single administrative issue.

Table 5.5. Issues decided upon by department committees

Issues domain	Name of Committee	Issues decided upon by department committees	Frequency
Research	Postgraduate Committee	PhD proposal	1
	Research Ideas Registration Committee	Research ideas registration	4
Total Research Issues			5
Teaching	Circumstances Committee	Request for extension	1
Total Teaching Issues			1
Total			6

This type of decision is made outside the meeting by a minority group within the department, a procedure that can be considered a kind of distributed leadership. However, this excludes from participation other members who may think that they have some worthy ideas to add, a situation which caused disagreement between members in scenario number two.

The third type, shown in Table 5.3, is the impromptu decision, meaning that decisions on these issues are taken during the main meeting time by opening up discussion and seeking participation from meeting attendees. Table 5.6 shows that 4 out of 36 issues in the four meetings fall within this type, which means that attendees were only supposed to engage and participate in an actual decision on these four occasions; otherwise, they were to remain silent, as explained in outlining the two types above. All these issues were administrative, in which the Head, serving as chairperson, read the issue from the agenda, explained it to other members and then sought members' ideas and thoughts in order to make the decision. However, the ways the Head dealt with these issues varied, depending on the kind of issue.

Table 5.6. Issues decided upon by all meeting attendees

Issues domain	Issues decided upon by the meetings' members	Who makes the decision?	Frequency
Administrative	Nomination of an academic staff member to represent the department in an issue	Unanimity	1
Administrative	Renewing academic staff contract	Voting	1
Administrative	Developing the department's programme	Individual	1
Administrative	The mechanism of distributing supervision of students	Unanimity	1
Total Administrative issues			4
Total			4

As there were just four issues of this type, it is difficult to identify a regular mechanism that is applied by the Head in making these decisions. However, it was observed that the decisions were made in different ways from one issue to another. For example, the mechanism of unanimity was used in deciding on the issue of nominating one of the staff to represent the department in the faculty meeting, as explained in scenario number three. Here the nomination was made by a kind of total group agreement, like the decision in scenario number four regarding the mechanism for distributing student supervisions among academic staff members. On another issue, the decision was made by the meeting's chair, although he sought the meeting attendees' ideas on tackling the issue, he appointed the team that would deal with the matter himself, as explained in scenario number five.

On another issue, the Head applied a decision-making mechanism that fits the directive voting mechanism. The Head read the issue, then commented on it directly by explaining the consequences of agreeing or disagreeing; it was about renewing the contract of a staff member who had reached retirement age. It could be said that the Head facilitated the voting procedure by explaining the consequences of each decision. However, he also showed others which decision he wanted, which could have resulted in some members remaining silent and not expressing their real thoughts in order to avoid any disagreement with the Department Head.

Finally, there were seven announcements written in small-point font on the agenda underneath the main issues; these were not matters for discussion. They were reminders to staff members, as all the same announcements had been sent by email to the department members. Just two announcements were placed among the agenda issues for discussion, one of which as explained in scenario number seven, because it was controversial and the chair wanted to ensure that the members understood it very well, since it was related to common requests regularly made by academic staff: requests to attend conferences.

5.3 Analysis of Department B

In this department, four sequential meetings were attended over a six-week period. Two took place before the two-week midterm break and two after that break.

Invitations to the meetings were sent electronically, along with the meeting agendas. The same themes used in analysing meetings in Department A are used to analyse Department B meetings. This section is followed by a section comparing the two departments.

5.3.1 Managing time and agendas

Meetings in Department B start at 11:00 a.m. every Wednesday, a regular meeting day known to all meeting attendees. This specified day and time were widely respected, with all the meetings starting very close to their announced time, except for a delay of two or three minutes to allow members to finish greeting each other and seat themselves. The chair in all meetings entered the meeting room about five minutes early, connecting female members with the meeting by phone and testing the clarity of the voices. When the Head entered the meeting room, other members were implicitly encouraged to enter as well, rather than chatting outside. The chair's action helped in starting the meetings almost on time.

Despite the implicit encouragement to start the meetings on time, a few members still came in late, while the meetings were in progress; however, they entered quietly and took their seats without causing the meeting to stop. The number of late arrivals was very small: one or two in each meeting, with the individuals involved differing from one meeting to another. Their late arrival could have had various causes, but none was related to the chair's commencing the meetings late, as he always began the meeting almost as scheduled.

Although it was clear when the meetings were to start, the agenda specified no time as to when they should end. Some members left before the meetings were finished, especially in longer meetings, which can be explained by the fact that they had other important commitments to meet as individuals, such as their lectures. The four meetings lasted for approximately an hour on average; two of them took about 50 minutes and the other two were about 70–75 min. The reason for these different ending times was variations in the number of items discussed at each meeting, together with the manner of discussing them.

Moreover, there was no mention of how long each issue should take or a maximum time for each issue, so some issues took longer than others. This could be normal for critical issues that require more discussion; however, stating a time for each issue

would have helped members to prepare themselves well for the meeting agendas. Because there was no time guideline offered for each agenda item, the first issues on each agenda could use up most of the meetings' time, leaving very little time for the issues appearing later in the agendas. However, this problem did not arise, as there was no set ending time for the meetings.

These findings can be explained by using Tropman's theoretical insights concerning participant trust and following the rules of temporal integrity that he suggests. Beginning with the first rule, which is starting on time, the first temporal integrity rule was met in Department B, as all four meetings started almost on time. Regarding the second rule of temporal integrity, which is ending the meeting on time, this temporal rule was not met by the department's meetings, as they lasted for different amounts of time, depending on their agendas and consequent discussion. Finally, regarding the third rule of temporal integrity – stating a rough time for each issue – this was also not met in Department B's meetings, as there were no guidelines given for the various issues on the agendas.

Members were informed about the meeting agendas, which were sent electronically to the meeting attendees one day before the meeting, giving them the chance to prepare themselves. In terms of agenda titles, all four meetings were identified by numbers that indicated the number of each meeting in the sequence of the department's meetings in that academic year. Therefore, the title of a meeting said nothing about its subject matter. However, the agenda issues were numbered and listed in clear language, so that their meaning could be easily understood in almost all cases. A couple of issues were not made clear enough in the agenda, such as "presenting a member's task", which was later presented as a summary of participation in an international conference, an experience shared with other members.

Moving to meeting types, there were no explicit aims or types for each meeting, but analysing the meeting issues indicates that there were a few types represented in each individual meeting, with one type predominating. This dominant type was approval meetings, the clear trait of which was that either the decisions were made before the meetings by department committees and needed only approval from those at the main meetings, or the decisions were easily anticipated by all members by

following the guidance and procedures which, when complied with, meant that approval would be easily gained. Besides this type, other types did emerge in different meetings, such as the advisory and problem-solving types.

Under the advisory category, there were two different kinds of issues: those that required decisions on which members' opinions were sought and those that gave information. An example of the former is discussing PhD students' proposals, at which students were invited to present to all department members, with members opinions' of the proposals being sought and decisions on them made, depending on members' comments. The other kind of meeting advisory issue consisted of giving information, described on the meeting agendas as announcements. Here, members were informed about different matters including research, teaching and administrative issues.

An example of this type is the announcement about writing exam questions, to the effect that academic staff should provide a mixture of multiple-choice and open questions. This announcement is a good example of how academic staff receive guidance from upper management levels regarding their teaching roles, including writing exam questions. Another example of giving information is the summary of conference attendance by academic members, who provide summaries of their participation and of other interesting talks at conferences they have recently attended. There were three issues in this category in the meetings observed; all three presenters were men.

In terms of the problem-solving type of meetings, there were two issues. The matter of accommodating new academic members in private offices in the department was the first such issue; the problem was that there were not sufficient offices in the academic department to accommodate all members of the academic staff. In addition, there were offices that were assigned to but unused by other members. Consequently, a team of members was formed to study the case and come up with some suggestions for solving the problem.

Moving to the feature of agenda integrity and the extent to which the rules of agenda integrity were observed, Tropman (2003) indicates that the first rule is to ensure that all issues on the agenda are covered. In all meetings in Department B, all the issues listed on the agenda were discussed. Hence, it can be said that this rule of agenda

integrity was met perfectly at Department B meetings. Moving on to the second rule, which is ensuring that there is no discussion of new issues which are not included on the agenda, no such new issues were brought up at the meetings. Accordingly, this rule was also followed, which suggests that the total agenda integrity of this department's meetings was ensured by the meetings' chairperson. When agenda integrity is assured, the general atmosphere of the meetings is expected to be healthier, with no hidden issues that could affect the trust between the chairperson and attendees.

5.3.2 Inclusivity of meetings

The department consists of 77 academic staff members, 42 men and 35 women (Table 5.7). However, not all of them are eligible to attend the department's weekly meetings, as only those with PhDs may attend; just over half of the total members are eligible to attend. 14 of the 35 female academic members were eligible, compared to 29 of 42 male members. Although there is not a vast difference between the total number of female members and male members (45% and 55% respectively), the difference is striking when one compares the eligible female members with the number of eligible men, who outnumber eligible women two to one.

Table 5.7. The number of academic staff in the department and meeting attendance in Department B

Total number of academic staff in the department		
Male		Female
42		35
Eligible to attend the meeting		
29		14
Meeting number	Attendees	
	Male	Female
1	26	7
2	27	13
3	25	9
4	27	12

The number of female academic members is very close to the number of male members; even though the university is generally led by men, there is not a significant gender gap in the department. However, in terms of eligible members the gap between eligible males and females can be seen clearly, although this might not be the case in the very near future, as those female members not eligible at present are expected to be eligible in one or two years' time.

5.3.3 Participants' roles in the meetings

5.3.3.1 Examples of observational roles

Scenario number one

(Commencing the meeting)

Chairperson: "Well, good morning everyone and welcome to this week's meeting; I hope you all had a nice time during the midterm break. Starting with the first issue in today's meeting, which is a request from Dr Fatimah for one year sabbatical leave from – to –; the department agrees to her request as she is eligible for this by fulfilling all the requirements; we wish her the best". All members were listening, without any comments (Note: this was the case with all staff and students' requests). *The second issue is agreeing on MA students' results; the department agrees on the following students' results, wishing them the best in their futures. All students' results were agreed on without discussion.*

Findings from scenario number one suggest that the chair acted as a coordinator; he was the meeting leader, reading the items on each meeting's agenda one by one and starting and ending the discussion of each issue. On all similar issues, the chair was the only speaker, with other attendees listening.

Scenario number two

(Announcements)

The chairperson: "The first issue is an announcement from the Faculty Dean encouraging academic staff to provide students with module materials and assessment criteria at the beginning of each semester; would any of you comment on this?" Attendee comments were along the lines of "we are already doing that", with no critical contributions. Consequently, the chair appointed one of his deputies to remind academic staff of this matter by making this announcement at the beginning of each semester. The third issue was an announcement from the Faculty Dean in regard to ensuring the quality of academic departments and making this a condition of agreeing to academic staff requests to attend conferences; the Head asked for comment. Mohammad spoke first, after which Sara and Shaker built on his statement. All three questioned the announcement and presented a dissenting point of view. As a result, the Head summarised what they had said, describing them as strong points, and decided to inform the faculty of the department's opinion regarding this announcement.

The findings from scenario number two suggest that the chair invited members to discuss these announcements, although they required no decisions, for three main reasons: first, to delegate responsibilities to his administrative team, to ensure department members understood these announcements and to obtain members' opinions of them. The chair in this scenario played the role of summarising, gathering members' ideas and opinions at the end of the discussion and benefiting from them when announcing his decisions on issues. For instance, he summarised members' viewpoints on the faculty announcement about academic departments' total quality and attending conferences, in regard to which the members questioned the announcement and explained their opinions. Then, he decided to raise the issue at the next faculty meeting.

Mohammad is the second most active player in Department B meetings, and he played multiple roles. For example, he could be described as a shaper, since he challenged the announcement and drove the discussion towards a suggestion for overcoming this particular obstacle, as he and other attendees viewed it. Sara and Shaker played the role of building; they built on Mohammad's opinion, suggesting and presenting another point of view that differed from the faculty announcement.

Scenario number three

(Nominating)

The chairperson: "Issue number twelve is a request from the Faculty Dean to nominate a member of staff to discuss which department in the faculty deserves to teach a specific module; will anyone comment on this?" Shaker, Omar and Riyadh all spoke, agreeing that the module was not related to the department's discipline so it should be taught by the appropriate specialist department. The chairperson then said, "Well, according to members' opinions we should not teach the module, so to meet the Dean's request the department Deputy will represent us in the faculty meeting, as he is the expert in the department's programme and modules".

Scenario number three shows that Shaker, Omar and Riyadh played specialist roles. For example, they all gave informed opinions about the issue surrounding the module, emphasising that it should be taught by the specialist department. This scenario also suggests that the chair was seeking information from knowledgeable members.

Scenario number four

(Seeking opinions)

The chairperson: "Issue number two is a request by a higher management level at the university for the department's opinion about changing the assessment mechanism from vivas for dissertations and theses to marking by an external examiner; what do you think?" Nader said that it was impossible for dissertations and theses to be marked this way, as the external examiner would not be involved in the research process and it would not be fair to mark work without engaging with it from the beginning. Riyadh added that students should be present to defend and clarify their work. Shaker said that assessing by viva ensures both the strength of the degree and the transparency of the assessment, as students' vivas are open events for all to attend. At the end of the discussion, the chairperson summarised what had been said, emphasising that assessing students should be in the hands of the academic department.

Scenario number four shows the chair playing a summarising role, in which he offered digests of attendees; opinions on the student assessment method suggested by a higher level of management at the university. In terms of maintaining the group, the chair also paid attention to department members whenever they spoke; he followed their statements with eye contact and sometimes by supporting the members' argument, as when he agreed with what they suggested about the proposed assessment mechanism. In addition, he was also supporting and encouraging: for example, he took account of all members' perspectives when summarising any discussions and he did not interrupt any member's remarks or reject any ideas out of hand. Overall, he was very welcoming and encouraging and sought members' voices most of the time. He repeatedly encouraged staff to comment on issues at meetings, making them feel involved in the process. This was accomplished by the language used, such as "*What do you think?"* and *"Would anyone like to comment on this?"* in scenarios number three and four.

Nader, Shaker and Riyadh played specialist roles regarding the assessment criteria, showing their expertise and expressing their opinions of top management's suggestion for changing the current method and justified their opinions.

Scenario number five

(Proposing and building)

The chairperson: "Issue number seventeen is discussing a PhD student proposal". The chairperson asked Dr Bader, the student's supervisor, to admit the student to the room. During this time, five to eight members excused themselves from the meeting, saying they had teaching lectures. The chairperson welcomed the student and said, "We are happy to listen to your presentation". The student presented his proposal, after which the discussion was opened to the group. Members started commenting on the suggested plan and topic. On this and similar issue, member participation varied from proposing new elements, which was regularly done by Drs Sara, Omar, Mohammad, Riyadh, Nader and Shaker, to building on those members' ideas for more development, which was frequently done by Reem, Amal, Mahmood and Anas, while Mohammad always sought more information and further explanation from the students. At the end of the discussion, and in all three cases after a number of suggestions, the Head announced the decision: "These suggestions will be sent to the Postgraduate Committee for further consideration and to ensure that the students follow these suggestions before applying for approval from the Postgraduate Committee for their PhD proposal plans".

Scenario number five shows the chair to be an information seeker, in that he opened the discussion and invited members to comment in cases of open discussions. He took different actions depending on what members said. Scenarios number two, three, four and five are examples of seeking information from meeting attendees; he repeatedly invited members to listen to the contributions, saying after he finished reading the issues *"Would any of you like to comment on this?",* even though in announcements that required no decisions he placed most of the issues under discussion, or questioned them, as in scenario number two in regard to people's opinions of the requirement for department total quality as a condition of permission to attend conferences.

Mohammad played the role of proposing; for example, he suggested new directions for PhD student research, while he also played the role of seeking information in this scenario, always asking the students for further explanation. Sara, Omar, Mohammad, Riyadh, Nader and Shaker played the proposing role, as they provided PhD students with suggestions for improving their proposals. Shaker was one of the most active players in proposing, especially in regard to PhD students' proposals, in which he offered them new ideas on which to build on and sometimes proposing subsidiary research questions. Reem, Amal, Mahmood and Anas, meanwhile, played the building role. They frequently contributed by building on other attendees' suggestions about PhD students' proposals. Their suggestions provided clear and precise directions for the students, as the builders focused on a given point and gave it a clearer direction.

Scenario number six

(Committees)

The chairperson: "Issue number six is looking at the department's Postgraduate Committee report regarding approving PhD students' proposals. The committee agreed on the following proposals: 1 and 2; therefore the department agreed to the committee's decision". All members listened without interrupting or commenting. The chairperson: "Issue number eight is looking at the faculty letter about reviewing the department offices, of which the unused one is to be allocated for those not yet assigned an office". He then said, "I believe a committee should study the issue carefully and give us their decision"; as a result he announced the names of the committee members, which included himself and his Deputy Head, and then moved on to the next issue. Nobody commented on either the issue or the decision.

Scenario number six suggests that the chair displayed different leadership roles. For example, he approved the decisions made by one department committee without opening the discussion to the rest of the meeting attendees, which suggests that the responsibility for such issues was delegated strictly to the committee. However, the chair adopted a different style when he played the role of proposing, in that he read

the issue of reviewing the department's offices and distributing them among the department's members. However, instead of opening up the matter to discussion, the chair this time made his proposal, which was also an individual decision to create a committee to discuss the issue. Appointing members to the committee was also decided by the chair on his own.

Scenario number seven

(Sharing experience and closing the meeting)

The chairperson: "The next issue is a report from Dr Sara regarding a conference in Malaysia that she attended last week". Dr Sara greeted everyone, and then gave a summary of her participation along with a summary of what had been presented at the conference. In two similar issues, members listened with no questions or comments. However, in the case of this particular report, Mohammad commented on the conference's themes and how they had become a research trend. Members thanked her for sharing her experience; the chair then closed the meeting by thanking all members.

Scenario number seven suggests that sharing information between department members is a regular feature of the department culture. In this scenario, Sara played the role of presenting information when she gave a summary of a conference that she attended in Malaysia.

5.3.3.1 Analysis of participants' roles in the meetings

Reading through these scenarios indicates that the Department Head, as chairperson, was the main player in the meetings, playing significant roles in all of them. Table 5.8 shows the roles played by active members in the terms used in Belbin's and Williams's theories. The chairperson was a multi-role member who played a total of eight roles, seven of them described by Williams's functional roles theory and one described by Belbin's team roles theory. The second most active member was Mohammad, who played four roles, three of them found in Williams and one in Belbin. Shaker played three roles (two in Williams and one in Belbin) and Sara played three roles, all found in Williams. Omar and Nader played two roles, one in

each of Williams and Belbin. Reem, Amal, Mahmood and Anas each played a single role, which fit with Williams's theory. Finally, Riyadh also played a single role found in Belbin's theory.

Table 5.8. Department B's active members and their roles

- Members' roles reflecting on Belbin's team role theory

	Plant	Resource investigator	Co-ordinator	shaper	monitor	Team-worker	implementer	Completer	Specialist
Chairperson	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mohammad	-	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-
Shaker, Omar, Nader & Riyadh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Yes

- Members' roles reflecting on Williams's functional role theory
- A: Task achievement roles

	Proposing	Building	Presenting information	Seeking information	Testing and clarifying	Keeping group in course	Summarising
Chairperson	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes
Shaker	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	-	-
Omar, Nader	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sara	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	-
Mohammad	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Reem, Amal, Mahmood and Anas	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-

- Members' roles reflecting on Williams's functional role theory
- B: group maintenance

	Supporting	**Showing attention**	**Harmonising**	**Gatekeeping**	**Tension releasing**
Chairperson	Yes	Yes	-	-	-

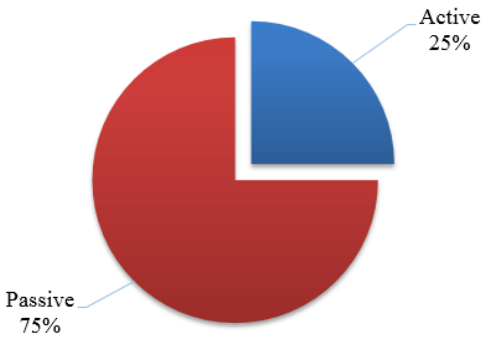
Some of the roles presented in both theories were not identified in the meetings at all, or were only identified on one occasion, making it difficult to report that the role was played by a particular member. From Belbin's theory, for example, the plant, resource investigator, monitor, team-worker and completer roles were not identified, while the implementer role could have been played by those who were appointed by the Head to perform certain tasks; however, their implementation could not be observed, as it was to take place outside the meeting. As for Williams, six out of seven of the achieving tasks roles were identified, whereas three out of five

maintaining the group roles were not identified at all: harmonising, gatekeeping and tension releasing.

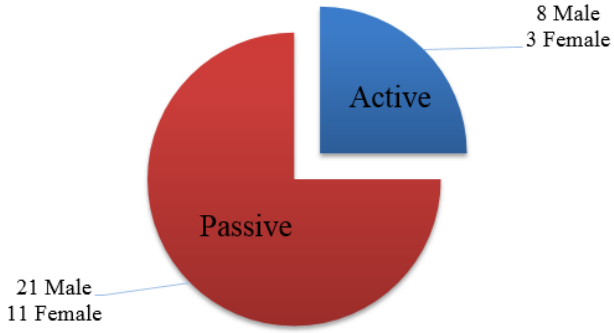
The findings indicate that Williams's theory was very useful in interpreting participants' roles in the meetings, though it could not cover all the observed roles. On the other hand, the findings suggest that Belbin's theory was limited in interpreting the attendees' observed roles, though there were a few exceptions. The only role that was observed but not mentioned in either theory was the role of silence. Further discussion of this issue follows in the next section, which compares Departments A and B.

Although there are eleven active members of Department B described above, the remaining members were quiet during all meetings. Therefore the majority of members remained silent and let their more active colleagues discuss the issues. There was no voting on any particular issue; therefore the voices of those passive members were not heard at all, although the chair was very welcoming and applied an invitational leadership style. Notably, some passive members were absorbed in the discussion, while others showed no interest in the meetings but were looking at their phones while the issues were discussed. This silent behaviour allowed the active minority in the group to influence the decisions, as they shared their ideas for discussion purposes.

In terms of gender, three female members were actively involved in the meetings. Sara was one of the multi-role members, playing three different roles: proposing, building and presenting information. Reem and Amal also took part in discussions, playing the building role, especially in scenario number five, in which they built on other members' suggestions regarding PhD students' proposals.



Pie chart 3. Percentages of passive and active members



Pie chart 4. passive and active members in terms of gender

Figure 5.2 Passive and active members overall and in terms of gender in Department B

The findings indicate that the chair and 10 other members were the only active and thus influential players in the meetings during discussions. The remaining members were not influential and in some cases might not have been at all interested in the meetings. In Figure 5.2, Pie chart 3 shows the percentage of active members who contributed during meetings, comprising 25% of total meeting attendees, while the majority of members were passive. Pie chart 4 shows that there were a total of 11 active members, 8 males and 3 females. By contrast, there were 32 passive members, 11 female and 21 male. These numbers suggest that about four fifths of female members and three quarters of male members were passive.

5.3.4 Decision-making process

Table 5.9 shows the different types of decisions and who made them. In the left column, there are three types of decision found in the meetings; the right column presents the decision-maker for each type shown in the left column.

Table 5.9. Types of decisions and by whom they were made

	Types of decisions	Who makes the decision
1	(Procedural decision) →	Chair
2	(Contrived collegiate decision) →	Committees
3	(Impromptu decision) →	Unanimity or the chair

As shown in Table 5.9, the first type of decision is procedural, meaning that such decisions are made following clear procedures and guidance provided by the university. Decisions on this type of issue are made by the department Head, who reads the issues and then announces decisions in the meetings without member input.

There were a total of 57 issues discussed in the four observed meetings in Department B. Table 5.10 shows all the issues of this type of decision; the majority of the issues in the four meetings – 36 out of 57 – are of this type. Regarding issue domains, 22 out of 36 issues within this type of decision were research-related matters, while there were 7 teaching-related issues and 7 administrative issues. Moreover, all these issues have a common feature; they represented requests, whether by or on behalf of staff and students. The chair handled all decisions of this type by himself, while the department members listened without making any contributions.

Table 5.10: Issues decided upon by the chairperson of the meeting, relying on university guidance and procedures

Issue domain	Procedural Decision Issues	Frequency
Research	Academic staff requests for attending conferences	9
	Agreeing on appointing tutors for PhD students	7
	Agreeing on viva examiners	6
Total Research Issues		22
Teaching	Accepting a student's reason for exam absence, giving him a chance to resit.	1
	Agreeing on PhD student's result	1
	Agreeing on MA students' results	5
Total Teaching Issues		7
Managerial	Agreeing on a request from another institution about offering casual work to specific members.	2
	Promotions	2
	Agreeing on a request from another institution for a member of staff to participate in a seminar at that institution.	1
	Agreeing on a sabbatical leave for research purposes	1
	Dropping modules	1
Total Administrative issues		7
Total issues	……	36

The second type of decision involved contrived collegiate decisions, shown in Table 5.9; these are decisions made before the meetings started by department committees, whose members were appoint by the Department Head to deal with specific matters. Some of these committees are permanent, such as the Postgraduate Committee, while others are temporary, being set up for a single task, such as the one established by the Department Head and his deputies to handle the assignment of offices for academic department staff. In this type of decision, the chair read the issue and then announced the committees' decisions without any contributions from the other attendees.

Table 5.11. Issues decided upon by the department committees

Issue domain	Name of committee	Issues decided upon by the department committees	Frequency
Research	Postgraduate Committee	Agreeing on PhD students' proposal plan	4
	Postgraduate Committee	Agreeing on PhD students' proposal idea	8
Total Research Issues			12
Teaching	Postgraduate Committee	Agreeing on PhD viva examiners	2
Total Teaching Issues			2
Total			14

Table 5.11 shows all issues that are classed as contrived collegiate decisions. There were 14 issues of this type, 12 related to research and 2 to teaching. There were no administrative decisions of this type. So far, this finding indicates that research-related matters form the majority of meeting issues, which can be explained by the fact that Department B provides more postgraduate than undergraduate courses.

The third type of decision is impromptu decisions, as shown in Table 5.12, which means decisions made during the main meeting time. These issues were first read by the chair, and then opened to discussion by the meetings' attendees to consider and make a decision. This type of decision is made by either the active members or the chair himself. The result of the active members' discussion can be considered a kind of unanimity, because the passive members do not show any disagreement about what was discussed.

Table 5.12. Issues decided upon during the meetings (impromptu decisions)

Issue domain	Issues decided upon by attendees	Who makes the decision	Frequency
Research	Discussing PhD students' proposals	Academic members	4
Total Research issues			4
Teaching	Seek department opinion about changing assessment mechanism	Specialists unanimity	1
Total Teaching issues			1
Administrative	Offices for academic staff	Chair	1
Administrative	Nomination of an academic staff to represent the department in an issue	Chair	1
Total Administrative issues			2
Total			7

Table 5.12 shows the issues requiring decisions that were brought to the meetings to decide upon during the meeting time, as they had not been made in advance, unlike the previous types. In this particular type, the participation of members was actively sought by the chair, who invited the members to share their thoughts. There were seven issues of this type, four related to research, two to administration and only one to teaching. These findings again indicate that research-related issues are the dominant domain in department meetings. However, the decision makers on this type of issue were different. For example, for research matters, the most active members were involved in making the decision on PhD students' proposals, while with administrative issues the chair made the decision, although the meetings' attendees took part in the discussions. Finally, the decision on the teaching issue regarding the assessment mechanism was of the unanimity kind, as the specialist members gave their thoughts on the matter with no disagreement from others, after which the chair summarised their comments and treated them as a decision.

Although all three types required decisions, the decisions were made at different levels, with only a small minority made during the main meetings. However, beyond these decision-requiring issues, there were others for which no decision was required, as shown in Table 5.13. These included eight announcements from the faculty and

top management level within the university which were read by the chair, who then invited the meeting attendees to comment if they wished. In most cases, the chair sought department members' comments in order to appoint one of his deputies to be responsible for ensuring that the academic staff followed the subject of the announcement in future, by reminding them about each announcement. In one case, the announcement was questioned by members, who were supported by the chair, as explained in scenario number two. The other four issues were presentations of previous events attended by one or a minority group of the members, who presented them in the meetings to inform other members about these issues.

Table 5.13. Announcements that did not require a decision

	Not requiring decisions	Frequency
1	Report regarding meeting with postgraduate	1
2	An announcement regarding the quality of academic departments	1
3	Announcement about department's evening programmes	1
4	Announcement about supervisor's signature on students' research instruments	1
5	Announcement about the deadline for submitting student proposal to the Dean of Postgraduate Research	1
6	Announcement about providing the reasons for student absence from exams immediately	1
7	Announcement about providing the Department Head with students' results	1
8	Announcement about writing exam questions as multiple-choice and open questions	1
9	Announcement about providing students with module materials at the beginning of the semester	1
10	Summaries of participation in conferences	3
Total		12 announcements

5.4 Comparative analysis

In this section, Departments A and B are compared to identify both similarities and differences, which will help to draw a clearer picture of how departmental meetings are led and how and by whom decisions are made. Attention is also paid to the participants' roles and the contributions they made. This includes a discussion of which theory of department members' roles is more appropriate for analysing the Saudi university context.

5.4.1 Managing time and agendas

Looking at the management of both meetings in terms of time and agenda and starting with the similarities between the two departments, the findings indicate that both departments have specified certain days and times each week on which to commence their meetings. This suggests that both departments are well organised, allowing their members to enter the meetings in their calendars in advance, which helps to avoid conflicts between events, which might occur if the announcement of the meetings were left until the last minute.

Moreover, both departments have no fixed time for finishing the meetings; unsurprisingly, meetings in both departments lasted for different amounts of time. This is a clear reason for members to leave longer meetings early, as they have other commitments. In addition, both departments failed to provide an anticipated time of discussion for each issue in the agenda, which is a defect in terms of meeting the temporal integrity rules on participant trust.

In terms of the agendas, both departments' members were sent an electronic copy of each meeting's agenda by email one day in advance, allowing members to prepare for the meetings. In addition, both departments successfully discussed all issues in the meetings' agendas; no issue had to be omitted or deferred to a later meeting.

On the other hand, there are some differences between the two departments in terms of time and agenda. The findings indicate that Department B started all its meetings almost on time, whereas Department A more often commenced its meetings late. In this particular area, the Head of Department B played a significant role in starting the meetings on time, as he always entered the meeting room at least five minutes before the starting time, which implicitly encouraged other members to enter the room,

resulting in a punctual start. By contrast, a lack of preparation for meetings was the main reason for the late starts in Department A. The lack of preparation included late entrances to the meeting room by the Head and consequently by the members, a feature of departmental culture established by the Head; another factor was the need to wait for committee reports, which should be have been ready well in advance of the meetings.

Moreover, the findings indicate that transparency in Department B was clearly shown by the chair, as all agenda issues were discussed and no additional issues were raised during the meetings. This was not the case in Department A, where four issues were introduced by the chair at the end of the various meetings. This affects agenda integrity, as the members had not prepared themselves to discuss these additional issues; furthermore, some attendees had left the meetings for individual reasons, and they might have stayed longer to discuss these issues if they had been informed about them.

5.4.2 Inclusivity of meetings

The findings show that there were more members eligible to attend meetings in Department B than in Department A (43 and 27 respectively), which is likely explained by the fact Department B has more members overall than Department A. Female members in Department B make up approximately one third of total meeting attendees, whereas females in Department A make up approximately one quarter of total meeting attendees, both of which could be explained by the fact that there are male than female members in each department.

5.4.3 Participants' roles in the meetings

The chairs in both departments were the most active players, as they took responsibility for ensuring the success of the meetings. Therefore, there were multi-role players performing several roles in the same meeting. However, Department A's chair played more roles than Department B's did, especially in the category of group maintenance. Table 5.14 compares the two chairs in terms of the roles they played. It is clear that Department A's chair performed three more roles than the chair of Department B. One role could explain the shorter meetings in Department A, namely the role of keeping the group on course, as the Head redirected the discussion to

achieve the aim of each issue, while the fact that Department B's chair did not play the same role could partly account for the longer meetings in Department B.

Table 5.14. Comparison between department chairs' roles

Chairs' roles reflecting on Belbin's team role theory

Chairperson	Plant	Resource investigator	Co-ordinator	shaper	monitor	Team-worker	implementer	Completer	Specialist
A	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	-
B	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	-

Chairs' roles reflecting on Williams's functional role theory
A: Task achievement roles

Chairperson	Proposing	Building	Presenting information	Seeking information	Testing and clarifying	Keeping group in course	Summarising
A	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
B	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes

Chairs' roles reflecting on Williams's functional role theory
B: group maintenance

Chairperson	Supporting	Showing attention	Harmonising	Gatekeeping	Tension releasing
A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
B	Yes	Yes	-	-	-

In both departments, there were active members who took up issues on the meeting agendas and contributed to the meetings. Those members played different roles in the meetings; some of them were multi-role members, while others performed a single role. Notably, Department A featured a second most active player (Majid), who played significant roles in the meetings and exerted considerable influence on the decisions made regarding the issues discussed, as he came up with some ideas that were welcomed by both the chair and by other members. He was the only multi-role member, other than the meeting chair, while all the others were single-role participants. By contrast, there was not a noticeable second player in Department B; rather, the active members together influenced the decisions, alternately playing various roles.

6 out of 11 active members in Department B were multi-role players compared to 2 multi-role players out of 8 active members in Department A. The higher number of multi-role members in Department B allowed for more discussion, opinions and

ideas to emerge in the meetings; therefore, the meetings in Department B were longer than those in Department A. There were thus dominant groups in both departments who influenced the meetings' decisions, but the group in Department A was smaller than its counterpart in Department B. Table 5.15 presents the roles played by both departments' members, in addition to showing how many members played each role in each department.

There were six common roles played by meeting attendees in both departments, all of which are task achievement roles. However, these roles were played more actively by Department B's members than Department A's members. For example, the proposing role was played by one member in Department A and five in Department B, and the building role was played by three members in Department A and six in Department B. These numbers indicate that Department B's meetings were more active than Department A's meetings.

In terms of Belbin's and Williams's theories, Tables 5.14 and 5.15 show clearly that Williams's theory was more useful than Belbin's in analysing the participants' roles in both departments' meetings. Table 5.14 shows both chairs' roles, most of which could be identified by using Williams's theory, with only a single role identified by using Belbin's theory. Table 5.15 shows that only two roles were identified by Belbin's theory, which supports the claim that Williams's theory was more useful. However, Belbin's theory was still of value, as it identified three roles that are not identified in Williams's theory. The limited usefulness of Belbin's theory could result from the fact that this theory was based on business organisations, not non-profit educational institutions.

Table 5.15. The roles and number of members playing those roles in each department

Members' roles reflecting on Belbin's team role theory

Departments	Plant	Resource investigator	Co-ordinator	shaper	monitor	Team-worker	implementer	Completer	Specialist
A	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
B	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4

Members' roles reflecting on Williams's functional role theory
A: Task achievement roles

Departments	Proposing	Building	Presenting information	Seeking information	Testing and clarifying	Keeping group in course	Summarising
A	1	3	4	2	-	-	-
B	5	6	6	2	-	-	-

Members' roles reflecting on Williams's functional role theory
B: group maintenance

	Supporting	**Showing attention**	**Harmonising**	**Gatekeeping**	**Tension releasing**
A	-	-	-	-	-
B	-	-	-	-	-

Based on the findings from both departments and benefiting from both role theories, three types of roles can be identified. The first consists of those performed only by the department Heads, the second of those played by both meeting chairs and other active members and, finally, the third consists of roles that are played only by active members. Table 5.16 summarises these three types. In the left column, the table shows five roles played only by the chairs, the middle column shows the three roles played by both chairs and active members and the right column shows the three roles played only by active members.

Table 5.16. Common roles in the departmental meetings

	Meetings' chairs	Meetings' chairs & Active members	Active members
1	Co-ordinator	Proposing	Specialist
2	Testing and clarifying	Seeking information	shaper
3	Summarising	Seeking information	Building
4	Supporting	-	-
5	Showing attention	-	-

Apart from a minority of active members in both departments, the rest of the members were passive, not contributing to discussing the meeting issues at all. On only one occasion, concerning the issue of renewing a member's contract in Department A, were passive members asked one by one to vote on whether they agreed; all voted with the chair's choice. In both departments, about three quarters of the members were passive with no contributions. This appears to have several causes. A lack of experience is one reason, as academic staff are not allowed to attend the meetings until they obtain their PhDs. The numbers attending meetings is another reason for passivity, in that a larger number of attendees reduces the chance of participation, as it would be time-consuming to let every member comment on each issue.

University policies encourage all members both to attend and participate actively in departmental meetings, which means that they should attend and that the department Head cannot invite only certain eligible members. One way to benefit from those silent attendees who actually comprise the vast majority of the meetings' attendees would be to divide them into groups, both male and female, and ask each group to present one of the issues along with what they suggest on the matter, and then open the discussion to the rest of those present. This would help to involve that silent group who might be shy about participating or not confident enough because of lack of experience; it would also force those who show no interest at all to participate rather than leaving this important work to others.

In terms of gender, the number of active males was higher than the number of active females in both departments. However, the contributions of female members in Department B consisted of input on the issue being discussed, such as proposing and building, whereas the contribution of females in Department A consisted of either seeking information or presenting a conference summary, which means that they did not contribute to any of the issues discussed. This can be explained by the fact that the opportunities for participation were greater in Department B, as there were more issues to discuss (see below).

5.4.4 Decision-making process

In both departments, there were three types of decisions, with the majority of the issues being of the procedural type; more than half of the issues in each department fit this category. There were 36 procedural issues in Department B and 24 issues in Department A. In this type of issue, the decision is programmed in line with clear procedures provided by the university or the government. These issues and the decisions made on them in both departments are always simply read and announced by the chairs. In both departments, procedural decision issues consist of requests from or on behalf of staff and students. Moreover, in both departments, the dominant domain was research-related matters. These issues took up members' and meetings' time, as members have nothing to do with these issues apart from being informed about them. Nevertheless, although these issues took up most of the meetings' time, the guidance and procedures of the university emphasise that all these requests should be approved in academic department meetings, not by the Department Head on his own, so they cannot be omitted from meeting agendas.

However, the guidance and university procedures are outdated, as they have not been revised or updated. This could explain why these issues must still be approved at department meetings, despite the resulting delay in making the decision and lengthening the process, since the academic department meetings are not always held every week. Hence, it could be argued that these issues should be excluded from meetings, as they do not require the views, ideas or experience of the attendees and take up valuable time for both those making the requests and the meeting attendees. Hence, the responsibility for deciding on them could be assigned to the Head as a managerial task.

On the other hand, it could be argued that including them in the meeting agendas does have benefits for the academic staff which would not be gained if these issues were excluded. For example, by including these kinds of issues, academic staff can be made aware of what is going on in the department, learn how it is managed and led and prepare themselves for taking up these kinds of positions in the future. In addition, including all department issues in the department's meetings ensures equality and transparency within the department, as all requests are treated in the same way. However, while the process of making decisions on these issues is explained well by the university guidance, it could be concluded that they should not be included in the meetings; rather, the decisions should be made directly by the Head or his managerial team, thus saving time and hastening the decision-making process, and allowing more room for academics to learn from other important issues arising in the meeting.

The second type of decision is the contrived collegiate decision, in which a minority group – a committee – meets to discuss the issues, reaches its decisions and presents them to the meetings for approval. Issues of this type were the second most common issues in the meetings of both departments, again with a dominance of the research domain; they were mostly about postgraduate research proposals. Decisions of this type were read and announced by meeting chairs without added discussion in the main meeting time. They thus took up members' and meetings' time, as non-committee members have no say on these issues apart from being informed of the decisions. However, although these issues took up some of the meeting time, the university guidance and procedures emphasise that all these requests must be approved at academic department meetings, not by the department committees alone, so they cannot at present be omitted from the meetings.

It could be argued that, to save members' time, these issues could be approved by the Department Heads after the committees consider them, without including them in the meetings' agendas, as members would not be asked or allowed to offer opinions on decisions made by the departments' committees. However, it could also be argued that this kind of issue is unlike the previous type, which concerns individual matters such as promotions and permissions to attend conferences. Issues like of this category are closely related to knowledge of the department's field, as in decisions on PhD and other research proposals, which assist in keeping members up to date

with their discipline. Therefore, as these issues are at the core of the members' research work, including them in the meetings is believed to benefit members through providing a sense of learning.

Having said that, since these issues are related to the members' research interests and not all members are selected to participate in each particular committee, it would be reasonable to allow them to give their opinions in the meetings regarding decisions made by the department's committees, bearing in mind that unselected members might offer something that is worth considering and refusing to listen to them could be interpreted as ignorance. However, I argue that, while members are appointed by the Head applying a kind of distributed leadership style, committee decisions should be approved in the main meetings; otherwise, the process of making the decision would be delayed and an endless circle could emerge, in which the committees decide, main meeting attendees comment on those decisions and offer other ideas, after which the committee studies the issue again and comes up with the same or a different decision, which could again be criticised in the main meeting.

The third type of decision is the impromptu decision. Here, the differences between the two departments are most stark, given the chairs' leadership styles and the participants' roles, as the dynamics of making the decision were different depending on the type of issue. Although both chairs played the same general roles, the details of their management of the meetings were different. For example, both chairs made individual decisions in the time for the main meetings; however, Department A's chair made relatively directed decisions, either proposing an idea and asking the members to agree or disagree, or providing information about and the possible consequences of a decision on an issue and then holding a vote, sending a message to the rest of the members about the decision he preferred. Although both chairs invited members to contribute to the decisions, Department B's chair was more welcoming, as he regularly sought attendees' views on both decision-requiring and non-decision-requiring issues, apart from procedural and committee decisions.

Overall, the opportunity for contribution is higher in Department B than in Department A, due to the fact that the chair was very inviting ; in addition, the number of impromptu decision issues was higher in Department B, with seven such issues compared to four in Department A. The impromptu decisions in Department B

followed discussion of students' proposals in the main meeting time, which did not occur in Department A, so Department B allowed more opportunity for discussion. Furthermore, the chair of Department B brought a number of announcements to the meeting agenda each week; members were invited to comment on these items if they wished. In the 4 meetings, there were a total of 12 announcements in Department B compared to just a single announcement in Department A, in which the other announcements were sent electronically. It is worth noting that the single announcement made in a Department A meeting was also announced by the chair of Department B; however, the manner of treating it was different.

Scenario number seven in Department A and scenario number two in Department B show how the two departments dealt with that announcement. The aim Department A's chair was to inform the staff of the announcement and its consequences in the future, while in Department B the aim was to inform the staff and invite them to comment. They actually questioned the announcement and its consequences, coming up with certain points to be discussed with the faculty; the Department B attendees did not accept the announcement as it stood, while Department A's members were not offered the opportunity to comment.

Despite some differences between the two departments, the findings suggest a strong similarity between them, which points to strong organisational cultural influences that transcend differences in leadership style. This issue is covered in more detail in the Discussion and overall conclusions chapter.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has helped reveal the dynamics of making decisions in both departments by explaining the manner of making departmental decisions, who made the decisions and what contributions were obtained and from whom. In addition, it identified the roles played by the attendees in each department, in terms of both Belbin's and Williams's roles theories, with the latter found to be significantly more useful. Moreover, it showed that research-related issues are the dominant domain, as both departments provide postgraduate courses. Finally, the chapter compared the two departments, finding that Department B is larger in size, in the number of active members and in the number of issues, and that the interaction with the issues was greater in that department.

Chapter Six: Survey analysis

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to measure how highly academic staff rate their current level of participation and how far that varies from the desired level of participation, identifying the gap between current and desired levels of participation in both departments in three decision areas: teaching and learning, research and administration. In addition, the chapter aims to find out whether there is any difference in terms of gender participation. Therefore, the findings of this chapter will help to check the findings of the observation chapter and to sharpening the focus of the chapter on the interviews.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first, the current and desired levels of participation in teaching decision areas in both departments are analysed and discussed by calculating the mean and SDs, then ranking the decision areas according to their mean scores, allowing calculation of the gap between current and desired levels of participation. This is followed by a comparison of male and female participation in both departments. Finally, the two departments are compared for any remaining similarities and differences. In the second section, research decision areas are analysed by the same procedures. The third section presents analysis of administrative decision areas. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

6.2 Teaching decision areas

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 present the results of current level, desired level, gap between them, and gap significance, of staff participation in making 10 teaching decisions for all participants in both Departments A and B. The first column in each table shows that the level of current participation was rated differently in the two departments on each issue; however, the mean scores for current participation in teaching decisions were 2.20 for Department A and 2.23 for Department B, which suggests that the two departments experienced almost the same levels of current participation, although there are some differences in the level of current participation for specific issues.

For example, in Department A, the highest level of current participation was in selecting modules for teaching, with a mean score of 3.57, at the top of the current

participation ranking order; it was followed by recruiting panels for postgraduate students' vivas, with a mean score of 3.17, then deciding on teaching methods, which occupied the third rank, with a 3.03 mean score. For Department B, the highest level of current participation was in the following three decision areas: recruiting panels for postgraduate students' vivas (mean, 3.26), followed by choosing postgraduate students for supervision (mean, 3.22) and then deciding on teaching methods (mean, 2.65).

Notably, these decisions were related directly to academics' personal interests; in other words, decisions on them can be made by an individual member. Therefore, participation was relatively high compared to other teaching decisions items. The reason for this could be that there is much more room for academic to participate in issues that affect them directly, and so they participate in them. In addition, these decisions form the core of their role as lecturers.

Table 6.1: Department A current and desired levels of participation in teaching decision areas (N=30)

Teaching and learning decision areas	Current level			Desired level			Gap		Significance	
	Rank order	Mean*	SD	Rank Order	Mean	SD	Difference mean	Rank order	sig	ES**
1 Designing the module content	9	2.03	1.326	8=	4.20	1.126	2.17	2	.000	0.8
2 Updating teaching materials	8	2.30	1.466	4=	4.40	1.248	2.10	3	.000	0.8
3 Deciding on the module references	6=	2.37	1.712	6	4.27	1.172	1.90	6	.000	0.8
4 Building new modules	10	1.80	1.349	7	4.23	1.165	2.43	1	.000	0.8
5 Deciding on teaching methods	3	3.03	1.691	3	4.43	1.006	1.40	8	.002	0.8
6 Selecting modules for teaching	1	3.57	1.431	2	4.47	1.137	0.90	10	.000	0.7
7 Choosing postgraduate students for supervision	6=	2.37	1.426	10	4.07	1.388	1.70	7	.000	0.8
8 Recruiting panels for postgraduate students' vivas	2	3.17	1.877	8=	4.20	1.186	1.03	9	.005	0.7
9 Solving students' study problems	5	2.47	1.456	4=	4.40	.855	1.93	5	.000	0.8
10 Deciding on criteria for students' attainment assessment	4	2.53	1.592	1	4.53	.730	2.00	4	.000	0.8
Total mean		2.20			4.14		1.75		.000	

Table 6.2: Department B current and desired levels of participation in teaching decision areas (N=23)

	Current level			Desired level			Gap		Significance	
	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Difference mean	Rank order	sig	ES*
1. Designing the module content	9	1.96	1.492	5=	4.09	1.041	2.13	2	.000	0.8
2. Updating teaching materials	7	2.22	1.594	7=	4.04	1.107	1.82	6	.000	0.8
3. Deciding on the module references	6	2.39	1.644	3=	4.17	.937	1.78	7	.000	0.8
4. Building new modules	10	1.78	1.445	9	3.96	1.261	2.18	1	.000	0.8
5. Deciding on teaching methods	3	2.65	1.695	2	4.52	.846	1.87	5	.001	0.8
6. Selecting modules for teaching	4	2.52	1.410	1	4.61	.656	2.09	3	.000	0.8
7. Choosing postgraduate students for supervision	2	3.22	1.565	5=	4.09	1.276	0.87	9	.007	0.8
8. Recruiting panels for postgraduate students' vivas	1	3.26	1.685	7=	4.04	1.522	0.78	10	.004	0.9
9. Solving students' study problems	5	2.43	1.237	10	3.87	1.180	1.44	8	.001	0.8
10. Deciding on criteria for students' attainment assessment	8	2.09	1.345	3=	4.17	1.072	2.08	4	.000	0.8
Total mean		2.23			4.02		1.70		.000	

By contrast, the lowest current levels of participation in Department A were found in building new modules (mean, 1.80), followed by designing the module content (mean, 2.03), updating teaching materials (mean, 2.30) and deciding on the module references (mean, 2.37). For Department B, participation in building new modules had the lowest level of participation (mean, 1.78), followed by designing the module content (1.96, mean), updating teaching materials (mean, 2.22) and deciding on the module references (mean, 2.39).

A noteworthy common feature of these items is that all were decisions related to teaching materials and course modules. The reason could be that deciding on them is a group rather than an individual task. The decision goes through department committees first, and then through the department meeting; it must also be approved by a higher level at the university. As a result, not all the department members can participate, as they are not all on the Teaching Materials committee; furthermore, suggestions produced by the committee are not final, as they could be rejected by the top management level.

Looking at the second column in each table, which illustrates desired participation, the results show that academics in both departments desired greater levels of participation in all teaching decision areas. The mean of desired participation was 4.14 in Department A and 4.02 in Department B, clearly indicating a high desired level of participation in both departments, although there are some differences in the level of desired participation for specific issues and between departments.

For example, in Department A, active participation in deciding on criteria for students' attainment assessment is a priority for academic staff, occupying the top of the desired participation ranking order (mean, 4.53). Two other staff-related decision areas are a priority for academics, as they are among the top three decision areas in which academics want active participation; selecting modules for teaching and deciding on teaching methods (means, 4.47 and 4.43 respectively). For Department B, the highest levels of desired participation were in selecting modules for teaching and deciding on teaching methods (means, 4.61 and 4.52 respectively). In both departments, decisions related more closely to individual members than to the

department as a whole were ranked highly in desired participation. The reason could be that these types of decisions are related to academics' job satisfaction.

Third column of each table shows the gap measured between current and desired levels of participation; a nil gap between current and desired levels of participation means that participants are satisfied with their current level of participation, while a gap means that participants have a low level of satisfaction with their current levels of participation, whether they desired higher or lower levels of involvement. Notably, the figures indicate that the actual level falls short of the desired level in all 10 areas in both departments, meaning that participants were widely dissatisfied with their current levels of participation: the total mean of the gap between current and desired levels was 1.75 in Department A and 1.70 in Department B, so there was a similar gap in both departments.

However, the gap between actual and desired levels of participation varied by item and by department. For example, in Department A, the widest gap was in building new modules (mean difference, 2.43). This was followed by designing the module content, (mean difference, 2.17) and updating teaching materials content (mean difference, 2.10). In Department B, the widest gap was in building new modules (mean difference, 2.18), followed by designing the module content (mean difference, 2.13).

These wide gaps between current and desired levels of participation indicate a very low level of satisfaction in both departments with current levels of participation in these decisions, which are all related to teaching materials. This desire might derive from the fact that decisions such as those related to teaching materials form the core of academic functions, so academics want to participate effectively in these kinds of decisions, or it could be a reaction to the very low level of current participation in these decisions.

Despite these similarities in the widest gaps, Department A differs from Department B in certain areas. For example, in selecting modules for teaching, the gap between current and desired levels of participation varied between departments. In Department A, this item was ranked eighth (mean, 1.40), whereas the gap was 2.09 in Department B, ranking third. This may be due to the different management style applied by each Department Head, regarding which it was reported in the previous

chapter that the Department Head B tended to keep most of the decisions under his and his managerial team's control.

The narrowest gap was in Department A, in selecting modules for teaching, with a mean difference of only 0.90. This was followed by recruiting panels for postgraduate students' vivas (mean difference, 1.03) and deciding on teaching methods (mean difference, 1.40). For Department B, the narrowest gap was in recruiting panels for postgraduate students' vivas (mean difference, 0.78), followed by choosing postgraduate students for supervision (mean difference, 0.87) and solving students' study problems (mean difference, 1.44).

Notably, all these items required decisions related to the academics themselves, and they could thus make them individually. Although the actual participation levels fell short of their desired levels in all these items, the gaps were not as wide as for items related to teaching materials, which suggests that the level of satisfaction with current participation in teaching materials decisions was much lower than for other decisions in both departments.

In the fourth columns are the results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which shows the significant difference between current and desired levels of participation in teaching decisions in both departments. There P-values were below 0.05 for all teaching decision areas, along with large effect sizes above 0.5 for all decisions. Using the Alutto and Belasco model to measure the discrepancies and differences between actual and desired levels of participation reveals that current participation in all teaching decision areas falls into the decisional deprivation category, in which participants felt that they were not involved in the process of making teaching decisions as much as they would like, and thus want to participate more. This indicates a low overall level of satisfaction with the current level of participation.

Table 6.3: Comparing males and females in Department A: current and desired levels of participation in teaching decision areas (N=30; 16 M, 14 F)

	Teaching decision areas	Participation	gender		sig
			Male	Female	
1	Designing the module content	Current	2.63	1.36	0.010*
		Desired	4.00	4.43	0.522
2	Updating teaching materials	Current	2.75	1.79	0.067
		Desired	4.00	4.86	0.108
3	Deciding on the module references	Current	2.87	1.79	0.091
		Desired	4.00	4.57	0.185
4	Building new modules	Current	2.19	1.36	0.130
		Desired	4.38	4.07	0.209
5	Deciding on teaching methods	Current	3.5	2.5	0.106
		Desired	4.44	4.43	0.643
6	Selecting modules for teaching	Current	3.56	3.57	0.914
		Desired	4.37	4.57	0.354
7	Choosing postgraduate students for supervision	Current	2.81	1.86	0.076
		Desired	4.06	4.07	0.945
8	Recruiting panels for postgraduate students' vivas	Current	3.75	2.50	0.071
		Desired	4.13	4.29	0.850
9	Solving students' study problems	Current	3.06	1.79	0.014*
		Desired	4.37	4.43	0.925
10	Deciding on criteria for students' attainment assessment	Current	3.00	2.00	0.092
		Desired	4.44	4.64	0.517
	Total mean	Current	3.01	2.05	0.015*
		Desired	4.21	4.43	0.759

Table 6.4: Comparing males and females in Department B: current and desired levels of participation in teaching decision areas (N=23; 12 M, 11 F)

	Teaching decision areas	Participation	Gender		sig
			Male	Female	
1	Designing the module content	Current	2.08	1.82	0.651
		Desired	3.92	4.27	0.608
2	Updating teaching materials	Current	2.42	2.00	0.566
		Desired	3.83	4.27	0.566
3	Deciding on the module references	Current	2.58	2.18	0.608
		Desired	3.92	4.45	0.288
4	Building new modules	Current	2.00	1.55	0.566
		Desired	3.50	4.45	0.151
5	Deciding on teaching methods	Current	3.17	2.09	0.211
		Desired	4.5	4.55	0.786
6	Selecting modules for teaching	Current	2.67	2.36	0.651
		Desired	4.58	4.64	0.833
7	Choosing postgraduate students for supervision	Current	3.83	2.55	0.051
		Desired	4.33	3.82	0.316
8	Recruiting panels for postgraduate students' vivas	Current	3.75	2.73	0.288
		Desired	4.50	3.55	0.288
9	Solving students' study problems	Current	2.58	2.27	0.608
		Desired	3.67	4.09	0.347
10	Deciding on criteria for students' attainment assessment	Current	2.42	1.73	0.169
		Desired	4.08	4.27	0.740
	Total mean	Current	2.75	2.12	0.151
		Desired	4.08	4.23	0.695

It is now worth looking at the tables to see whether there are any differences in respondents' participation according to gender. Tables 6.3 and 6.4 show the Mann-Whitney U test results, which reveal any similarities or significant differences between males and females regarding current and desired levels of participation in each department. Starting with current participation, the total mean score for males was higher than the female mean score in Department A (3.01 and 2.05 respectively), which is considered a significant difference with a P-value below 0.05. Males scored slightly higher than females in all teaching decisions, except in selecting modules for teaching, in which they scored almost identically. Despite the relatively higher male score, a significant difference between male and female current participation occurred in only two items – designing the module content and solving students' study problems – with P-values below 0.05. Notably, the lowest current levels of participation for both genders were found in decisions related to teaching materials and modules such as designing the module content, updating teaching materials, deciding on the module references and building new modules, which could be explained by the fact that this type of decision was decided upon by a specialised committee within the department and required further approval by higher levels in the university.

As regards current participation in Department B, the total mean score for males was higher than the female mean score (2.75 and 2.12 respectively), but the difference was not significant, with a P-value above 0.05. The males' score was found to be slightly higher than the females' in all teaching decisions, but without significant differences in any of them. Thus, while current male levels of participation in both departments were slightly higher than current female participation levels; the differences were not statistically significant for any item in Department B and or for most items in Department A. Although males scored slightly higher in current levels of participation than females in both departments, male participation was not very high in an absolute sense.

In terms of desired level of participation, males and females in Department A desired greater levels of participation in all teaching decisions. However, females had higher levels of desired participation than males, as the total female mean score for desired

participation was 4.43, compared to a male score of 4.21. Although the females' score was slightly higher than the males', the Mann-Whitney U test reveals no significant differences between the genders in desired levels of participation in all teaching decisions. This was also true in Department B, in which females were found to score higher levels of desired participation than males (4.32 and 4.08 respectively). Although females scored slightly higher than males, the Mann-Whitney U test reveals that there are no significant differences in Department B between males and females in desired levels of participation in all teaching decisions.

The results indicate that there were no highly significant differences in current or desired levels of participation in teaching decisions between males and females in both departments. This similarity between genders could be explained by the fact that they were working at the same university and experiencing the same management and leadership styles. However, women found to have lower ratings for current levels of participation than men on almost every single item in both departments, and to have higher ratings for desired levels of participation. Explanations of these differences are discussed in the next chapter, on the interviews.

Table 6.5: Testing the significance of differences in current and desired levels of participation between Departments A and B in teaching decision areas

Teaching decision areas		Current		Desired	
		sig	ES	sig	ES
1	Designing the module content	0.524	0.08	0.509	0.09
2	Updating teaching materials	0.706	0.05	0.075	0.20
3	Deciding on the module references	0.914	0.01	0.422	0.10
4	Building new modules	0.723	0.04	0.324	0.10
5	Deciding on teaching methods	0.416	0.10	0.912	0.010
6	Selecting modules for teaching	0.011*	0.35	0.781	0.03
7	Choosing postgraduate students for supervision	0.046*	0.27	0.874	0.02
8	Recruiting panels for postgraduate students' vivas	0.835	0.02	0.967	0.005
9	Solving students' study problems	0.970	0.005	0.083	0.20
10	Deciding on criteria for students' attainment assessment	0.334	0.13	0.187	0.10

Table 6.5 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U test comparing Departments A and B as to current and desired levels of participation. In terms of current levels of participation, the test indicated that there were no significant differences between the two departments in terms of their current participation in 8 of 10 teaching decision areas, with P-values greater than 0.05. The only two teaching decision areas with significant differences were selecting modules for teaching and choosing postgraduate students for supervision; in the former the participation of Department A (mean rank=31.62, N=30) was significantly higher than that of Department B (mean rank=20.98, N=23): U=206.500, z=-2.55, P=0.011, two-tailed. This effect can be described as medium (r=0.35). In the latter, the participation of Department B (mean rank=31.67, N=23) was significantly higher than that of Department A (mean rank=23.42, N=30): U=237.500, z=1.997, P=0.046, two-tailed. This effect can be

described as small (r=0.27). However, in terms of desired participation, the Mann-Whitney U test indicated that there were no significant differences between the two departments, with P-values being greater than 0.05 in all teaching decisions and showing that the two departments desired almost the same level of participation.

6.3 Research decision areas

Tables 6.6 and 6.7 show the results for the current level, desired level, the gap between them and the gap significance of staff participation in making research decisions for both Departments A and B. As to current participation, the first column of each table shows that the levels of current participation were rated differently in the two departments on individual issues. However, the mean scores for current participation in research decisions were 1.67 for Department A and 1.97 for Department B, indicating suggests that the two departments experienced almost the same low levels of current participation.

Table 6.6: Department A's current and desired levels of participation in research decision areas (N=30)

Research decision areas	Current level			Desired level			Gap		Significance	
	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	Rank order	sig	ES*
1. Deciding on academic research subjects in the department	3	1.27	.740	3	3.63	1.299	2.36	2=	0.000	0.8
2. Evaluating department members' research	4	1.17	.461	4	3.53	1.479	2.36	2=	0.000	0.8
3. Studying research projects referred to the department	2	1.30	.794	2	3.90	1.125	2.6	1	0.000	0.8
4. Deciding on PhD students' proposals	1	2.97	1.497	1	4.47	1.137	1.5	4	0.000	0.8
		1.67			3.88		2.20		0.000	

*Effect size

In Department A, the highest level of current participation was in deciding on PhD students' proposals (mean score, 2.97); the same was true in Department B, in which deciding on PhD students' proposals (mean score, 2.87) was at the top of the current participation ranking. Notably, this decision area is related directly to academics' core functions, since deciding on PhD students' proposals is one of their main roles, and participation in it was relatively high compared to other research decision items.

Table 6.7: Department B's current and desired levels of participation in research decision areas (N=23)

Research decision areas	Current level			Desired level			Gap		Difference	
	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Difference mean	Rank order	sig	ES*
1. Deciding on academic research subjects in the department	3=	1.65	1.152	2	4.30	1.185	2.65	1	0.000	0.8
2. Evaluating department members' research	3=	1.65	1.265	4	3.61	1.559	1.96	3	0.000	0.8
3. Studying research projects referred to the department	2	1.74	1.214	3	4.00	1.279	2.26	2	0.000	0.8
4. Deciding on PhD students' proposals	1	2.87	1.359	1	4.57	.728	1.7	4	0.000	0.8
		1.97			4.12		2.14		0.000	

*Effect size

The lowest current levels of participation in both Department A and Department B were found in evaluating department members' research, deciding on academic research subjects in the department and studying research projects referred to the department, (mean scores in Department A: 1.17, 127 and 1.30 respectively; mean scores in Department B: 1.65, 165 and 1.74 respectively), indicating very low levels of participation.

The common feature of these items is that they are all department-related decisions of an administrative nature. The reasons for this could be the sensitivity of decisions in some cases, together with the possibility that attention was not effectively paid to research in general by the university, its departments or individual academics.

The second column in each table illustrates desired participation; the results show that academics in both departments desired greater levels of participation in all research decision areas. The mean of desired participation was 3.88 in Department A and 4.12 in Department B, indicating a high level of desired participation in both departments, although Department B desired slightly more than Department A. There are also some differences in the level of desired participation specific issues in each department.

For example, the findings suggest that active participation in deciding on PhD students' proposals, which is one of the main functions of staff, is a priority for academic staff in Department A, as it held the top rank in desired participation (mean score, 4.47). This was also the case in Department B, where deciding on PhD students' also took top rank with a 4.57 mean score. At the top of the desired levels of participation in both departments were decisions primarily related to their regular roles as academics, rather than those related to the department as a whole. The reason could be that participation in these decisions is closely related to their job functions and thus us more likely to affect their overall job satisfaction.

By contrast, in the other decisions, academics in both departments desired a greater level of participation, but not to the same extent as in those discussed above. For example the lowest desired level of participation was in evaluating department members' research in both departments, with mean scores of 3.53 in Department A

and 3.61 in Department B. The reason for this might be the sensitivity of evaluating colleagues' research, which could produce conflicts among department members.

The third column of each table shows the results of the gap between the current and desired levels of participation; no gap means that respondents are satisfied with their current level of participation, whereas the presence of a gap between current and desired level means that participants feel a low level of satisfaction with their current levels of participation, whether they desired more or less. The figures indicate that the actual level falls short of the desired level in all four areas in both departments, meaning that participants were not satisfied with their current level of participation, with a total mean of the gap of 2.20 in Department A and 2.14 in Department B. This suggests very similar and wide gaps in both departments.

However, the gap between the actual and desired levels of participation varied with different items and between departments. For example, in Department A, the widest gap was in studying research projects referred to the department, with a 2.60 mean difference between actual and desired levels of participation. This was followed by deciding on academic research subjects in the department and evaluating department members' research, both with a 2.36 mean difference. As to Department B, the widest gap was found in deciding on academic research subjects in the department, which had a 2.65 mean difference between current and desired levels of participation. This was followed by studying research projects referred to the department and evaluating department members' research, with mean differences of 2.26 and 1.96 respectively.

These wide gaps between current and desired levels of participation indicate very low levels of satisfaction among academics with their current participation in these decisions in both departments; these are all decisions related to the department in general. The reason for this greater level of desired participation could lie in members' willingness to update themselves on topics currently being researched, thus helping them to engage in research activities, as academic staff are required to publish a certain number of studies in order to be promoted.

By contrast, the narrowest gap was in Department A in deciding on PhD students' proposals, with a mean difference of 1.0. The same was true in Department B, in which deciding on PhD students' proposals had a mean difference of 1.7. This was

the only research decision related to staff roles in which staff were expected to participate effectively.

The fourth column of each table shows the results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which shows the significance of differences between current and desired levels of participation in research decisions in both departments. The tests indicated significant differences between actual and desired levels of participation in all research areas in both departments, as desired levels of participation were significantly higher than the current levels of participation, with P-values below 0.05 for all research decision areas and large effect sizes (above 0.5) for all the decisions. Therefore, using the Alutto and Belasco model to measure the discrepancies and differences between actual and desired levels of participation, it is found that current participation in all research decision areas falls into the decisional deprivation category, in which participants feel that they were not involved in the process of making research decisions as much as they would like; they desire more participation. This suggests that there is a widespread low level of satisfaction regarding the current level of participation.

Table 6.8: Comparing males and females in Department A: current and desired level of participation in research decision areas (N=30: 16 M, 14 F)

Research decision areas	Participation	Gender		sig
		Male	Female	
1. Deciding on academic research subjects in the department	Current	1.5	1.00	0.257
	Desired	3.88	3.36	0.313
2. Evaluating department members' research	Current	1.31	1.00	0.257
	Desired	3.69	3.36	0.580
3. Studying research projects referred to the department	Current	1.56	1.00	0.257
	Desired	3.94	3.86	0.822
4. Deciding on PhD students' proposals	Current	3.19	2.71	0.498
	Desired	4.37	4.57	0.498
Total mean	Current	1.89	1.42	0.131
	Desired	3.97	3.78	0.854

Table 6.9: Comparing males and females in Department B: current and desired level of participation in research decision areas (N=23: 12 M, 11F)

Research decision areas	Participation	Gender		sig
		Male	Female	
1. Deciding on academic research subjects in the department	Current	1.92	1.36	0.151
	Desired	4.25	4.36	0.976
2. Evaluating department members' research	Current	1.83	1.45	0.525
	Desired	3.17	4.09	0.190
3. Studying research projects referred to the department	Current	1.83	1.64	0.608
	Desired	3.92	4.09	0.880
4. Deciding on PhD students' proposals	Current	2.75	3.00	0.786
	Desired	4.5	4.64	10.000
Total mean	Current	2.08	1.86	0.880
	Desired	3.96	4.29	0.316

It is now worth looking at the tables to see whether there are any differences in respondents' participation according to their gender. Tables 6.8 and 6.9 show the Mann-Whitney U test results, which reveal any similarities or significant differences between males' and females' current and desired levels of participation in both departments. Starting with current participation in Department A, the total mean score for males was higher than the female mean score (1.89 and 1.42 respectively), but the difference was not significant, with the P-value of 0.131 being well above 0.05. Males were found to score slightly higher than females in all research categories. It was notable that, for both genders, the lowest current levels of participation were found in decisions related to the department, such as studying research projects referred to the department, deciding on academic research subjects in the department and evaluating department members' research.

Regarding current participation in Department B, the total mean score for males was higher than the female mean score (2.08 and 1.86 respectively), but the difference was not significant, with a P-value far above 0.05. Males were found to score slightly higher than females in three research decisions but without significant difference. Females, on the other hand, scored slightly higher than males in deciding on PhD students' proposals. Therefore, although males scored slightly higher current levels of participation than females in both departments, male participation was not very high.

In terms of desired level of participation, in Department A, males and females desired greater levels of participation in all research decisions; however, males scored higher levels of desired participation than females, with the total male mean score for desired participation being 3.97 compared to the female score of 3.78. Although males scored slightly higher than females, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed no significant differences between them as regards desired levels of participation in all research decisions. In Department B, females were found to score higher levels of desired participation than males, with scores of 4.29 and 3.96 respectively. Although females scored slightly higher than males, the Mann-Whitney U test reveals no significant differences in Department B between male and female desired levels of participation in all teaching decisions.

The results indicate that there were no statistically significant differences between current and desired levels of participation in research decisions between male and female in both departments. Current participation of both genders in the two departments falls short of their desired levels of participation, both genders in both departments desiring greater participation compared to their current levels. This similarity between genders could be explained by the fact that males and females were working at the same university and experiencing the same management and leadership styles in each department. Although the results indicate no statistically significant differences in current levels of participation in research decisions between male and female in both departments, women have a lower rating for current levels of participation than the men on almost every single item. Also, have a higher rating in desired levels in Department B.

Table 6.10: Comparing current and desired levels of participation between Departments A and B in research decision areas

Research decision areas	Current level		Desired level	
	sig	ES	Sig	ES*
1 Deciding on academic research subjects in the department	0.132	0.20	0.029*	0.30
2 Evaluating department members' research	0.171	0.18	0.674	0.05
3 Studying research projects referred to the department	0.078	0.24	0.507	0.09
4 Deciding on PhD students' proposals	0.767	0.04	0.594	0.07

*Effect size

Table 6.10 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test comparing Departments A and B regarding their current and desired levels of participation in research decisions. In terms of current levels, the Mann-Whitney U test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the two departments in all research decision areas; the overall P-value was 0.343, which is greater than 0.05. Moreover, in terms of desired participation, the Mann-Whitney U test again showed no significant differences between the two departments, the P-value again being greater than 0.05. The only noticeable difference between the two departments was found in deciding on academic research subjects in the department, for which the desired participation of Department B (mean rank=31.98, N=23) was significantly

higher than that of Department A (mean rank=23.18, N=0): U= 230.500, z= -2.190, P=0.029, two-tailed. This effect can be described as small (r=0.3). Therefore, the findings provide evidence that there were no significant differences between the two departments.

6.4 Administrative decisions

Tables 6.11 and 6.12 present the results for the current level, the desired level, the gap between them, and the gap significance, of staff participation in making twelve administrative decisions, for all participants in Departments A and B. As far as current participation is concerned, the first column of the tables shows that the level of current participation was differently rated in the two departments on specific issues. However, the mean scores for current participation in administrative decisions were 2.08 for Department A and 2.13 for Department B, which suggests that the two departments experienced almost the same levels of current participation, although there are some differences in the level of current participation on particular issues.

In Department A, the highest level of current participation was in choosing the in-service training needed (mean score, 3.30), followed by deciding on taking part in committees (mean score, 3.13). For Department B, the highest level of current participation was also in choosing the in-service training needed (mean score, 3.30), followed by deciding on taking part in committees (mean score, 3.13). Notably, the highest scores were found in the same items in both departments. These decisions are related directly to academics' personal interests, and participation in them was relatively high compared to other administrative decisions items. The reasons for this could be that there is much more room for academics to participate in such issues or that issues of this type affect them directly, so they choose to participate in them.

The lowest current levels of participation in Department A were found in deciding on the department plan, nomination of lecturers for administrative posts and deciding on sacking lecturers (mean scores, 1.53, 1.57 and 1.80 respectively). Meanwhile, for Department B, nomination of lecturers for administrative posts, indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance and deciding on sacking lecturers and renewing their contracts, were at the bottom of the current participation ranking (mean scores, 1.43, 1.48 and 1.61 respectively).

Table 6.11: Department A current and desired levels of participation in administrative decision areas (N=30)

Administrative decision areas	Current level			Desired level			Gap		Significance	
	Rank order	Mean	S D	Rank order	Mean	S D	Mean Difference	Rank order	sig	ES*
1. Deciding on the department plan	12	1.53	1.167	6	4.10	1.029	2.57	1	.000	0.8
2. Choosing the in-service training needed	1	2.97	1.542	1	4.83	0.461	1.86	8	.000	0.8
3. Deciding on launching seminars and forums	4	2.33	1.493	4=	4.13	1.137	1.80	10	.000	0.7
4. Deciding on recruitment of lecturers	6	2.10	1.423	7=	4.07	1.172	1.97	6	.000	0.8
5. Nomination of lecturers for administrative posts	11	1.57	1.040	9=	3.90	1.213	2.33	3	.000	0.8
6. Deciding on renewing lecturers' contracts	7	1.93	1.437	11	3.83	1.289	1.90	7	.000	0.8
7. Deciding on sacking lecturers	10	1.80	1.297	12	3.63	1.650	1.83	9	.000	0.8
8. Deciding on taking part in committees	2	2.60	1.429	7=	4.07	1.112	1.47	12	.000	0.8
9. Deciding on working overtime	5	2.20	1.518	9=	3.90	1.185	1.70	11	.000	0.8
10. Developing new programmes	3	2.37	1.474	2	4.37	1.159	2.00	5	.000	0.8
11. Deciding on students' acceptance requirements for entering the department	8	1.90	1.517	3	4.17	1.262	2.27	4	.000	0.8
12. Indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance	9	1.73	1.337	4=	4.13	1.196	2.40	2	.000	0.8
Total		2.08			4.09		2		.000	

Table 6.12: Department B current and desired levels of participation in administrative decision areas (N=23)

Administrative decision areas	Current level			Desired level			Gap		Difference	
	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Difference mean	Rank order	sig	ES*
1. Deciding on the department plan	6	1.96	1.364	4	4.09	1.276	2.13	3	.000	0.8
2. Choosing the in-service training needed	1	3.30	1.663	1	4.74	0.864	1.44	10	.001	0.8
3. Deciding on launching seminars and forums	4	2.48	1.620	6	4.00	1.128	1.52	8=	.000	0.8
4. Deciding on recruitment of lecturers	7	1.83	1.230	9	3.70	1.428	1.87	5=	.001	0.8
5. Nomination of lecturers for administrative posts	12	1.43	.896	10	3.52	1.563	2.09	4	.000	0.8
6. Deciding on renewing lecturers' contracts	9=	1.61	1.270	11	3.13	1.517	1.52	8=	.001	0.8
7. Deciding on sacking lecturers	9=	1.61	1.158	12	2.78	1.536	1.17	11	.002	0.8
8. Deciding on taking part in committees	2	3.13	1.660	3	4.26	1.054	1.13	12	.001	0.8
9. Deciding on working overtime	5	2.17	1.466	5	4.04	1.224	1.87	5=	.000	0.8
10. Developing new programmes	3	2.91	1.649	2	4.57	0.590	1.66	7	.001	0.8
11. Deciding on students' acceptance requirements for entering the department	8	1.74	1.356	7	3.91	1.311	2.17	2	.000	0.8
12. Indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance	11	1.48	.994	8	3.87	1.392	2.39	1	.000	0.8
Total		2.13			3.88		1.74		.000	

One notable common feature of these items is that all are related to the departments rather than to academic staff themselves, and participation was lower than in other administrative decisions. The reason for this could be that these are managerial decisions, not of interest to academic staff, because they are not at the core of their

role unless they hold a management position. Therefore, deciding on them is the responsibility of academic departments' Heads and their management teams.

The second column in Tables 6.11 and 6.12 illustrate desired participation, with the results showing that academics in both departments desired greater levels of participation in all administrative decision areas. The mean score of desired participation was 4.09 in Department A and 3.88 in Department B, which suggests high desired levels of participation in both departments, although there are some differences in level of desired participation for individual issues in the two departments.

In Department A, active participation in choosing the in-service training needed was a priority for academic staff, which led the ranking of desired level of participation with a mean score of 4.83, followed by developing new programmes at 4.37. The highest level of desired participation in Department B was also in choosing the in-service training needed, with a mean score of 4.74, followed by developing new programmes, at 4.57. In both departments, the highest priority related to an administrative decision that was directly relevant to individual members. The reason for this could be that decisions of this type were related to their job satisfaction. In addition, the second most desired level of participation in both departments was developing new programmes, an issue related to their function as academic staff who teach these programmes.

Meanwhile, deciding on sacking lecturers and deciding on renewing lecturers' contracts were at the bottom of the desired participation ranking, with scores of 3.63 and 3.83 respectively in Department A and scores of 2.78 and 3.13 respectively in Department B; participating in these decisions could lead to conflict between colleagues.

The third column in Tables 6.11 and 6.12 shows the gap measured between current and desired levels of participation; where there is no gap, respondents are satisfied with their current levels of participation, while the presence of a gap means that participants feel a low level of satisfaction with their current levels of participation, whether they desired more or less. Notably, the figures indicate that the actual level falls short of the desired level in all 12 areas in both departments, indicating widespread dissatisfaction among participants with their current levels of

participation; the total mean of the gap was 2.00 in Department A and 1.74 in Department B.

However, the gap between the actual and desired levels of participation varied with specific items in the two departments. For example, the widest gap in Department A was in deciding on the department plan, which led the ranking with a 2.57 mean difference, followed by indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance (mean difference, 2.4). In Department B, the widest gap was in indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance (mean difference, 2.39), followed by deciding on students' acceptance requirements for entering the department with a 2.17 mean difference.

This wide gap between current and desired levels of participation indicates a very low level of satisfaction in both departments with the current level of participation in these decisions, all of which are related to the department. This greater level of desire might derive from the fact that such decisions affect the functioning of academic staff. They want to participate effectively in these kinds of decisions, as some administrative decisions influence the teaching process in general, such as deciding on students' acceptance requirements for entering the department and indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance.

The narrowest gap was found in Department A in the item deciding on taking part in committees, with a mean difference of 1.47, at the bottom of the ranking. This was followed by deciding on working overtime (mean difference, 1.70). The narrowest gap in Department B was in deciding on taking part in committees (mean difference, 1.13), followed by deciding on working overtime (mean difference, 1.70). Notably, all these items were either decisions related to academics themselves or sensitive decisions related to colleagues within the department. Although the actual levels fell short of desired levels in all these cases, the gaps were not as wide as for the items related to departmental decisions, which suggests that levels of satisfaction with current participation in department-related decisions were much lower than for other decisions in both departments.

The fourth column in Tables 6.11 and 6.12 shows the results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which indicated significant differences between actual and desired levels of participation in all administration areas in both departments, with P-values

below 0.05 for all administrative decision areas, along with large effect sizes above 0.5 for all decisions. Therefore, using the Alutto and Belasco model to measure the discrepancies and differences between actual and desired levels of participation, it is found that current participation in all administrative decision areas falls into the decisional deprivation category, in which participants feel that they are not involved as much as they would like in the process of making administrative decisions, and so want to participate more. In other words, there is a low level of satisfaction with the current level of participation.

Table 6.13: Comparing males and females in Department A: current and desired levels of participation in administrative decision areas (N=30: 16 M, 14 F)

Administrative decision areas	Participation	Gender		sig
		Male	Female	
1 Deciding on the department plan	Current	2.00	1.00	0.085
	Desired	4.31	3.86	0.313
2 Choosing the in-service training needed	Current	2.25	3.79	0.010*
	Desired	4.75	4.93	0.580
3 Deciding on launching seminars and forums	Current	2.69	1.93	0.294
	Desired	4.19	4.07	0.854
4 Deciding on recruitment of lecturers	Current	2.75	1.36	0.012*
	Desired	4.37	3.71	0.085
5 Nomination of lecturers for administrative posts	Current	1.87	1.21	0.154
	Desired	3.63	4.21	0.313
6 Deciding on renewing lecturers' contracts	Current	2.62	1.14	0.008*
	Desired	4.00	3.64	0.423
7 Deciding on sacking lecturers	Current	2.37	1.14	0.019*
	Desired	4.06	3.14	0.093
8 Deciding on taking part in committees	Current	3.37	1.71	0.001*
	Desired	4.19	3.93	0.473
9 Deciding on working overtime	Current	2.19	2.21	0.886
	Desired	3.69	4.14	0.525
10 Developing new programmes	Current	3.00	1.64	0.028*
	Desired	4.44	4.29	0.473
11 Deciding on students' acceptance requirements for entering the department	Current	2.44	1.29	0.120
	Desired	4.25	4.07	0.951
12 Indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance	Current	2.25	1.14	0.043*
	Desired	4.13	4.14	0.918
Total mean	Current	2.48	1.63	0.001*
	Desired	4.16	4.01	0.266

Table 6.14: Comparing males and females in Department B: current and desired levels of participation in administrative decision areas (N=23: 12 M, 11 F)

	Administrative decision areas	Participation	Gender		sig
			Male	Female	
1	Deciding on the department plan	Current	2.17	1.73	0.413
		Desired	3.92	4.27	0.413
2	Choosing the in-service training needed	Current	2.67	4.00	0.079
		Desired	4.67	4.82	0.740
3	Deciding on launching seminars and forums	Current	2.58	2.36	0.833
		Desired	4.08	3.91	0.786
4	Deciding on recruitment of lecturers	Current	1.83	1.82	0.786
		Desired	3.83	3.55	0.525
5	Nomination of lecturers for administrative posts	Current	1.25	1.64	0.608
		Desired	3.5	3.55	0.928
6	Deciding on renewing lecturers' contracts	Current	1.92	1.27	0.347
		Desired	3.25	3.00	0.740
7	Deciding on sacking lecturers	Current	2.17	1.00	0.044*
		Desired	3.25	2.27	0.151
8	Deciding on taking part in committees	Current	3.67	2.55	0.134
		Desired	4.58	3.91	0.235
9	Deciding on working overtime	Current	2.67	1.64	0.104
		Desired	4.42	3.64	0.235
10	Developing new programmes	Current	3.25	2.55	0.347
		Desired	4.67	4.45	0.316
11	Deciding on students' acceptance requirements for entering the department	Current	2.00	1.45	0.525
		Desired	3.75	4.09	0.976
12	Indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance	Current	1.83	1.09	0.169
		Desired	3.67	4.09	0.833
	Total mean	Current	2.33	1.92	0.060
		Desired	3.96	3.79	0.755

It is now worth examining whether there are any differences in respondents' participation in administrative decisions by gender. Tables 6.13 and 6.14 show the Mann-Whitney U Test results, revealing any similarities or significant differences between males' and females' current and desired levels of participation in both departments. Starting with current participation in Department A, the total male mean score was higher than the female mean score (2.48 and 1.63 respectively); the difference was significant, with a P-value of 0.001, below 0.05. Males were found to score slightly higher than females in all administrative decisions except deciding on working overtime, in which the two genders scored almost the same. In choosing the in-service training needed, females currently participate more than males (means, 3.79 and 2.25 respectively), which is a statistically significant difference.

As for current participation in Department B, the total mean score for males was higher than the female mean score (2.33 and 1.92 respectively), but with no significant difference, the P-value being above 0.05. Although, the difference was not significant between males and females, the male score was higher than the female in 10 out of 12 administrative decision issues. The only issues women scored higher than males were nomination of lecturers for administrative posts and choosing the in-service training needed. Current male levels of participation in both departments were slightly higher than current female levels; however, the differences were only statistically significant in Department A, and although males scored slightly higher current levels of participation than females in both departments, male participation was not very high in absolute terms. Notably, current female levels of participation in both departments were higher than male in regards to choosing the in-service training needed, which suggests that females are more interested than males in in-service training.

In terms of desired levels of participation, males and females in Department A desired greater levels of participation in all administrative decisions, but males scored higher levels of desired participation than females, with a total desired mean score of 4.16 for males, compared to 4.01 for females. Although males scored slightly higher than females, the Mann-Whitney U test reveals no significant differences between males and females in desired levels of participation in all administrative decisions. This was also the case in Department B, in which males scored higher levels of desired participation than females (3.96 and 3.79

respectively), although the Mann-Whitney U test revealed no significant gender differences in Department B in desired participation in administrative decisions.

The results indicate that there were no significant differences in the desired levels of participation in administrative decisions between males and females in both departments. However, there were significant differences between male and female current participation in Department A; although current participation in both genders in the two departments fell short of their desired levels of participation, as both genders in both departments desired greater participation compared to their current levels.

Table 6.15: Testing the significance of differences in current and desired levels of participation between Departments A and B in administrative decision areas

Administrative decision areas	Current level		Desired level	
	sig	ES*	sig	ES*
1. Deciding on the department plan	0.157	0.10	0.728	0.04
2. Choosing the in-service training needed	0.370	0.10	1.000	0
3. Deciding on launching seminars and forums	0.761	0.04	0.583	0.07
4. Deciding on recruitment of lecturers	0.553	0.08	0.382	0.10
5. Nomination of lecturers for administrative posts	0.562	0.07	0.482	0.09
6. Deciding on renewing lecturers' contracts	0.288	0.10	0.083	0.20
7. Deciding on sacking lecturers	0.565	0.07	0.041*	0.20
8. Deciding on taking part in committees	0.223	0.10	0.443	0.10
9. Deciding on working overtime	0.992	0.00	0.556	0.08
10. Developing new programmes	0.235	0.10	0.907	0.01
11. Deciding on students' acceptance requirements for entering the department	0.709	0.05	0.375	0.10
12. Indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance	0.643	0.06	0.486	0.09

Table 6.15 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U test comparing Departments A and B in regard to current and desired levels of participation; it indicates that there were no significant differences between the two departments in terms of their current participation in all administrative decision areas, with P-values greater than 0.05. Moreover, the indicates that there were no significant differences between the two departments in terms of their desired participation, as those P-values were also greater than 0.05 in all administrative decision issues but one, providing evidence that the two departments desired almost the same levels of participation. The only significant administrative decision area was deciding on sacking lecturers, for which the desired participation of Department A (mean rank=30.63, N=30) was significantly higher than that of Department B (mean rank=22.26, N=23): U=236.000, z=-2.039, P=0.041, two-tailed. This effect can be described as small (r=0.2).

6.5 Summary

The results for the two departments make clear that academics scored low levels of current participation in all three decision domains: teaching, research and administration. However, in both departments, the lowest levels of participation were in research-related decisions, followed by administrative decisions; the highest current levels of participation were found in teaching-related decisions. These current levels of participation fell short of the desired levels in all items in all three decision areas in both departments, with significant differences between actual and desired levels of participation found in all decision areas in both departments, according to the Wilcoxon signed-rank test results, which showed desired levels of participation to be significantly higher than current levels.

Therefore, using the Alutto and Belasco model to measure the discrepancies and differences between actual and desired levels of participation, it is found that current participation in all decision areas falls into the decisional deprivation category, in which participants feel that they were not as involved in the decision-making process as they would like, and so want to participate more. This suggests that there is a low level of satisfaction regarding the current level of participation. The highest level of deprivation was found in research-related decisions, followed by administrative decisions; the lowest deprivation levels were found in teaching decisions.

However, the gap between current and desired levels of participation varied with specific items, with the narrowest gap between current and desired levels of participation occurring in staff-related decisions in both departments; the widest gap between current and desired levels of participation was found in department-related decisions. This provides evidence that the level of satisfaction in terms of current participation is generally low in all decision areas. More notably, the findings indicate a lower level of satisfaction in items related to the department than in those related to academic staff.

Levels of participation were found to be low in both genders, although males scored slightly higher levels of current participation than females in both departments in almost all decision areas. Women also had a higher rating than men in desired levels of participation on a substantial number of items, suggesting that women were more likely to be dissatisfied with the current system of decision making.

The slight difference between the two departments in terms of current participation can be explained by the different management styles applied by each department's Head. Head of Department B, for example, tended to keep some of the decisions under the control of himself and his managerial team. However, the very similar results for both departments as to current and desired levels of participation can be explained by the power of organisational culture, as both departments are located in the same university, where institution-wide regulations and cultural practices impact on both departments. The reason for the low level of participation can also be attributed to the nature of the university management system, as other managerial units exert some influence on the departments' decisions by ensuring that these are scrutinised for final for approval. This process reduces the effect of the decisions from "deciding" on the matters in question to only "suggesting" what they hope will be will be accepted rather than rejected.

Chapter Seven: Interview analysis

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores in greater depth the perceptions of academic staff regarding their participation in departmental decision making in two departments at a Saudi university to provide more nuanced explanations of some patterns that emerged in previous chapter; therefore, the chapter's structure will be thematic in some regards, but will also cover the two departments with a section exploring their similarities and differences and allowing for the comparative analysis. The level of academic staff satisfaction regarding their participation in departmental decision making is explored by interviewing a total of 10 academic staff, 5 from each department. The chapter is divided into four sections: analysis of Department A, analysis of Department B, discussion of the similarities and differences between the departments and, finally, a summary of the chapter.

7.2 Analysis of department A

The analysis of the interviews draws on three main issues that emerged in the previous chapter so as to explore the issues in greater depth: the different levels of participation according to the decision areas, the decision-making process and the gap found between current and desired levels of participation and, finally, the gender level of participation. The next section presents the respondent profile, followed by the analysis of these three issues.

7.2.1 Respondent profile

Five respondents with different levels of seniority were interviewed in Department A, as shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Respondents in Department A

	Academic Position	Managerial Position	Gender
1	Associate Professor	University Level	Male
2	Associate Professor	Faculty Level	Male
3	Assistant Professor	None	Male
4	Assistant Professor	Department Level	Female
5	Assistant Professor	None	Female

7.2.2 Decision areas and level of participation

The survey analysis revealed that the level of current participation is higher in teaching-related decisions than in research and administrative decision making. Findings from observations also revealed that discussion during meetings was more frequent with teaching decisions than research and administrative decision areas. To explore this, participants were asked about their participation in all the three decision areas.

All five respondents emphasised teaching as the most significant area of decision making, which complements the survey findings, in which the highest level of participation was found in teaching decisions and observations and where the most discussed issues involved teaching decisions. The key reason for this that emerged from the data analysis is about the department focus. All participants described teaching as their main career roles and most of their daily work as related to teaching, which also reflects the university's focus on teaching. One respondent reported:

> *In universities, academic staff have three general function roles; teaching, research and community service. However, according to what academic staff are asked to do, teaching responsibilities take over 60% of our role in the department, then research and finally community service. As a result, teaching-related issues are the main role of academic staff.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

Similarly, a female respondent reported:

> *As our main roles are about teaching, I prefer to participate in these decisions effectively to participate in shaping the department and my future.* (Assistant Professor, new member, female)

As a result of the teaching focus of the department, academic staff were more involved in teaching decisions. This was the case with the five respondents, regardless of academic position, managerial position or gender.

In terms of academic participation in research decisions, the survey findings indicate a very low level of current participation. This was complemented by the interview findings; all five respondents emphasised their limited participation in research decisions. The key reason that emerged from the data analysis is that the department does not engage actively in research projects; similarly, the university as a whole

pays much less attention to research than to teaching; therefore, the level of participation was very low. One respondent reported:

> *Research decisions to a large extent are individually based; as the department does not take over any research projects, it is heavily dependent on each member's effort. I have my own interests internally and externally because research activities are the way of developing myself and contributing to others through scientific research. Research is an ongoing activity that never stops.* (Assistant Professor, department level, female)

Similarly, another member reported:

> *Research is an individual activity for promotion reasons; the department does not have research projects. Also, there are no funded projects, and as a result the return value is very low, so academic staff prefer to invest their time in individual research to be promoted. As parents having responsibilities, we need to be promoted and have additional income rather than working on something with very low benefit, to be honest with you.* (Assistant Professor, male)

The findings indicate that the department does not focus on research, as there are no research activities in the department in which to participate. As a result, the level of academic staff participation was very low in research decisions. Four respondents emphasised that research is an individual matter which does not link to the department's responsibilities. Hence, academic staff work individually to obtain their promotions. The only research decisions academic staff deal with in the department are postgraduate research projects. One respondent reported:

> *As the department focuses on postgraduate students, most of the research decisions are related to students' research projects. Other than that, academic staff work on individual research projects for career promotion reasons.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, male)

As a result of the department's teaching focus, academic staff were not involved in research decisions. This was the view of all five respondents, regardless of their academic position, managerial position or gender.

In terms of academic participation in administrative decisions, all five respondents emphasised that participation in administrative decisions depends solely on each member's role; members with managerial positions are more likely to participate in

such issues as a part of those duties. Otherwise, the academic staff focus on teaching and research. One respondent reported:

> *Departmental meetings are about teaching and research matters. For example, the department has no role in appointing its new head or, at least, nominating any member for this position. Also, the department has nothing to do with any financial matters.* (Assistant Professor, new member, female)

Similarly, another member reported:

> *Academic staff follow their job description, so academic staff should not be involved in administrative decisions which are not part of their roles, unless they are among the administrative team, head of the department or a member of the management team and department committees.* (Assistant Professor, male)

Both of these respondents do not see administrative decisions as a core part of their role unless they have administrative responsibilities. This view is also supported by a senior member, who shows how participation in administrative decisions in the department is limited to being a member of the department committees. However, as he is a senior manager at the faculty, he has a high level of participation in administrative decisions as a part of his role. He reported:

> *Academic staff make some administrative decisions through the department committees, and I am a member of some of them. Currently, I am a senior manager at the faculty, so I am dealing with many administrative issues.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, male)

Based on the qualitative findings, it can be concluded that the reason for this higher level of participation in teaching decisions compared to research decisions is the department's focus on teaching, rather than on research. Participation in administrative decisions depends heavily on the member's managerial position; those with managerial positions are far more likely to participate in administrative decisions, such as the Department Head.

7.2.3 Decision-making process

This section explores the dynamics of making Department A's decisions, in terms of how and where the decisions are made and who makes them. All five respondents agreed that the department's issues are identified at the department level where the

decisions are made, which is at the department meetings, either by a unanimity or by voting whenever there is unanimity does not exist. Some issues are referred to specialised committees to be studied carefully by the experts. Those issues are then included in a later meeting's agenda, along with the committee's recommendations. For example, one respondent reported:

> *The departmental decisions are made at the department meetings, whether the issues are raised by the Department Head, academic staff or students. The decisions are made by agreement of all the meeting attendees or by voting.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, male)

Another respondent explained the process of bringing the issues to the department meeting; the issues are handed to the Department Head first in a formal structure, who directs them to the special committee for further consideration, after which the issues are placed on the meeting agenda. This indicates the accessibility of the Head and a welcoming environment for members' ideas. She reported:

> *Academic members hand their suggestions to the Head of the department, who sends them to the specialised committees to study the cases; then, we discuss them at the department meetings.* (Assistant Professor, department level, female)

However, one respondent mentioned that not all decisions are made at the department meetings; some of them are decided upon by the department committees or the Department Head, which is against university rules:

> *In general, departmental decisions are started as a recommendation from the department committees or individual suggestions which both go through the department meetings as usual for a vote. However, in recent years, some decisions are made by individuals rather than at the meetings. There is an emerging culture in universities, especially some of them, in which the committees only make the decisions, or the Head of department, without discussing them in the meetings which is against the Higher Education rules. It is a shame that this is what is happening right now in our department.* (Assistant Professor, male)

This is the only member who mentioned the issue of making the decisions outside the meetings, which could reflect the distributed leadership through the department committees. From the observation findings, committee recommendations were placed on meeting agendas but were always approved by the meetings' chair. On the

other hand, this could be an agenda integrity issue, with where not all issues included in meeting agendas.

As far as members' contributions are concerned, all five respondents feel that their contributions are important and taken into consideration. The findings indicate a supportive and welcoming environment for member participation. Their contributions vary from suggesting new ideas to expressing their opinions regarding what is discussed at the meetings, both of which are welcomed at the meetings and by the Department Head. For example, a new female member reported:

> *Being new to an academic career, I am still developing my skills and observing what is going on in the department. However, so far in the meetings I have given some suggestions that have been accepted, and have disagreed with others' suggestions, and my opinion was appreciated.* (Assistant Professor, new member, female)

Similarly, an experienced member reported:

> *I am one of the department members and my participation is very important. I have suggested many issues and the department took my opinion on board, one of which is the development of the department programme. As a result of that, a committee has been established of which I am a member. Therefore, my voice is heard and welcomed when the contributions are valuable, regardless of who says them.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

Three out of five respondents emphasised the equal opportunity to participate in making department decisions; the only difference is the extra credit for each member. They mentioned different reasons that make members more active and influential. For example, a senior manager at the university level emphasised the equal participation opportunity for all members; however, he also noted some factors that make members more active, such as personal negotiation skills and having high positions, whether managerial or academic, all of which enhance the level of participation:

> *All members help in making the decisions. We cannot say there are groups in making the decisions, and if so these groups will fail because academic staff are skilled and have critical thinking. However, it could be that there are some influential members, whether by their managerial or scientific position, or the way they discuss the issues; however, within the way that the meeting is led, all members*

> *have the chance to participate.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

Another member mentioned the equal opportunity of all members to participate in discussions; however, having a strong argument which enhances the level of participation. A female member also mentioned the equal chance of participation for all members, although factors such as experience play a vital role in members' levels of participation:

> *All members at the department have an equal opportunity to participate. No one member takes over the decisions; however, members have different years of experience; the more experienced members have already known all the university procedures, enabling them to participate actively, while others are working to build their experience, so they listen to others' contributions.* (Assistant Professor, department level, female)

Although the opportunity for participation is equal, these factors resulted in a lack of participation from the members. For example, some members prefer to be silent so as to learn, with inexperienced members listening carefully to highly experienced ones in order to develop their knowledge and skills. This is one of the reasons for the high number of silent members observed during the meeting observations and complemented by the interview findings. Consider this exchange with a new female member said:

> *Question: Are you satisfied with your level of participation in teaching decisions?*
>
> *Response: Yes, but I am not satisfied with my colleagues' participation because some members exclude themselves from the process of decision making. The problem is that around 70% of the members attend the meeting and always agree with what is said with no contribution.* (Assistant Professor, new member, female)

Another reason for being silent, as reported by one respondent, related to the department and meeting leadership. The participant mentioned a problem with the voting system for some critical issues in which the Head of the department influenced the decision towards his desired outcome by making explicit the decision he wanted in his introduction and starting the voting, leading others to vote or agree with him. Although this issue was mentioned by one respondent, it complemented the observation analysis, in which a similar situation was observed. The Head provided a rich introduction to the issue – the question of renewing one of the

member's contracts – with the consequences for each decision and how academic staff could be affected if they decided to opt for a decision contrary to his own view. He then started the voting:

> *To be honest, all my suggestions to the department were brought in and discussed at the meetings. However, inside the meetings I stop at a point which has been growing in recent years, which is the mechanism of voting, where the Head of the department gives an introduction directing the decision to what he wants, resulting in a kind of silence among members, with silence meaning agreeing with what he said. This is not right; therefore, after the meetings some members have different opinions regarding the issue. Hence, on critical issues and especially issues such as appointing members in committees, renewing members' contracts and appointing new members, votes should be on paper or electronic to avoid embarrassment, because the culture of voting is still not prevalent or understood correctly.* (Assistant Professor, male)

The respondent suggested using the secret ballot in critical decisions to avoid embarrassment for the Head and other members. However, in some issues like the case observed in the meeting, the Head was the closest person to the facts and the one in charge of the department, so it might have been acceptable for him to relate his preferred decision. Other than that, directing a decision by the Head would not be acceptable. The same respondent again emphasised the issue of directing decisions in the meetings for a particular interest and how an unofficial group led the decisions:

> *Question: Who plays the critical role in making the decisions?*
>
> *Response: Of course, there is the issue of friendship and relationship; as you know, there is official and unofficial teamwork. The unofficial method, whether they have direct work interest or are just supporting each other in right and wrong deeds or personal relationships, plays a critical role in directing the decisions, then pushing the other meeting's members (the department) to accept the decisions. Therefore, the rest of members accept, looking for peace and avoiding being called 'bitchy'.* (Assistant Professor, male)

The other four respondents did not report a problem with the leadership practices undertaken by the Head of the Department. Conversely, they mentioned equality

between members and making the decisions in a consultative environment with no dominance by any one group:

> *The procedure followed in making departmental decisions is that the decisions are made by the department meeting, not the Head of the department, whether by members' agreement on the decisions or voting whenever there are different opinions. Therefore, the process of making the decisions is based on consultation and not dominance by some of the staff. Everyone participates in the decisions.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

Moreover, one respondent noted the equal and full opportunity to participate, in which each issue is given time for discussion; this encourages members to attend the meeting and be involved in the discussion, which reflects the healthy leadership practices:

> *I am one of the academic staff, so I do participate, like other colleagues. However, participation depends on the argument and its strength. Every issue takes its full time for discussion with equal participation from all members without any bias to anyone; participation in the decisions is thus crucial for academic staff, so they are keen to attend and participate.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, male)

As far the level of satisfaction regarding participation in decision making is concerned, four out of five respondents were satisfied with their current level of participation in teaching-related issues. The findings indicate that they participate actively in teaching decisions and that their recommendations and suggestions are taken into consideration. In addition, the findings reveal that academic staff have some room for autonomy to decide on teaching issues, such as the modules' references, teaching methods and assessments. One respondent reported:

> *There are many issues which can be decided upon regarding teaching matters. For example, I can change the modules syllabus, teaching strategies and assessment methods; however, I need to provide the department at the end of the semester with a full report including the justifications for these changes.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, male)

On the other hand, there was one respondent who was not satisfied with his current level of participation because he thought that there was not enough transparency about all the department's issues, with the more critical decisions made outside of department meetings:

> *Question: Are you satisfied with your level of participation in teaching decisions?*
>
> *Response: No, I am not satisfied with my level of participation, because I feel that the most critical issues are not included in the meeting agendas in order to discuss and make decisions on them; even though some important issues are included in the meetings, their full details are not provided, resulting in a lack of information about them which prevents us from participation and making the right decisions.*
>
> *Question: Do you desire more participation?*
>
> *Response: Yes, I do, because desiring no more participation means that I want to have a future that I have no opinion about, a situation that is not acceptable by academics who feel responsible for their work.*
>
> *Question: To what extent is your voice heard in the meetings?*
>
> *Response: It depends on the issue. On issues with a conflict of interest, members agree with the Head, wanting to avoid losing relationships with colleagues. However, on other issues with no conflict of interest, my contributions are very desirable.* (Assistant Professor, male)

The respondent's dissatisfaction is related to the exclusion of some issues with conflicts of interest and the lack of detail on issues, which are meeting agenda integrity problems. Apart from that, his contributions are welcomed on other issues where there is no conflict of interest. In terms of desired levels of participation, and despite the fact that the majority of respondents were satisfied with their current level of participation, four out of five respondents desired more participation; only one respondent did not, emphasising that his current participation was sufficient. The findings reveal two main reasons for desiring more participation: first, as noted above, to participate effectively in shaping the department's future, which includes the academic staff's futures, as they are part of the department. The second is an eagerness to improve the department through active participation, as a new female member indicated:

> *Question: Do you desire more participation in teaching decisions?*
>
> *Response: Yes I do.*
>
> *Question: Why?*

> *Response: Being a new member, I look forward to improving the department in any way, and the only way is by participating in the department's issues effectively.* (Assistant Professor, new member, female)

In terms of research-related decisions, all five respondents were not satisfied with their current level of participation and desired more, which is consistent with the survey findings. Analysis of the finding reveals a key reason for this dissatisfaction, which is the shortage of critical research issues in the department, as the department focuses more on teaching than on research:

> *Question: Are you satisfied with your level of participation in research decisions?*
>
> *Response: No. All issues are about students' proposals which are discussed by the special committee; there are no critical research issues to participate in.* (Assistant Professor, department level, female)

In terms of administrative decisions, all respondents consider administrative decisions as an extra workload which is not related to the main work of the department – teaching and research – which should be dealt with by those who have managerial responsibilities. However, they do not mind engaging in them whenever the department needs them. One respondent reported:

> *Question: Do you desire more participation in administrative decisions?*
>
> *Response: I am part of my department; whatever they ask I will do it.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

This respondent neither desires participation in administrative decisions nor seeks to avoid participation; rather, he accepts the need to participate if his the department managerial team asks him to play a role of that nature.

7.2.4 Gender

As far as gender participation is concerned, analysis of the findings reveals that the opportunity for participation is equal for both sexes. However, there are two key reasons that make male participation more influential; the first is the larger number of male members during votes, which could lead to more influence. The second is the dominance of men in managerial positions, such as the Department Head, who is always male. Other than that, gender participation is equal and depends on each member's personality:

> *Question: Is there any difference between male and female participation?*
>
> *Response: The opportunity to participate is for everyone; however, as the number of male academic staff is three times higher than female members, males will influence the decision making more than females because of the large number.*
>
> *Question: Despite the large number of males, is there any dominant gender group in making the decisions?*
>
> *Response: It is really a personal matter. Some members have strong arguments resulting in a strong scientific voice which enables them to influence the decisions, whether male or female. Female members, therefore, are more frank and explicit about their opinions than male members.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

A female member reported:

> *They are almost the same; the only difference is that the Head is always male. Other than that, male and female participation is equal. In the women's section, we experience high levels of participation.* (Assistant Professor, department level, female)

The respondents reported no differences in gender participation in Department A. These findings diverge with the survey and observation findings, which both showed evidence of lower levels of female participation. This divergence can be explained by the fact that the opportunity for participation is equal, but the level of actual participation differs for two reasons, as the interview findings suggested. The first is the larger number of male than female members. Second, being in a managerial position is far more likely for male members; the Department Head position is exclusively for males.

7.3 Analysis of Department B

The analysis of the interviews draws on three main issues that emerged from the previous chapter to explore them in greater depth: the different levels of participation according to decision areas, the decision-making process and the gap found between current and desired levels of participation and, finally, gender levels of participation. The next section first presents the respondent profile followed by the analysis of these three issues.

7.3.1 Respondent profile

Five respondents with different levels of seniority were interviewed in Department B, as shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Respondents in Department B

	Academic Position	Managerial Position	Gender
1	Professor	None	Male
2	Associate Professor	University Level	Male
3	Assistant Professor	Department Level	Male
4	Associate Professor	Faculty Level	Female
5	Assistant Professor	None	Female

7.3.2 Decision areas and levels of participation

The survey analysis revealed that the current level of participation was higher in teaching-related decisions than in research and administrative decisions. Findings from the observations also revealed that the discussion in the meetings focused more on teaching decisions than on the research and administrative decision areas. To explore these findings, respondents were asked about their participation in all three decision areas.

All five respondents emphasised teaching as the most significant area of decision making, which complements previous findings from the survey, where the highest level of participation was found in teaching decisions, and meeting observations, as the most commonly discussed issues were about teaching decisions. The key reason for this that emerged from the data analysis reflects the department's focus. All the participants described teaching as their main professional roles; most of their daily work is teaching related, reflecting the university's overall focus on teaching. One respondent stated:

> *There are so many teaching decisions in the department, such as deciding on the programme module and changing*

> *the assessment methods; however, I do not participate effectively in them.* (Assistant Professor, female)

This respondent emphasised the large number of teaching issues in the department, which reflects the departmental and university-wide focus on teaching. The reason for not participating effectively in them is discussed later in this chapter. Another respondent emphasised the large number of teaching issues at the department and university levels:

> *I actively participate in teaching decisions in the department, particularly those related to modules in general. As I am the university consultant on academic matters, I deal with many issues that come from our department and other departments.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

In terms of academic participation in research decisions, the survey findings indicated a very low level of current participation. This was complemented by the interview findings; all five respondents emphasised their limited participation in research decisions. The key reason for this that emerged from the data analysis is that the department does not engage actively in research projects; similarly, the university as a whole pays much less attention to research than to teaching. As a result, the level of participation was very low. One respondent reported:

> *Research decisions in the department are very limited, because the core of the academic staff's role is about teaching. At the university level in general, research matters are limited and depend largely on each member's effort. Usually, academic staff concentrate on their own individual research for promotion reasons. There is no initiative from the department with regard to research activities, which we are awaiting from the department.* (Professor, male)

The findings indicate that research is seen as a personal matter for career advancement reasons, with the department making no effort to encourage research activities and the university not paying a great deal of attention to research; this is clear from the annual assessment sheet, which does not include significant numbers of statements about research. As a result of the teaching focus in both the university and the department, participation in research was found to be very limited. One respondent reported:

> *Research decisions in the department are very limited; however, if the annual assessment sheet is updated to*

> *allocate more points regarding research activities, this will increase the opportunity to participate more in research decisions.* (Assistant Professor, department level, male)

In terms of academic participation in administrative decisions, all five respondents emphasised that participation in administrative decisions is not a part of academic members' roles, although members with managerial positions are expected to participate in such issues as part of those duties:

> *The role of academic staff in administrative decisions is very weak. The issues are brought to the meetings just to inform the staff about them. The department actually should not waste its and the academic staff's time in administrative decisions, such as allocating the teaching rooms, which should be dealt with by administrative staff in the department.* (Professor, male)

Another member also suggested not including administrative issues in department meetings because they are programmed decisions, so deciding upon them is straightforward. She stated:

> *Actually, administrative decisions are very routine, so participation in them is very limited. When the request meets the university regulations, there is no need to discuss them at the department meeting.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, female)

The findings indicate that administrative decisions are not preferred areas in which academic staff should participate, unless it is part of their role, such as Department Head and others with managerial responsibilities. The attachment of administrative decisions to the meeting agenda takes up meeting time which might be better invested in other, more critical issues. Based on the qualitative findings, it can be concluded that the reason for higher levels of participation in teaching decisions than in research decisions is the department's focus on teaching more than on research. Similarly, participation in administrative decisions was found to depend heavily upon members' managerial positions; those with managerial positions are more likely to participate in administrative decisions, while others without such positions were not especially interested in them.

7.3.3 Decision-making process

This section explores the dynamics of making Department B's decisions, in terms of how and where the decisions are made and who made them. All five respondents

reported that the majority of the department's decisions on issues are made at department meetings, either by unanimity or by voting when there is no unanimity. Following a linear process of making the decisions, by referring some of the issues to specialised committees to be studied carefully by experts first, those issues, along with the committee's recommendations, are then included in a main meeting agenda. For example, one respondent reported:

> *The issues attached to the meetings usually go through the department committees first. Their recommendation is then attached to the meeting agenda to finalise the decisions.* (Assistant Professor, department level, male)

Another respondent discussed the process of making decisions:

> *Decision making in the department follows the university rules, by which the department's academic and administrative issues should be made at the department meeting by unanimity or majority voting. Academic departments are the starting point for most of the decisions, so departments play a critical role when academic staff are active.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

Although departmental issues are largely considered in consultative fashion at department meetings, they are not treated equally; for example there is no opportunity to participate in some of them due to centralised decision-making processes. One of the respondents stated:

> *There are great hopes attached to department meetings where most issues are raised and decisions made in a consultative or voting manner, but this does not apply in all departments, where in some cases there is room for participation in some decisions, while other decisions are centralised. Therefore, the process applied to making decisions is not the same for all issues. This is the current situation, but we desire a greater level of participation.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, female)

Moreover, some of the department's decisions are not made at the department level but at higher levels within the university hierarchy, which is against university rules. An experienced member reported:

> *The problem occurs when some decisions have academic and administrative aspects at the same time. The decisions are then made at the university level, which is wrong because they are academic aspects and the department must make its decision first. However, sometimes when these*

> *decisions come to the department we stop them because it's a departmental matter and the decision should be made in the department, not at the faculty or university meeting level, because it is the department or a special committee's responsibility.* (Professor, male)

The respondent emphasised the problem of departmental decisions being made by other bodies in the university without consulting the department, with some decisions imposed by the top management level at the university, which is one of the implications of a centralised system. Despite a clearly stated structure for making departmental decisions, participation in the issues is not equal where some decisions are centralised.

As far as members' contributions are concerned, they vary from giving suggestions to expressing opinions and finishing the discussion. The findings indicate that experience and strong arguments are both considered to be facilitators for valuable contributions. For example, an experienced professor reported:

> *As a professor, and sometimes because I am the only one in the meeting due to the different absence reasons of other professors, meeting attendees look to what I would say on any issue where they have different opinions about it, so I do not talk unless I have an opinion that I am sure about and others will totally agree with it, or at least the majority of them will. Sometimes when there is disagreement about an issue, I am also asked to speak to stop the disagreement between two different opinions, so my decision is expected to solve the problem. Most of the time, the decisions that I participate in are approved by all other high meetings, because I used to be a Faculty Dean and held high managerial positions at the university, so I know the process of making academic, administrative and academic-administrative decisions.* (Professor, male)

Another respondent noted:

> *Of course, when I present an idea or opinion, I prepare myself with supporting evidence which always convinces others. Strong arguments lead to acceptance by others and I suggested a couple of issues which have been accepted and approved.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, female)

However, the findings also indicate that members' contributions are not always welcome. All five respondents emphasised that there are some factors which sometimes limit their contributions at meetings, most of which are leadership issues.

For example, three out of five respondents feel that their contributions are not always welcome, due to poor meeting management. One respondent reported:

> *The process of making departmental decisions is not conducted by the scientific method; there is no method for making decisions in the department. There is no agreed or fixed mechanism for listening to all members' voices. This has resulted in an unwillingness to participate among some members, because their contributions had not been listened to carefully and appreciated by others.* (Assistant Professor, female)

The respondent emphasised that not all members' voices are listened to, which causes inequality in terms of members' participation in the decisions, which in turn demotivates members when it comes to participation. Hence, poor meeting management in terms of not providing equal chances for participation played a vital role in limiting members' contributions. Another respondent reported:

> *The poor meeting management by the Department Head limits member participation, with the discussion time of one issue running out after only one or two speakers have given long and repetitive speeches. Good meeting management will allow all members to participate, but will ask them not to repeat what has been mentioned by others.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

Two out of five respondents mentioned the Department Head's behaviour of directing decisions, by which he prevents some members from expressing their opinions, leading to lower levels of participation. One respondent reported:

> *Another reason preventing members from effective participation is that, sometimes, there is an attempt to direct decisions in the interests of someone outside of the department, such as new members being considered for appointments, thus preventing some members – but not me – from participating in the decisions.* (Professor, male)

Similarly, a female member reported:

> *All members play a weak role in making the decision, except the Department Head and his deputies. Before the voting starts, the Head and his deputy imply their desired decisions, then all members follow him, so the issues are not presented neutrally, leading to poor participation. Actually, the discussion is not led properly, with one or two members consuming the meeting time with their contributions.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, female)

Moreover, the findings reveal other striking leadership factors that reduce the level of participation, which were noted by one of the respondents and are related to the integrity of the meeting agenda. He reported:

> *The department, when preparing the meeting agenda, should include the details for each issue, allowing the meeting attendees to read and, therefore, discuss them at the meeting effectively; otherwise, members' participation will not be effective or they will keep silent due to the lack of information about the issue being discussed. Moreover, sometimes there are some issues attached to the meeting minutes that have not been discussed at the meeting, which makes some members careless about participation because they know there are some decisions being made without their awareness. Really, the decisions that wanted to be delayed are included in the meetings for bureaucracy.* (Professor, male)

Another leadership issue was reported by a female respondent regarding the marginalisation of and non-welcoming environment for members' contributions. She reported:

> *The absence of a supportive environment for members' opinions leads the members to stay silent. All members have something to say; they are experienced members, but their responses can be disappointing. Opinions should not be treated with contempt and marginalised.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, female)

The final leadership issue is conflict between meeting times and lecture times, which regularly affects at meetings and leads to a poor level of participation. One respondent reported:

> *Some members have lectures at the time of the meetings, so they arrive late, and then cannot participate.* (Professor, male)

The findings suggest a number of reasons both for their silence and being passive at the meetings by the majority of the members, a phenomenon which was found in the observation data. The most significant reason is leadership practices and meeting management, as in the reasons outlined above. However, the findings reveal other personal factors that limit the level of participation among some of the members, as reported by three respondents. One cited the lack of participation skills:

> *There are some members who do not talk over the course of several meetings. They have not participated at all and when they wish to, they do not have the ability to participate because they have not been trained to do so. (Associate Professor, university level, male)*

Another respondent mentioned the lack of preparation for the meetings which could be a result of some of the leadership practices:

> *Some members come to the meeting without looking at the meeting's agenda or reading it in detail; therefore they cannot participate, having an empty head in relation to the meeting's issues.* (Assistant Professor, department level, male)

Finally, another respondent mentioned shyness in participating, which could be a result of being new to the department of a type of respect for other experienced members who taught those new members when they were students. Respect for teachers is a feature of Saudi culture. One professor reported:

> *Some members are shy in relation to other colleagues, especially new PhDs, so do not participate because they may wish to avoid conflict with other colleagues. At the department meeting, there are colleagues or previous students whom I taught and supervised before they were appointed in the department; they always agree with and support my decisions.* (Professor, male)

Despite the factors that hinder active participation by members, the findings reveal that there are some personal factors which play a significant role in enhancing the level of members' participation, such as academic position, experience and the ability to present a strong argument. One of the respondents stated:

> *There are some factors that enable members to play a critical role in making the department's decisions, which derive firstly from members' scientific positions, by which members with a higher position always have an important role in making and directing the decisions; secondly, from members with leadership characteristics whose opinions are always valuable and respected in making the decisions, regardless of their academic position; and finally, experienced members with wide knowledge which enables them to deliver valuable contributions that influence the decisions.* (Professor, male)

As far as the level of satisfaction regarding participation in decision making is concerned, the findings indicate that three out of five respondents were satisfied with

their current level of participation in teaching decisions and desired no more. One respondent reported:

> *I am satisfied, because the university rules ensure full participation for academic staff in their department decisions, either by giving their opinions on the issues, or by voting, or by offering their suggestions to the Department Head.* (Associate Professor, university level, male)

However, one of the three satisfied respondents was not satisfied with top levels' actions after department decisions were made; these decisions were sometimes delayed, even though the department had made the correct decisions, for reasons of centralisation. He reported:

> *What I am not satisfied with is the consequences of the right decisions we made based on our specialities in the subject, which sometimes clash with inexpert bodies at the university. As a result, the decisions are delayed but are then later approved. This is one of the drawbacks of the centralised and bureaucratic system, in that if departments make their decisions independently this problem would not occur.* (Assistant Professor, department level, male)

On the other hand, the findings indicate that two out of five respondents were not satisfied with their level of participation in teaching decisions. The key reason for their dissatisfaction is the lack of a welcoming environment for suggestions and expressing opinions, which is a leadership problem. One respondent reported:

> *My level of participation is not satisfactory in all three decision areas. Although the decisions are made at the department meetings, for some reason we do not express our opinions. There is an opportunity to handle some suggestions, but the suggestions handled never go outside the door.* (Assistant Professor, female)

Similarly, the other dissatisfied respondent mentioned the practical difficulties of delivering suggestions to department committees. The respondent reported:

> *Committees kill creativity. I have a suggestion about the curriculum but there is no chance of presenting it because participation on this type of issue is limited to the Curriculum Committee's members. I do not undervalue the committee's efforts, but what the committee comes up with should be discussed later in the department meetings to seek other members' agreement with the committee's decision. The decisions should not be the exclusive domain of the*

> *committee. As a result, I feel completely disengaged from the majority of the decisions, although they are very much related to our daily work. I can say that the decisions are largely made by the Department Head and some committees, without engaging all academic staff.* (Associate Professor, faculty level, female)

The opposite view regarding committees' roles was cited by another respondent, who emphasised that committee recommendations should be respected and approved by attendees at the main meetings. Overall, the findings suggest that there is no agreement on the department committees' roles regarding whether their recommendations should be approved or further discussed. The respondent reported:

> *In the meetings, I always support the recommendations when they come from specialised committees and I respect my colleagues' opinions in those committees, even though I do not participate in them. I participate in the meetings by supporting their recommendations because the issues have been studied by specialised members, and I do not allow unspecialised members or those who have not studied the issues to disagree with the committees' decisions. I always like members to talk about what they know; otherwise, they should respect other specialists who are more knowledgeable about the issues.* (Professor, male)

In terms of research-related decisions, all five respondents were not satisfied with their current level of participation and desired more, which is consistent with the survey's findings. Analysis of the findings revealed that the key reason for this dissatisfaction is the shortage of critical research issues in the department, as the department focuses more on teaching than on research, as described in the previous section. Moreover, all respondents consider administrative decisions to be extra work that is not related to the department's core work of teaching and research and believe they should be dealt with by those who have managerial responsibilities rather than being brought to meetings, as making those decisions depends on fixed rules.

7.3.4 Gender

Analysis of the findings indicates that there is a different point of view regarding male and female participation; the three male respondents feel that there is equal participation, whilst the two female respondents feel that male participation is dominant. One male respondent stated:

> *There is no difference between male and female participation in teaching and research work issues. The*

> *good thing in the department is that both genders discuss and participate in the decisions. Also, in terms of the department committees, where there are male and female members, the participation is equal; even though the discussion with females is by the communication system, we really experience effective female participation.* (Professor, male)

Another respondent noted the opportunity for equal participation; however, he acknowledged that males carry extra weight in terms of appointments to managerial positions at the university, which is a male-led institution. He reported the following:

> *Almost the same – the university regulations do not differentiate between males and females; however, there is a difference in appointing members within the university. In universities that have male and female members, like our university, you will find that the appointment to managerial positions is exclusively for males and this is justifiable as all issues are in the male section. There is an ambitious plan to appoint female faculty deans and department heads in the female section in the future. However, female voices are heard in the meetings and their voices are listened to more than male voices.* (Associate Professor, University Level, male)

By contrasts, the two female respondents cited a low level of participation by women compared to men. Both emphasised that the poor communication system is one of the key reasons for the low level of participation. In addition, some of the leadership practices hinder female participation, because chairing a meeting with in-person and telephone attendees requires some skill to treat all attendees equally. One respondent reported:

> *The decision is made in a consultative manner, but, with males only, the meeting is led in an unprofessional way; the issues are discussed but male opinions are taken into account more than female opinions. We are just listeners. The poor communication system could be a reason for that as we hardly hear them and they hardly hear us; or the reason could be the speedy process of decision making.* (Assistant Professor, female)

This respondent reported that there was unequal opportunity for gender participation, with a decision-making process she considered to be dominated by male members. The respondent referred to two main reasons; the poor management of meetings and the poor communication system. These findings accord with the survey findings, in which female levels of participation were found to be lower than male levels of

participation. Although the observation findings found the chair to be invitational, his invitations were not reported by female attendees. This divergence between observation and interview findings may be explained by the poor communication system, which prevents effective dialog between women on the phone and men in the room.

7.4 Discussion

In terms of decision areas and levels of participation, analysis of the findings reveals that respondents in both departments have similar points of view regarding their levels of participation across the three decision areas. In both departments, the current level of participation was higher for teaching-related issues than in research and administrative decisions. The findings indicate that in both departments teaching issues are the preferred decision areas for participation, because teaching is the major role of academic staff and those issues are closely related to their daily work, which is consistent with the findings from both the observations and the survey.

However, the findings indicate that there is no research culture in either department as part of a departmental vision, resulting in low levels of participation in research decisions in both departments, as research activities are seen as a personal rather than departmental matter. In both departments, research activities and decisions are limited; the departments do not engage actively in research projects, and members are more interested in working on their own research for career promotion reasons. Hence, the departments are not supportive of research, and the academic staff are not motivated to pursue it, as they feel that they have other personal commitments, such as promotion, which should be fulfilled first. The very similar results in both departments could be explained by the fact that both are part of the same university, which focuses more on teaching than research.

In contrast, participation in administrative decisions was not desired by either departments' members. Analysis of the findings indicates that administrative decisions are viewed as the role of the departments' managerial members, i.e. Department Heads and their managerial teams. The findings also reveal that academic staff have nothing to do with administrative decisions, as those decisions are straightforward and follow certain rules. However, in both departments, administrative decisions are attached to the meeting agenda to inform the members

about them and, more importantly, to follow the university rules, which state that all decisions must go through department meetings.

In terms of the decision-making process, the two departments display some similarities. The respondents in both agreed that departmental decisions are made at the department level in the department meetings, either by unanimity or by voting when unanimity cannot be reached. Both departments have a number of specialised committees whose role is to study issues carefully when they are referred to committees and their expert members by the Department Head. The issues, together with the committee recommendations, are then included in a main meeting agenda. The application of similar formal structures by both departments could be explained by the fact that they are both part of the same university and are governed by the same regulations.

However, some respondents in both departments emphasised the problems with making some departmental decisions outside the department meetings without all members' agreement, whether by departmental committees or Department Heads. Moreover, in both departments, but more clearly in Department B, Department Heads influence some decisions by making clear their preferred decisions and voting in meetings before the rest of the members, which several respondents indicated was a cue for other members to follow the Head's wishes.

As to meeting agendas, some respondents in both departments reported the problem of not including sufficient detail about issues, which prevented them from active participation. Meeting attendees should be provided with full information regarding the agenda in order to enable them to participate effectively. By not providing sufficient information, poor decisions could be reached and only a minority of attendees can participate, such as Department Heads and their managerial teams, because they are the only ones who are sufficiently aware of the issues.

In terms of members' contributions, Department A's respondents emphasised the supportive and welcoming environment for members' participation. In contrast, there is a limited opportunity for members' contributions in Department B due to certain leadership practices, such as the poor management of meetings in terms of consuming meeting time with only one or two members' contributions. The difference between the two departments is a result of the different leadership styles

applied by the Department Heads, with the Head of Department A engaged with and open to members' contributions, whilst in Department B's Head was less engaging. Although the Head of Department A was shown to be more engaging, the findings also showed that he did not always act that way. The different leadership styles applied by both Department Heads varied according to the type of issue (see Chapter Five, section 5.2.4). These different styles can be explained by the continuum leadership behaviour model (Tannenbaum and Schmidt, 1973), in which leaders behave differently in different situations, ranging from authoritarian to democratic or somewhere in between.

In both departments, certain influential members play an active role in making decisions. Two key reasons emerged from analysis of the findings; the first is experience, as experienced members are more likely to participate because they are more knowledgeable than other members, especially the newest members. The second is an academic member who is also on the managerial team, whether on the Department Head's team or chairing one of the departments' committees.

In terms of gender, both departments showed factors that enable more active participation from males than females. One key reason for this is that holding a managerial position, which is widely dominated by men, enables members to be close to all departmental issues. Moreover, the participation of female members in Department B was less than ideal because of the use of a poor communication system to connect female and male members during meetings, which was not a problem in Department A. Indeed, ensuring effective communication systems is one of the meeting chair's responsibilities, and thus reflects the quality of meeting management.

The findings indicate the complexity of the process of departmental decision making and of academic staff participation in that process. The findings help to explain certain themes that emerged in previous chapters, such as the greater level of participation in teaching-related decisions, the dominance of some members as opposed to the silence of others and gender differences. Although participants expressed different points of view on academic participation, it can be argued that, overall, participation in decisions depends on both the academic staff and on departmental leadership.

It has been shown that the departments and the university as a whole focus more on teaching than on research activities; therefore, academic staff were found not to participate in department-level research decisions or activities, though they are committed to their own research and to students' research. Despite the fact that some research projects were referred to the departments for participation in decision making, the departments and consequently their staff were not keen on such participation, because there was no culture of research in the departments, a situation that can be found in other universities worldwide. However, in terms of administrative decisions, the reason for low participation was the unwillingness of members to participate in such issues except where they were part of the members' responsibilities, as in the case of members with managerial positions. The preferred decision area involved teaching-related decisions, because teaching is at the core of the academic's role. However, current participation was not satisfactory for a combination of reasons.

The findings suggest that both departments' leadership and academic staff play roles in simultaneously limiting and enhancing levels of participation in decision making. In terms of limiting participation, poor management of meetings, along with a lack of motivation on the part of the academic staff and a less than supportive environment by at least one Department Head, can lead to lower participation. Indeed, some academic behaviour can be addressed by good leadership; for example, shyness can be overcome by actively inviting members to contribute to discussions. Additionally, the problem of late arrivals to and early departures from meetings could be solved by arranging lectures which do not conflict with meeting times. Where participation skills are lacking, they could be enhanced by providing members with training courses.

On the other hand, some of the disappointing leadership practices could be overcome by the academic staff themselves by self-motivation and thoroughly preparing for the meetings, including the preparation of strong arguments. These steps could help to increase the level of participation, but some leaders' practices should still be reconsidered, such as the exclusion of issues and the direction of academic staff towards desired decisions. Finally, on the issue of gender participation and the way each group sees the other's participation, the findings indicate that both genders faced some difficulties in being active members, but females had extra problems,

such as the poor communication system between males and females during meetings in one of the departments, a drawback that has not been acknowledged by male academic staff, since the chairs of the meetings are male. In addition, the vastly more frequent appointment of males to managerial positions makes male participation more influential, though this situation is currently seeing some change, as one of the participants observed.

7.5 Summary

The interview data have helped to provide insight into the dynamics of decision-making in both departments, along with explaining themes that emerged in previous chapters. By and large, both departments were similar, despite a few leadership differences. The evidence shows the strong influence of the shared organisational culture on the departments, compared to the influence of the leadership style applied by the two department heads. In the following chapter, findings from the observation, survey and interviews are further discussed.

Chapter 8: Discussion and overall conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the overall research outcomes based on a synthesis of evidence from the four key sources of data collection and analysis (documents, observations, questionnaire survey and interviews) in order to provide an overarching picture and deeper insights into departmental decision making at this Saudi university. A summary of the overall research outcomes is provided first, followed by a discussion of their significance above and beyond what is already known from the literature. There is also a reflection on the extent to which the research outcomes have achieved the study's aims and answered the research questions. This is followed by the limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter presents some implications for professional practitioners and policy makers and some suggestions for further research.

8.2 Summary of overall research outcomes

The results from the research data were synthesised and discussed in relation to the dynamics of departmental decision making, focusing on the three major themes that emerged from the data analysis. The first theme covered the process of making departmental decisions, in terms of who made them, how they were made and where. The second covered the issue of inclusion of members. The third covered the management of meetings and its influence on academic staff participation.

8.2.1 Decision-making process in academic departments

The findings revealed the dynamics of making departmental decisions, in terms of how decisions were made, who made them, what contributed to them, and the impact of leadership style, which resulted in different levels of participation by academic staff. The document analysis showed that decisions were made on almost all the issues in the meeting minutes; this was confirmed by the observational findings, according to which decisions were made on all issues on the agenda that required decisions, which suggests that the major aim of the meetings was to make decisions, although this was not stated clearly in the agendas. However, academic departments' decisions were made in various stages and in various ways, both inside and outside their main meetings, either by unanimity, by voting when unanimity was not reached

or made individually and announced by Department Heads at meetings, with no contributions invited from the members of the meeting.

The results of the documentary analysis and observational data indicated that three types of decision were made in academic departmental meetings: procedural, contrived collegiate and impromptu decisions (see Chapter Five, section 5.3). The process of making the decisions and the participatory role of academic staff in making them differed from one type of issue to another. Figure 8.1 shows the opportunity for academic staff participation in departmental decisions, depending on the type of decision, so that, for example, the opportunity for participation decreased in the case of procedural issues and gradually increased in the case of contrived collegiate decisions, at least for those participants who were members of the departments' committees; full opportunity for all members to participate was found in the case of impromptu issues.

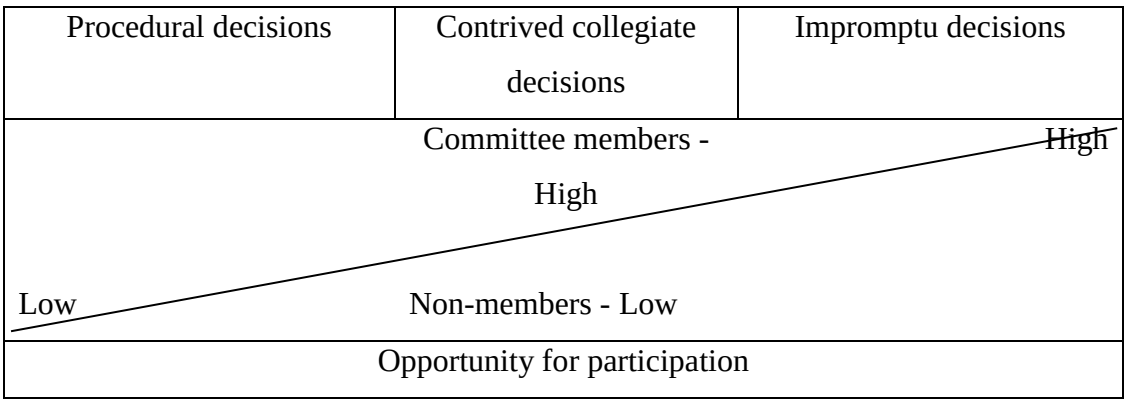


Figure 8.1: Probability of academic staff participation

Analysis of meeting minutes (see Chapter Four) revealed that most of the decisions were yes-or-no decisions, which was confirmed by the observation data (see Chapter Five), demonstrating that the majority of the issues were procedural and could be decided by following certain guidance and procedures. In both departments, procedural decisions were made by Department Heads, who announced them in the meetings with no input from academic staff. As procedural decisions followed straightforward directions, there were no inputs from academic staff that indicated a desire to participate more deeply in these decisions; in fact, academic staff were actually unwilling to participate in decisions on such issues, according to the interview data. As that interview data also revealed, procedural decisions consumed

a significant amount of the members' valuable time, with members acting only as listeners during meetings; the only staff benefit consisted of being informed about what was occurring in the department.

Almost all procedural decisions were administrative decisions; in both departments, members were not keen to participate in administrative decisions. It was not a preferred decision area (Dykes, 1968) because participation in those decisions was the responsibility of the managerial members of the departments, such as Department Heads and their managerial teams. However, as the overall structure of the university affected both departments (Lee, 2007), administrative decisions were attached to each meeting's agenda to inform the members about them and, more importantly, to follow the university rules, which stated that all decisions had to go through the department meetings, even though deciding on them was straightforward and followed certain rules. This was one explanation for the generally low level of respondents' participation revealed by the survey's results, as there were very few issues that required staff participation and contributions in either department. The survey result was confirmed by the interview data, which showed that participants were not satisfied with the large number of procedural issues taking up so much time in the department meetings with no contributions from the meeting attendees.

In terms of contrived collegiate decisions, both departments have a number of specialised committees. The Department Head is responsible for appointing members to committees. These members are experts who are expected to provide useful recommendations on the issues referred to them. These issues, along with the committee's recommendations, are then included in on a main department meeting agenda. Therefore, those academic staff who were among the committee members were very involved in making this type of decision, while the majority of staff were not involved. This type of decision was made by the committees and announced by the Department Heads with no input from the meeting attendees either requested or welcome, as they were not invited to participate. It was noted that both departments have a similar formal structure, which could be explained by the fact that they are part of the same university (Lee, 2007).

Most contrived collegiate decisions were research-related decisions. The meeting minutes that were analysed revealed that almost 45% of all issues on the agendas in

both departments were research issues; this was confirmed by observational findings, which showed that over 50% of all issues that arose in all observed meetings were related to research. The use of more than one method helped to validate the findings by triangulation; therefore, it can be argued that both departments paid attention to research activities in meetings. However, regardless of the large number of research issues discussed and decided on at meetings of both departments, the findings made clear that the lowest levels of participation were in research-related decisions. This indicated that there was no research culture in either department as part of a departmental vision, as was found in several Scottish universities (Holligan et al., 2011). The results of the survey were confirmed by the interview results, in which participants emphasised the low levels of participation in research-related decisions.

Three key factors emerged from the interview data to explain both the large number of research decisions made at the meetings and the lower levels of participation found in the survey. Firstly, although the number of research issues was large, only those members who were on the research committees were involved in making decisions on them. Secondly, despite the large number of research-related issues, there were no research projects in which the departments' members could participate; almost all of them were related to PhD students' proposals, which were part of the students' degree requirements and, ultimately, of the staff's duties.

Thirdly, although very few research projects were referred to the departments by the university, academic staff were not willing to participate in them, because the returns from engaging in research projects were not sufficiently valued by the university. Members were thus more interested in writing their own research for career promotion reasons (Dykes, 1968). Research activities and decisions were limited and widely seen as personal rather than departmental matters, with no active engagement by the departments in research projects. Hence, as there was not a supportive environment for research in either department, the academic staff were not motivated to pursue research at the departmental level. Academics worked on meeting other personal commitments, such as promotion, which was a priority for them.

The last type of decision is the impromptu decision. These were discussed and made in the meetings, and there were at least ostensible opportunities for participation by all members. The documentary analysis and observational data revealed that very

few issues were subject to this type of decision; those discussed covered a variety of issues, including teaching, research and administration matters. Regardless of the low number of issues addressed in this type of decision, the findings provided evidence of different levels of participation by academic staff and of different practices by both Heads in dealing with these issues. There were a number of reasons for this, which are discussed below within the theme of meeting management.

Data from the meeting minutes showed that almost 45% of the total issues on the meeting agendas in both departments were teaching issues. This finding was translated in both departments into higher-level scores on current participation compared to the other two decision areas, although the levels of participation in teaching decisions were not high in absolute terms. In both departments, the findings showed that teaching issues were the preferred decision areas of participation, because teaching was the major role of academic staff and those issues were thus closely related to their daily work. This result was consistent with and explained the findings from the observations and the survey. The findings indicated that a culture of teaching was dominant in both departments, which showed the teaching focus of the university (Smith, 2005). Thus, it was not surprising to find academics participating more in teaching-related decisions in department meetings, as teaching is the core of their work and one of the two key services that the university provides. The very similar results in both departments could be explained by their being departments of the same university, which focused more on teaching than on research.

The findings also revealed that staff were less likely to participate in decisions related to students' research, unless they were members of the Research Committee. In addition, the findings showed low levels of academic staff participation in administrative decisions, because these were seen as administrative responsibilities that should be handled by the managerial staff without input from the academic staff.

8.2.2 Inclusion of members

The findings included the measurement (see Chapter 6) of actual and desired levels of academic staff participation in three decision areas: teaching, research and administration. The results showed low levels of actual participation in all three areas in both departments. It was also shown that the lowest actual level of

participation was in research-related decisions, followed by administrative decisions, then teaching decisions, which scored the highest current level of participation. This was generally confirmed by the observational findings, which revealed limited opportunities for participation because most of the decisions were procedural or made outside the departmental meetings, either by the Head or by the departments' committees as contrived collegiate decisions.

In stark contrast to actual participation, the findings showed that more participation was desired by academic staff across all three decisions areas. The current levels of participation fell short of the desired levels in all items in each of the three decision areas in both departments, with significant differences between actual and desired levels of participation found in all decision areas in both departments, according to the Wilcoxon signed-rank test results which showed that desired levels of participation were significantly higher than current levels. Therefore, using the Alutto and Belasco (1972) model to measure the discrepancies and differences between actual and desired levels of participation, it was found that current participation in all decision areas fell into the decisional deprivation category, in which participants feel they are not as involved in the decision-making process as they would like and want to participate more. The highest level of decisional deprivation was found in research-related decisions, followed by administrative decisions, and the lowest levels found in teaching decisions.

However, the gap between current and desired levels of participation varied according with different items, with the narrowest gap between current and desired levels of participation occurring in staff-related decisions in both departments; the widest gap between current and desired levels of participation was found in department-related decisions. This result revealed the limited opportunity for participation in departmental decisions, which could be the result of both the university's centralised system and the leadership styles employed in both departments.

Generally, the overall similarities between the results of both departments as to current and desired levels of participation could be explained by the fact that both departments are located in the same university, and are thus subject to the same institution-wide regulations and cultural practices. However, the findings did evince

a slight difference between the two departments in terms of current participation, which could be the result of the different management styles applied by the respective Department Heads (Morozumi, 2015), as decisions of similar issues were decided upon differently by the Department Heads as was shown in the observation findings.

However, the findings also showed that both departments contained some influential members who played an active role in decision making, a factor also found in other studies such as Morozumi's (2015). Hence, a line could be drawn between the vast majority of academic staff in both departments who were passive in the meetings, as demonstrated by observational data and confirmed by interviews, and the small minority who were active in making the decisions (see Chapter Four, section 4.2). Interview findings revealed two key reasons for this phenomenon. The first was experience (Truong et al., 2017), which affected participation in that experienced members were more likely to participate because of being more knowledgeable than other members, especially new members. The second reason was positional power (Yukl and Falbe, 1991) exercised by being on a managerial team, whether on the Department Head's team or as chair of one of the departmental committees (Kovač et al., 2003).

The small minority of active members included the both Departments Heads, who were the most active members in the meetings, playing multiple roles according to Belbin's team role theory (2010) and Williams's functional theory (1984). The other active members played multiple or single roles, as described by both models, in making the decisions, mainly by proposing new ideas or building on others' suggestions. Observational results provided evidence of a dominant minority of members who participated effectively and influenced the decisions, a result which was confirmed and explained by the interview data. Observation of four sequential meetings helped to identify the influential and passive members in all meetings.

The vast majority of meetings attendees were passive. Of the total number of staff members observed in the meetings, 77% in Department A and 75% in Department B were passive, which helped explain why the survey results showed low levels of participation. Their passivity might be accounted for by the large number of attendees. This number was twice and three times in Departments A and B

respectively the number recommended for decision-making meetings, which is five (Romano and Nunamaker, 2001). Of course, this factor reduced the opportunity for participation, as there was not enough time for all members to contribute on each issue. Thus, having no opportunity for participation was one reason for the low levels of participation in departmental decisions. Another possible reason for low participation was the eligibility criteria for attendance at the departments' meetings, which allowed only PhD holders among the departments' members to attend, but omitted any elements of team building or role specification, so that members had no clear role in the meetings. However, the findings also showed that some individual characteristics prevented members from participating, such as being new members with no experience of the decision-making process.

As to gender participation, most members were passive in both departments, but it was observed that male participation was more frequent than female participation. Also, male contributions had more influence on the decisions because their participation included proposing and building, while female participation in Department A consisted only of asking for clarification. This was confirmed by the survey findings according to which male participants in both departments scored higher levels of current participation than females in all decision areas. At the same time, females scored higher levels of desired over actual levels of participation, showing that their satisfaction levels were lower than those of male participants. This result was confirmed by observational data findings, according to which female participation was lower than male participation, though not all male participation levels were high in absolute terms.

The findings suggested some factors that explain why men were more active than women. The first was occupying a managerial position, a status widely dominated by men, as found by other studies worldwide (Aiston, 2014), and which enabled them to participate actively through proximity to all the departments' issues. Moreover, the findings revealed a poor communication system between female and male members in the meetings, at least in Department B; therefore, female participation was not always what it could have been due to technical problems, which was not the case in Department A. This problem reflected the quality of meeting management, as ensuring an effective communication system that connects all meeting attendees is an essential task to be undertaken by meetings chairs. It also reflected broader social

and cultural issues, as the university's centralised system of decision making and in general served as a microcosm of the broader system and culture, in which more men are in managerial positions in the country's public sector; women are simply not expected to participate actively in most Saudi contexts.

8.2.3 Management of meetings

Academic staff were more likely to participate in impromptu decisions; however, the management of meetings influenced the levels of academic staff participation, even in this area. Management differed from department to department and from one issue to another; for example, the Department Heads sometimes made the decisions themselves, while on other issues they welcomed participant input. Consequently, there were no fixed processes for making decisions in either department, such as those suggested in the literature by Simon (1977) and Bratton et al. (2010).

The Department Heads performed differently by applying different mechanisms and leadership styles in making decisions according to the type of issue or situation, a tendency which falls within the continuum of the leadership behaviour model proposed by Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973). Both Heads, on some occasions, used their authority to make decisions on their own and simply telling members of their decisions, while on other occasions they offered members more freedom to make decisions, such as those made by the departments' committees. Between these two extreme types of decision-making behaviours, the Heads behaved variously on other issues, which resulted in dissatisfaction among some members, as they did not understand the basis on which the Heads used their authority.

Notably, there were no rich discussions in the meetings, as most of the issues required only procedural or contrived collegiate decisions. In reality, most decisions were actually made outside the departmental meetings either by the Department Heads or by committees, although they were included in the meeting agendas. For bureaucratic reasons, these issues had to go through the departmental meetings to follow university procedures. The limited opportunity for participation on some issues could explain the low current levels of participation in departmental decisions indicated in the survey findings.

However, some respondents in both departments were not satisfied with certain aspects of meeting management, especially in relation to the process of making

departmental decisions. For example, the interview data revealed, as an explanation for the low levels of participation, that some important issues which required discussion were actually made outside the departments' meetings without being included in the agenda. As a result, staff felt demotivated to participate in decisions on other issues, as their input was not welcome on important matters. Such leadership behaviour, which appears to have affected the level of members' participation, could not have been observed simply by attending the meetings; this is another demonstration of the value of using mixed methods to gather evidence.

The observational results revealed another practice of the chairs. For example, both chairs on a few occasions welcomed members' contributions and encouraged passive colleagues to participate by explicitly asking for their views, thus playing the co-ordinator role in the Belbin model. However, despite being invited to participate, only a small minority of members actually offered their views. There were many reasons for this. One was the poor management of meetings; for example, the chair of Department B did not control members' contributions, but allowed one or two members to consume all the meeting time with their contributions, leaving no time for others to contribute, which also explained the longer meetings in Department B than in Department A. This situation was confirmed by interview data, as participants emphasised the poor management of contributions in Department B. Such behaviour limits the opportunity for participation, providing another reason for the generally low levels of participation.

Another example is the Department Heads' influence over some of the decisions, achieved through selling their preferred decisions and voting first, before the rest of the members, which exerted subtle pressure on other attendees to follow the Head's wishes. This behaviour was observed in meetings of both departments and was confirmed by the interview data, in which members emphasised the use of authority by both Department Heads to obtain their desired decisions. The results showed different ways of making departmental decisions applied by each Department Head. Although this appeared to be a problem for some members, it could be explained by the continuum of leadership behaviour, whereby heads use their authority on some occasions by responding to a given situation in a way that is more restrictive, while allowing areas of freedom in other situations, based in all cases on the Heads' own perceptions of each situation (Tannenbaum and Schmidt, 1973).

Another management issue of concern to some of the respondents was meeting agendas; the findings showed that there was a problem of not including sufficient detail about the issues, meaning that members could not participate as actively as they may have wished. Failure to provide full information about agenda items prevented effective staff participation, resulting in poor decisions or participation limited to those who were close to the departments' issues, such as the Heads and their managerial teams, as they were the only ones who were aware of all the relevant details. Provision of these details was found to be an important factor in facilitating academics' participation. Another practice accounting for the low level of participation was bringing up new issues at the meetings that were not included in the agenda, so that members, particularly in Department A, were not prepared to discuss these issues, resulting in a lack of participation.

Therefore, leadership practices either limited or enhanced members' contributions. A supportive and welcoming environment for member participation within both departments would enhance members' contributions. Practices that limit opportunities to contribute were certainly observed, such as poor meeting management in Department B, in which meeting time was consumed by only one or two members' contributions. The difference between the two departments resulted from the different leadership styles applied by the Department Heads, despite their operating within the same university (Morozumi, 2015), in that the Head of Department A engaged with and welcomed members' contributions much more than the Head of Department B.

The process of decision making can be considered by linking it to its definitions. Decision making can be defined as the process by which an objective will be achieved by selecting a satisfactory option, while participation in decision making could be defined as the process by which organisational decisions are shared by superiors and subordinates. It is reasonable to conclude that some of the leadership practices in both departments when making departmental decisions – such as selling a decision made by leaders to the members, which might not represent that satisfactory option – have not met the terms of these definitions. Participation in the decisions was also limited by failure to share the issues with the departments' members, which occasionally occurred in both departments. By not conforming to the central tenets found in definitions of the process of decision making and

participation in that process, the participatory level in departmental decisions was found to be unsatisfactory.

One of the "main leadership behaviour associated with leadership effectiveness at departmental level… (is) allowing the opportunity to participate in key decisions/ encouraging open communication" (Bryman, 2007,p.697), which is a crucial behaviour for organisational success (Singh, 2009). The lack of an engaging environment established by leaders was one of the reasons for the passive behaviour of some members, even though engaging staff has been reported as providing successful educational management by facilitating the process of making decisions (Mehta et al., 2010).

However, there were some challenges that both departments faced. For example, the leadership and management roles of the departments were restricted due to the university's structure. Purely administrative decisions, such as the departments' budgets and the appointment of new members, appeared to be entirely out of the hands of even the Department Heads, which is an example of managerialist leadership (Bush, 2011).

8.3 Significance of the overall research outcomes

The overall research outcome suggested that the levels of academic staff participation in departmental decisions were strongly influenced by aspects of organisational and departmental structure and departmental leadership; therefore, academic staff participation was seen as a reaction to both leadership influences and individual factors. The research shed light on the dynamics of making departmental decisions, the different levels of participation in the three decision domains and the different levels of academic staff participation, enabling us to understand the factors surrounding the departmental decision-making process in the departments studied at this Saudi university.

The study's contribution includes five areas of originality, above and beyond the existing literature. The first is its methodological contribution. The research makes a significant and original contribution to the theoretical understanding of decision making in the context of a Saudi Arabian university by applying new theoretical approaches that include the cultural perspective, leadership styles resulting in different levels of engagement and the role of individuals within teams. These

aspects were then synthesised to provide a highly detailed understanding of an under-researched context by applying Western theory and methodology to the Saudi context. This procedure provided new knowledge of the decision-making process in higher education in Saudi Arabia, a subject on which little research has been completed. Moreover, the contribution is valuable not only for the Saudi context, but also within the wider sphere of Islamic and Middle Eastern culture for its broad understanding of decision making within Islamic and Middle Eastern higher education systems in general.

The second contribution consists of a deeper understanding of leadership and its impact on the decision-making process. The findings revealed that there were three types of decision (see Figure 8.1), across which the probability of academic staff participation differed; each of them reflected a different leadership style. It could be argued that these different processes of making decisions and different levels of opportunity for participation were generic, forming a theoretical model that could cover all theories of leadership, but was largely associated with the top-down Saudi culture with its higher power distance, as per Hofstede, in which participation levels are highly circumscribed. However, when viewed as individual facts, the findings actually revealed a low power distance on some occasions, as when Department Heads invited passive members to vote, encouraged others to make suggestions and delegated responsibilities to committee members. In this light, Hofstede's model is very general and cannot explain differences within the same culture and context. Also, times have changed since Hofstede's work was conducted. Many changes in the direction of more participation and democratic engagement, although slow and gradual, are currently taking place in Saudi Arabia at different levels, political, economic and cultural.

The third contribution is related to understanding the significance of gender differences, thanks to obtaining male and female perspectives on the departmental decision-making process in the Saudi higher education context. This had not been previously undertaken, largely for cultural reasons. However, the use of appropriate methods made it feasible to obtain both gender perspectives for the first time in this context. The research contributed by comparing male and female perspectives on departmental decision making, with the findings providing evidence that female participation was lower than that of their counterparts. This lower level can be linked

to the wider political structure in which most governmental positions are held by men, as well as to the wider society and culture which regards men as being responsible for the entire family by working to earn money, with females acting as housewives and mothers and ideally not engaging in paid work. In this regard, Islamic teaching emphasises that males are responsible for their wives' living expenses even when the wives are working and earning money. Hence, the lower level of participation was not only a reflection on the departments and university in question, but also the wider social, cultural, political and religious values of Saudi Arabia. The research, therefore, provided evidence in the sphere of higher education decision making which illustrated a broader cultural and political way of thinking.

The fourth contribution regards innovative approaches to data collection. The research employed mixed methods and combined four data collection methods. Document analysis, observation, questionnaires and interviews were all used to provide a rich understanding of the departmental decision-making process in a higher education setting. There have been very few examples of research using similar methods to investigate decision making in higher education. This approach is applicable to research into this subject from a wider perspective, outside the Saudi Arabian context; hence, the present study offers global possibilities.

The four methods were used sequentially to support each other through facilitation to provide valid evidence. Documentary research and observational findings were triangulated to answer the first research question, and both, along with the focus group interview, facilitated the design and sharpened the focus of the questionnaire. The questionnaire findings answered the second research question, and were triangulated with both the observations and the interview findings. Interview findings complemented the findings of the previous methods and explained the themes emerging from those methods to answer the third research question.

The evidence from these different sources largely converged, as the observation findings confirmed the document findings, while the survey findings supported the observation findings. However, there was some divergence between interview data and observation data, in that the explanations of some interviewees regarding leadership practices and gender participation diverged from what was observed. For example, the invitational environment in the meetings was not always what it was

observed to be, according to the respondent who noted that decisions were directed by unofficial meetings outside the department's weekly meetings. Furthermore, female participation was seen by male members as being equal to male participation, which diverged from both the survey findings and the female point of view in the interview data. This divergence could be caused by unconscious bias among respondents, which is not uncommon when comparing questionnaire and interview data with observation data of the same phenomenon. This divergence of evidence showed how critical it was to combine methods and thus to obtain more accurate results than could be gained by using any method on its own.

The fifth contribution is in the creation of a new conceptual model of participatory decision making in Saudi higher education and similar contexts. I label this the Culturally Integrated Model of Participatory Decision Making. Its component parts are illustrated in Figure 8.2, which collates the research findings and their original contribution by showing the complexity of the process of departmental decision making and the factors which influence the level of academic staff participation. The conceptual model presents two influential features affecting the level of academic staff participation: university and departmental levels. It also indicates how this cultural integration at both university and departmental levels has the potential to impose constraints, or conversely open up opportunities for more participatory decision making, depending on the complex interplay between conservative leadership influences and structures versus those more sympathetic to democratic change. The conflation of these key elements provides an original contribution to the theoretical understanding of decision making in the higher education system in particular, and within Islamic and Middle Eastern culture more generally.

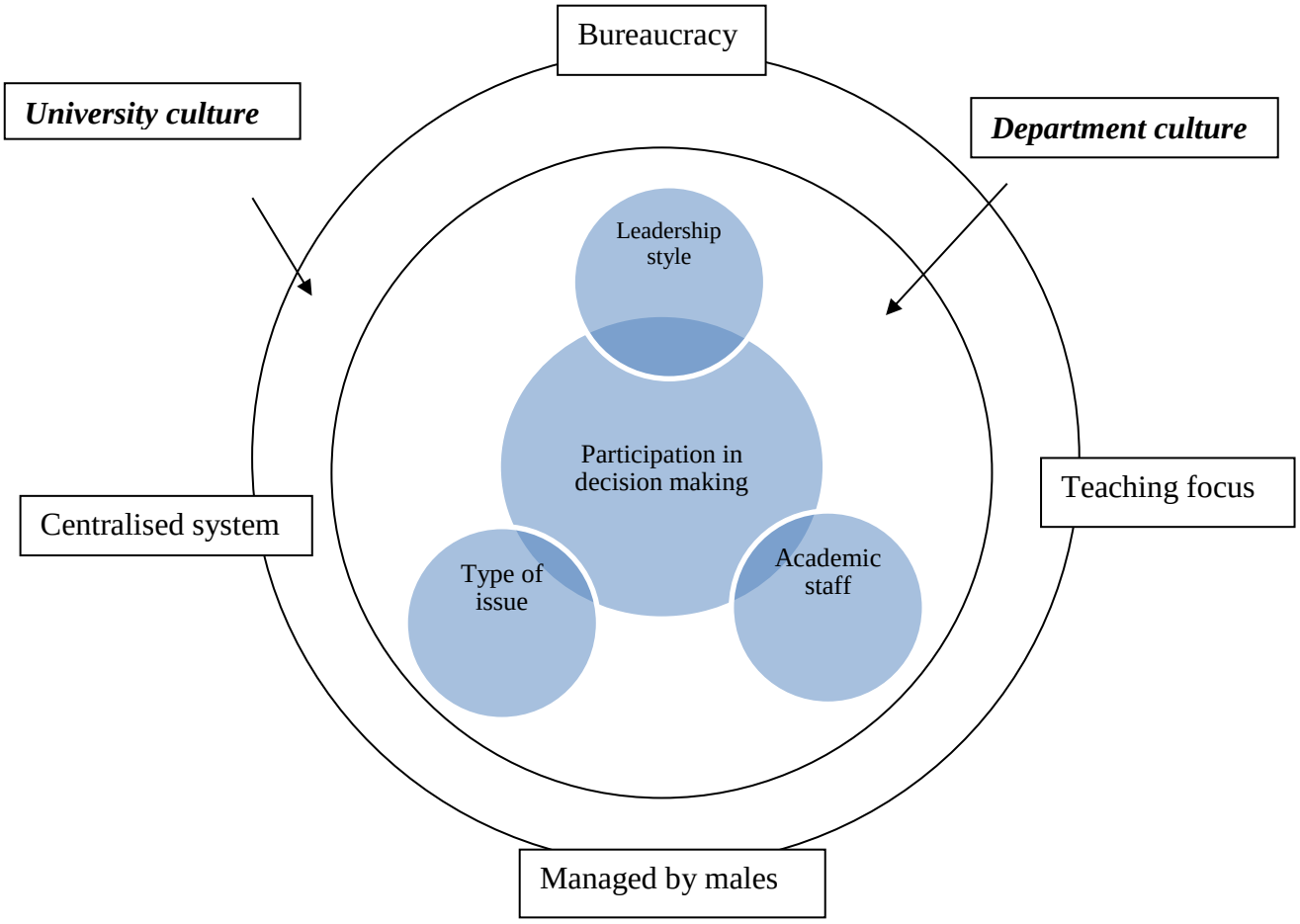


Figure 8.2: A Culturally Integrated Model of Participatory Decision Making

The new conceptual model shows that the university culture influenced the process of decision making at the departmental level in four aspects: the university's centralised system, bureaucracy, management by males at the university and the university's overall focus on teaching. Some of the features of formal models (Bush, 2011) were recognised in the selected case study, in which hierarchical and bureaucratic elements have been demonstrated.

In terms of centralisation, the top management levels of the university are in charge of some issues specifically related to the departments, such as financial matters, which thus limited participation by the departments and their members. Moreover, the appointment of new staff to academic departments was also determined by the most senior management, further limiting the effectiveness of academic staff participation in departmental decisions. As a result of this centralised system, decision making was highly bureaucratic, in that all departmental decisions in all three decision domains – teaching, research, and administration – had to be approved by the university's top management. This illustrated the university's hierarchical

authority structure (Bush, 2011). Furthermore, the university's rules and regulations had to be followed by all academic departments, another expression of the bureaucratic model.

In addition, the university's dominant focus was on teaching, which was reflected in the focus of both departments. Because members were interested in the teaching issues that formed the main core of their roles, they were involved more in these issues than in research issues, the latter being limited to matters concerning postgraduate students. Finally, the dominance of males in higher management positions in the university was reflected in both departments, in which the majority of managerial positions were held by males; consequently, male participation and voices were more prominent. It could be said, therefore, that the general university culture had a direct impact on the process of departmental decision making and on member participation.

In terms of departmental culture, the conceptual model shows that, besides the general influence of university culture on the decision-making process and the level of academic participation, there were certain specific factors affecting these processes and academics' participation in them, at both the departmental and individual levels. The conceptual model shows three factors which together either enhanced or limited academic levels of participation in departmental decisions: leadership style, type of issue and academic staff.

8.3.1 Normative applications

Here, the normative applications of the three factors are considered. With regard to the first factor (leadership style and meeting management), welcoming and supportive leaders helped to increase the participation levels of academic staff, whereas an unwelcoming environment demotivated staff from participating in decisions. Leadership practices and management skills were also found to exert a critical influence by enhancing or limiting the level of academics' participation. For example, providing sufficient information about the issues to be discussed helped to increase the chance of member participation; the converse was also true.

Moreover, how and where departmental decisions were made were other factors that affected academics' opportunities for participation. The decision-making mechanism applied by Department Heads influenced the level of staff participation, in that

unclear decision-making processes limited participation, and made staff feel demotivated and dissatisfied. Additionally, when critical departmental decisions were made outside the department meetings, it reduced the value of the meetings and demotivated staff from participating in other decisions, as their views were not desired on what they considered the important ones.

Meeting management required certain skills to ensure equal opportunities for all meeting attendees to express their views on the issues discussed. However, poor management of meetings prevented this from happening, by chairs' either failing to manage the time for staff contributions or dedicating most of the meetings' time to a minority of issues, leaving insufficient time for members' contributions on other issues. Another important management skill was communicating with all meeting attendees, especially those who attended the meetings by phone, which is by definition all the women. Therefore, it can be concluded that the leadership style employed directly enhanced or limited the level of staff participation in departmental decisions.

The second factor is the type of issue, as it was demonstrated that the level of academic participation depended on this factor. For example, the main focus of both departments was on teaching, reflecting the general university focus, so the highest level of participation was found in teaching-related decisions, as opposed to research and administrative decisions. This result is consistent with many other studies. For example, Morozumi (2015) found that academic staff participated more in teaching issues as these were relevant to their central roles and they were thus expected to participate effectively when they arose. However, despite the higher level of participation in teaching issues than in the other two domains, the current level of participation in teaching issues was not satisfactory, as staff desired more involvement; this finding was consistent with Alenezi's (2013) study, which was conducted in a similar context.

Participation in research-related issues in particular was very low, as the departments focused more on teaching than on research activities. As a result, there were few departmental research issues and activities in which to participate, apart from assessment and supervision of postgraduate students. However, academic staff were engaged in personal research activities for career promotion reasons. Hence, a

research culture did not truly exist as a core departmental focus, apart from a very few projects which were not typically referred to the departments.

Participation in administrative decisions was also low, as academic staff were unwilling to decide on these issues, which they saw as tasks that should be dealt with by those with managerial responsibilities, like heads of departments. These issues were considered routine matters that required no real input from academic staff, so they showed no interest in participating in them. This was consistent with other studies (Morozumi, 2015; Alenezi 2013).

However, the level of their participation in issues surrounding their core role (teaching matters), let alone in those of other domains, was not satisfactory for the majority of staff, as they generally desired a greater level of participation. This result was consistent with studies conducted in other higher educational institutions worldwide and particularly in the Saudi context. For example, Maloney's study (2003) found that the current participation of faculty at 12 colleges fell short of their desired level. This was also the case in Mongolian universities, at which current levels of participation were lower than the desired levels (Bat-Erdene, 2006). As to the Saudi context, the findings of the present study were consistent with Alenezi's (2013) findings, which showed the current participation levels of academic staff in a Saudi university as falling short of their desired levels.

The third factor involves aspects of the academic staff. The findings suggested that other factors affected their levels of participation, including those directly related to the academic staff themselves. Their participation could be enhanced or limited by factors such as their roles in the department, their experience and knowledge and their gender. With regard to members' roles, it was clear that academic staff with additional managerial responsibilities, such as heads of department, deputy heads, committee members and those with positions at the faculty and university levels were more likely to participate effectively in the decisions. Therefore, as the participation of the majority of academic staff, who were without managerial positions, was generally low, even in some of the teaching-related issues, this finding was consistent with another study which found that non-managerial academic staff were less likely to influence decisions in Croatian higher education (Kovač et al., 2003).

The findings show that the experience and knowledge of academic staff facilitated participation; experienced members were expected by meeting attendees to contribute more to the discussions, compared to others, as their input was both desired and respected. The personality and skills of academic staff also influenced their effectiveness in the participatory process of decision making (Conley, 1991), with charismatic and inventive members more likely to participate, compared to shy and newly appointed members. Therefore, academic staff themselves were found to exert a critical influence on members' level of participation.

The final characteristic of academic staff which influenced their level of participation was their gender. The research outcome provided an original contribution to cross-gender perspectives on decision making in non-Western contexts by overcoming some of the barriers to cross-gender research in the Saudi context in order to obtain perspectives from both genders. The gender of academic staff was found to influence the level of participation for a combination of reasons. First, the lower number of academic females compared to males made the total male voice more influential than the female voice. The underrepresentation of females that was found in the study's results was consistent with the global phenomenon of women being outnumbered by men in academia. There are ongoing policies and initiatives to close the gap between male and female numbers in higher education in places like Australia (Winchester and Browning, 2015). A Saudi sign of this trend was found in the number of female members in both departments who were recently appointed but were not yet eligible to attend the departments' meetings.

Secondly, holding managerial positions was clearly a factor which increased the level of academic staff participation; therefore, as the university in general is a male-led university, most managerial positions are held by men. This resulted ipso facto in lower levels of female participation in departmental decisions. Female underrepresentation in managerial positions is a universal issue (Mohajeri et al., 2015; Lie and Malik, 2012) which has a pervasive effect on females' level of participation. However, as one interviewee emphasised, an ambitious plan had been put in place to appoint female members to managerial positions at the university and faculty levels.

Finally, the distinctive circumstances that segregate male and female academic staff in this study required only telephonic contact between genders in department meetings instead of in-person attendance. However, the system of communication was poor on some occasions, which limited the full involvement of female members and prevented them from effectively participating, resulting in their dissatisfaction. Chairing meetings with attendees outside the meeting room and communicating only by voice required high management skills to ensure equal opportunities for participation by all members, both inside and outside the meeting room; however, it was even more important to ensure the functionality of the communication system used. All three reasons affecting genders worked together to limit the level of female participation, resulting in their dissatisfaction. The low level of female participation compared to men was consistent with the findings of Denton and Zeytinoğlu (1993), who found that men's participation was greater than women's in Canadian universities.

The fourth academic staff factor to be mentioned was the dominance of some members in the decision-making process in the departments, which helped to explain the active and passive behaviours of other academic staff during meetings (Morozumi, 2015). It can be concluded that all three departmental aspects – leadership, academic staff and type of issue – affected the level of academic staff participation, beyond a general university culture which also influenced such participation.

8.4 Critical reflection on research outcomes

The overall outcomes of the research helped to achieve the aim of this study by providing a deeper understanding of the departmental decision-making process in higher education in Saudi Arabia. The research assessed the participatory role of academic staff in departmental decisions and provided an in-depth understanding of academics' roles and methods of making decisions. Each of the three research questions helped to achieve the research aims of this study, as each covered some aspects of the phenomenon being researched. Combining the findings of the three research questions helped to paint an overall picture of the process of decision making at the departmental level.

The outcomes of the first research question (*How are departmental decisions made in a Saudi university?*) explored the process of departmental decision making in terms of who made the decision, who was actively involved in the decision-making process and what types of contribution the various parties made. In addition, the results revealed whether one group or person was dominant and indicated the leadership styles applied in each department. The outcomes of meeting minutes and observation findings provided a picture of the dynamics of departmental decision making.

The outcomes of the first question, through documentary research and observation of meetings, helped to examine the dynamic of the departmental decision-making process. It revealed the goal of department meetings, which was to make decisions on issues related to the departments, and showed how successfully the goals of these meetings were met, in that decisions were made on almost all of the issues. The outcomes indicated that decisions were reached in various manners. The majority were yes-or-no decisions made by following explicit procedures and guidance; thus, simply by fulfilling the requirements relevant to each request or issue, affirmative decisions were assured. In addition, there were a few voting and unanimity decisions. The meeting chairs followed no specific process in making decisions on the issues that required discussion in the meetings. They acted differently on each issue, selling the decisions on some occasions and announcing the decisions on others, which reduced the level of staff participation in these and other decisions. However, they welcomed members' suggestions on a few occasions. The way the Heads behaved in relation to each issue demonstrated the levels of participation available to the members. Hence, meeting management played a significant role in enabling or limiting participation.

However, the large number of decisions that were made in the departmental meetings was not reflected in the levels of staff participation in those decisions. In fact, meeting attendees were rarely involved in making the decisions, as the opportunity for genuine participation was not always available. This was because the majority of decisions on agenda issues required no participation from the members, as they were procedural decisions. As a result, meetings were largely dominated by the Department Heads, who were the most active members in all meetings, being comprehensively responsible for managing the meetings by reading the issues,

managing contributions and making decisions. On only a few occasions were there opportunities for participation by those present; however, even then, not all members were involved. Rather, a minority participated, though Department Heads were sometimes welcoming towards members' contributions. It was observed that there were dominant groups in the meetings in both departments; those members were active whenever the opportunity arose. In contrast, the majority of members were passive during all the meetings observed unless they were asked personally to speak up or vote.

The outcomes of the first research question reflected the actual practices of making departmental decisions and assessed the role of each member in the meetings. Attendance at four sequential meetings, one each week, helped to reveal repetitive behaviours by members. In addition, it helped to identify the different leadership styles applied by the Heads of departments, depending on the type of issue. The outcomes also helped to identify members' contributions to the decisions, which varied depending on the members' experience and knowledge. In addition, the outcomes helped in identifying the dominant members who actively engaged in making the decisions. The overall outcomes of the first research question were satisfactory in terms of providing an understanding of the departmental decision-making process.

The outcomes of the second research question (*To what extent are academics currently participating in Saudi university decision making, and how far does the current level of participation match academics' desired levels of participation?*) provided measurements of participants' actual and desired levels of participation in the three domains of teaching, research and administrative decisions; they also offered a gender comparison of participation levels in the decisions. The outcomes of the survey analysis showed a generally low level of participation in all domains. Levels of current participation in research and administrative decisions were even lower than in teaching-related decisions. The outcomes suggested no significant difference between the two departments, which scored low levels of current participation in all three decision domains. This result was consistent with previous studies conducted in similar contexts that shared the same sort of centralised system and bureaucracy.

In general, levels of participation were low in the case of issues that were more directly related to the departments, such as appointing new members; however, on some issues that were directly relevant to academic staff, such as choosing teaching methods, the level of participation was higher. In measuring the discrepancy between current and desired levels of participation, it was found that academic staff desired a greater level of participation in all three decision-making domains; a significant degree of decisional deprivation in all domains was thus very much in evidence. However, as gender participation was a particular interest of this research, the findings were explored further to reveal different levels of participation among male and female members, with female members scoring lower levels of participation than men in both departments. In addition, female members scored higher desired levels of participation than males.

The outcome of the survey was consistent with the observational outcome, in which limited opportunities for participation were observed. However, the outcomes of the second question provided measurement of both actual and desired levels of participation from participants' perspectives, which could not have been measured solely through observing meetings. The use of different methods helped to confirm other findings, since the presence of more than one source of evidence strengthened the research results by enabling the researcher to confirm, support, explain and validate the results from each method. The outcomes of the second question were satisfactory in providing measurements of the actual and desired levels of participation among both departments' members. The outcomes enabled comparison of the two departments and of both genders. The themes that emerged from the previous methods were taken forward for further investigation in order to answer the third research question.

The outcomes of the third research question (*How can the levels of satisfaction in the participatory process in departmental decision making be explained?*) explained the themes that emerged from previous methods. The outcomes of semi-structured interviews with both male and female participants helped to elucidate the emergent themes and to compare both departments and the genders within each department. The outcomes of the interviews were valuable for the additional details they provided, which would not have been possible on the basis of findings from the previous methods. The outcomes showed different reasons for the levels of

dissatisfaction with academic staff participation in departmental decisions, some of which were related to the type of decision, others to the participants themselves and still others to meeting management and the general university structure.

The outcomes of the third research question were helpful in explaining the much higher levels of participation in teaching decisions compared to the other domains. Teaching was the central role of academic staff in both departments and indeed the dominant focus of the university as a whole. The outcomes also explained the large number of research issues in both departments and the low level of participation in decisions on them, as shown in the analysis of the meeting minutes and observational data. Research issues were concerned with postgraduate students' research rather than research projects under the departmental umbrella. There was no evidence of a research culture in either department, only individual research projects conducted for career promotion reasons.

The outcome of the interviews indicated some differences between participation levels, according to which participants could be divided into active and passive members. The minority of active and thus dominant group members in each department had some features in common. They were experienced members, were knowledgeable or held managerial positions, whereas the opposite was true of the majority of members, who were recently appointed, had less experience and lacked managerial positions. The interview data also revealed that experienced members were more likely to be appointed to the departments' committees, and consequently to participate more forcefully, while inexperienced members were less likely to be appointed to such committees, reinforcing their lower levels of participation.

Despite the diversity among members, meeting management was found to influence the level of participation. The chairs' occasional (or frequent, depending on the respondent) practice of selling the decisions, for example, was one reason for the limited opportunity to participate in department meetings, as members went with the chairs' recommendations. The failure to manage the meetings and especially manage members' contributions, in addition to the large numbers of members attending the meetings, also limited opportunities for participation for all members. Excluding members from participation in some issues by not including them in the meetings was another reason for the low levels of participation, as such actions demotivated

them from participating in other issues, as they knew from experience that their input was not desired on critical issues concerning the departments. Finally, the inconsistent way in which decisions were made by the meeting chairs was found to reduce the willingness to participate, as participation was not always guaranteed.

Such behaviour was found to reduce the level of members' participation; however, there were other factors that further limited the opportunity for female members. For example, the use of an ineffective communication system for connecting male and female members during the meetings in one department sometimes prevented females from participating. This explanation could not have been obtained by any of the earlier methods, including the observation of meetings, which both demonstrates the value of mixed research methods and serves as a limitation that will be discussed below. Another factor was the fact that females held fewer managerial positions than males, although the majority of males held no managerial positions.

The university's structure and centralised system caused some issues which were very important to the departments to be decided at the university's top management levels, which reduced the overall level of participation in departments' decisions. In addition, some decisions made in departments were not final until approved by top management, meaning that they were sometimes rejected. The outcomes of the third question were satisfactory in revealing serval aspects that could not be obtained in previous methods. That question was also helpful in terms of hearing from male and female participants from both departments, which could not be achieved in previous research in the Saudi context.

Overall, the outcomes helped to achieve the aim of this research through the use of four data collection methods. The results provided information about the process of making departmental decisions in higher education in a context that had not been sufficiently researched. The overall outcomes achieved the research aim by providing an overarching picture of the departmental decision-making process in a Saudi higher education institution. In addition, they provided deeper understanding of departmental leadership and its impact on the decision-making process. The research further provided findings from a cross-gender analysis: an area that had not been adequately researched in the Saudi context. Based on the research results, the study developed a culturally integrated model of participatory decision making,

which helped to bridge the knowledge gap regarding the participatory role of academic staff in a higher educational setting, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia and similar Arab countries. This was significant not only in the Saudi context, but also in that of the wider community sharing Islamic and Middle East culture, and for the broader understanding of decision making within higher education systems in general.

The outcomes helped to answer the research questions and also to satisfy my curiosity about the departmental decision-making process. The results of this research helped me to understand the participatory role of academic staff in departmental decisions, an environment in which I will work as soon as I finish my PhD. Possession of knowledge based on current empirical research into a topic of interest and concern to me will assist me, first as an individual by developing my participation skills and understanding of others' behaviour, and beyond that by providing suggestions for further development based on scientific research.

8.5 Limitations of the study

The research has limitations. The nature of this research inquiry required adopting a single-institution case study and two of its academic departments to understand the phenomenon in sufficient depth. The research outcomes, as a result, reflected the studied units within the selected university, and statistical generalisation is not possible. However, the rich data and case description facilitate naturalistic generalisation that allows readers in similar cultural and organisational contexts to generalise the case study findings to their own contexts. In this way, generalisation is in the eyes of the reader.

In addition, the study focused on only two academic departments in the chosen institution, due to the limited time available and the scope of doctoral research. Another factor was that both departments provided both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, which might make it worth investigating others that focus only on one or the other. The departments chosen were social science departments; other types of department could have different or similar results.

I managed to observed female contributions and interactions during the meetings; however, other behaviours could not be observed, such as their activities during periods of silence. By contrast, some male members were seen to be busy with their

smartphones, but the researcher could not know what the female academics were doing. The female members' attendance and punctuality could not be observed. However, if female observation was closely established by hiring a female colleague, for example, to observe the meetings, more insights would have been gained. Also, it was not possible to gain the perspectives of either Department Head by means of interviews, as they did not volunteer to be interviewed; however, other members at different levels of seniority did volunteer, and were accordingly interviewed. Also, the limited number of volunteers for the interviews with no managerial position has limited the chance of hearing from non-managerial academic staff. Although the use of interview was very useful by revealing interesting findings, conducting more interviews with non-managerial staff could have produced additional interesting findings.

8.6 Implications of the study

There are two objectives of this section, based on the overall research findings described above and the limitations of this research. The first is to make recommendations for future policy and practice in relation to decision making in higher education. The second is to link the limitations to recommendations for further research.

In regards to the former, in these times of rapid growth and change worldwide both academically and economically, institutions need to work harder to thrive in a competitive world. Employees are considered the engine of any institution; in higher education institutions, these are the academic staff. Previous research has emphasised the importance of academic involvement for institutional success. Based on the findings of this research, several implications for both professional practitioners and policy makers are presented.

In this competitive era, with the recent expansion of the number of universities relying on government funds and the harbingers of financial crisis in Saudi Arabia that has already resulted recent cuts in public sector bonuses, including those in higher educational institutions, universities should consider generating part of their budgets by working with external bodies, such as companies. Full funding may no longer be available in the future, especially given the fluctuation in the oil price

(Saudi Arabia's dominant resource). The near total absence of a research culture should be addressed by energising the research unit at the university and supporting research activities in the individual departments. Academic departments should have more freedom to collaborate with external bodies by working on research projects or providing consultations in their fields of expertise. Departments should work on research proposals to generate more funds; this could be accomplished by decentralisation and provision of more room for the departments to engage with external bodies.

Bureaucracy could be limited by delegating some responsibilities to the appropriate body. For example, procedural decisions could be made by the managerial team without discussing them at the departments' meetings. This should speed up the process of making these decisions, thus saving meeting time which would be better spent on critical issues, and allowing more members to participate. In addition, the sense of distributed leadership in terms of delegating responsibility on some issues to the departments' committees could be enhanced by approving these decisions without presenting them again to the meetings, a policy which would hasten the process of decision making in cases where members' contributions were not welcomed.

The unsatisfactory levels of participation in departmental decisions which resulted from poor management of meetings should be overcome by ensuring equal opportunities for participation by all members in decisions on all issues that are genuinely within the department's purview. Enhanced transparency regarding the departmental issues and clarification by the Department Heads of the methods for deciding on these issues could increase the level of academic participation. In addition, dividing the roles involved in managing meetings between members should enhance the quality of meeting management. For example, one member could be appointed to manage the contributions in order to save time while providing an opportunity for others to participate.

Certain agenda items could be assigned to suitable members, according to relevance and member expertise, for them to present and comment on. This should improve the quality of the decisions and create opportunities for participation by all members, as each group of members would present on the issues closest to their area of

knowledge. Those recruiting members to the departments' committees should consider including new members along with experienced ones, to build the new members' confidence and train them in the skills of discussion and decision making. Such a policy would also help overcome shyness among those who felt less comfortable in participating.

Institutions that wish to be recognised globally must work tirelessly to be included in the global university rankings; to this end, universities can gain more from academic staff by granting greater empowerment in decision making, as academics are the experts in their fields. This would require them to gain the skills needed both to participate in and to manage meetings. Based on the research results, members who are responsible for managing meetings are advised to attend courses in meeting management skills such as communication, time management, contribution management, motivating others and running distance meetings. At the same time, academic staff, particularly new members, are advised to develop their participation skills through regularly attending meetings and benefitting from input by experienced members. In addition, being prepared for meetings could increase their confidence and overcome their shyness, eventually leading them to a fairer degree of participation.

The differences between male and female levels of participation could be balanced by recruiting a female member to manage women's contributions during the meetings. The meeting chair should also keep checking the connection and clarity of the voices of both males and females. In addition, although it was acknowledged that the number of female members is increasing in both departments, top management levels are advised to recruit more female members to managerial positions, a situation which will be found to be associated with increasing levels of participation through greater proximity to university, faculty and departmental issues.

Based on the research outcomes and limitations, a number of future studies are suggested. The phenomenon was investigated in a single case study; the research could be replicated in other Saudi universities using the same research methods to see if they yield similar or different results. Replicating the research in other Saudi contexts would help generalise the results from the total number of researched cases. The phenomenon could also be researched by applying different data collection

methods. For example, the level of staff participation in Saudi universities could be measured by conducting quantitative research to find out the levels of academic staff satisfaction across the entire country. Female perspectives could also be examined more closely by a female researcher, who would be able to observe female members at the women's location. Finally, the decision-making process in higher education institutions in other contexts, especially in Islamic cultures, could be researched using the same theoretical models and data collection methods, making it possible to compare decision-making processes in different contexts within a similar culture.

8.7 Summary

This chapter has presented a discussion of the process of departmental decision making and the participatory role of academic staff in making these decisions. The level of participation was found to be influenced by the cultures of both the university and the departments. The centralised system was found to limit the freedom of departments to make their own decisions on matters like budgets and staff appointments. On the other hand, the departments' leadership and the personality and roles of academic staff were found to influence the level of academic staff participation. There were also some differences in terms of gender participation. This chapter, through its summary of the findings, has provided valuable implications for professional practitioners and policy makers and provided suggestions for further research.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Observation schedule

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Date</td><td>Time</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Title of the meeting</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Number of Meeting members</td><td>Comments</td></tr>
<tr><td>Male

……..</td><td>Female

……..</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Meeting type</td><td>Tick as appropriate</td><td>Meeting objectives</td></tr>
<tr><td>Advisory</td><td></td><td rowspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Negotiation</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Problem solving</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Support</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">How is the meeting led?</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Are the meeting’s issues understood? Who explained them?</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Who was actively involved in making decisions?</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What contributions did they make?</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Have decisions been made? Yes	No
Who made the decision? Probes: individual, minority group, voting, total agreement.	What action is decided on?
How are alternatives/solutions generated?	
Who generated them?	
Have they been reviewed?	
Have the final decisions been reviewed? By whom?	

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

A survey measuring the degree of Academics' participation in departments' decisions at a Saudi Islamic University

The purpose of this survey is to indicate the current rate of academics' participation in departments' decisions at an Islamic University in Saudi Arabia, as well as to determine the degree of participation that academics desire.

Your participation in filling in this survey will surely help me to complete the requirements for my Ph.D. degree. Therefore I shall be very grateful if you could take part. Your voice is really important and will be appreciated for its role in completing this research project. I hope that you can participate.

To enable the study to obtain the full benefit of your participation, please ensure that you have answered all questions and please tick two responses for each question: one for the current level of participation and the other for the desired level of participation.

If you have any questions please do contact me at:

Abdulaziz Alsuhaymi, PhD student

School of Education

University of Leeds

(UK) Mobile NO: (+447429000852)

(SA) Mobile NO: (+966500329988)

E-mail: Ml11aaaa@leeeds.ac.uk

Thank you in advance for completing this questionnaire.

Section 1: Personal details

Please choose the appropriate options.

Gender: ☐ Male

☐ Female

Age: ☐ 30 or under ☐ 31-40

☐ 41-50 ☐ 51 or over

Years of experience working at your academic department:

☐ 0-5 ☐ 6-10

☐ 11-20 ☐ 21 or more

Section 2: Teaching and learning decisions

As an academic department member, could you please indicate for each decision area –

The degree of your current participation

The degree of participation you would like to have

Note: *Answers are ranked from 1-5 (1 means very rarely; 5 means very often) as in the example below:*

1. **Designing the module content**

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

2. Updating teaching materials

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

3. Deciding on the module references

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

4. Building new modules

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

5. Deciding on teaching methods

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

6. Selecting modules for teaching

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

7. Choosing PG students for supervision

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

8. Recruiting panels for PG students' vivas

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

9. Solving students' study problems

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

10. Deciding on criteria for students' attainment assessment

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Research decisions

As an academic department member, could you please indicate for each decision area –

The degree of your current participation.

The degree of participation you would like to have.

Note: *Answered are ranked from 1-5 (1 means very rarely; 5 means very often) as in the example below:*

11. Deciding on academic research subjects in the department

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

12. Evaluating department members' research

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

13. Studying research projects referred to the department

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

14. Deciding on PhD students' proposals

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

Section 4: Administrative decisions

As an academic department member, could you please indicate for each decision area –

The degree of your current participation.

The degree of participation you would like to have.

Note: *Answers are ranked from 1-5 (1 means very rarely; 5 means very often) as in the example below:*

15. Deciding on the department plan

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

16. Choosing the in-service training needed

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

17. Deciding on launching seminars and forums

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

18. Deciding on recruitment of lecturers

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

19. Nomination of lecturers for administrative posts

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

20. Deciding on renewing lecturers' contracts

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

21. Deciding on sacking lecturers

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

22. Deciding on taking part in committees

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

23. Deciding on working overtime

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

24. Developing new programmes

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

25. Deciding on students' acceptance requirements for entering the department

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

26. Indicating the department's capacity for student acceptance

Current participation Desired participation

Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often		Very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

Section 5: Open questions

As an academic department member, could you please answer the following questions:

What do you think about the degree of academics' participation in your

department's decisions?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

What course of action could help your department to benefit more from academics' participation in department decisions?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
....

Would you add any other decisions that you participate in which are not included in the survey?

.....
.....
.....
.....
....
.....

Section 6:

This survey will be followed up by conducting semi-structured interviews with some academics. If you are interested in being interview please provide your contact details bellow:

Name:

E-mail address:

Telephone number:

Thank you so much for completing the survey.

Appendix 3. Interview schedule for interviewing academic staff

1. How are your department decisions made?

Prompts:

- Who plays the critical role in making department decisions?
- What is your role in making department decisions?
- Does your participation influence the final decisions?
- Do you reckon your participation is important? Why?
- To what extent is your voice heard\not heard regarding department decisions?
- In which areas of department decisions do you prefer to participate? Why?

2. Could you tell me about your participation in teaching and learning decisions in your department?

Prompts:

- What is the nature of your participation in teaching and learning decisions? e.g. student assessment.
- Are you satisfied with your level of participation in teaching and learning decisions? Why\why not?
- To what extent does your participation in teaching and learning decisions influence the final decision?
- Do you want to participate more\less in teaching and learning decisions? Why?

3. Could you tell me about your participation in research decisions in your department?

Prompts:

- What is the nature of your participation in research decisions? e.g. reviewing, writing.
- Are you satisfied with your level of participation in research decisions? Why\why not?
- To what extent does your participation in research decisions influence the final decision?
- Do you want to participate more\less in research decisions? Why?

4. Could you tell me about your participation in administrative decisions in your department?

Prompts:

- What is the nature of your participation in administrative decisions? e.g. budget, department plan.
- Are you satisfied with your level of participation in administrative decisions? Why\why not?
- To what extent does your participation in administrative decisions influence the final decision?
- Do you want to participate more\less in administrative decisions? Why?

5. Could you tell me about gender-related participation in department decisions?

Prompts:

- To what extent do genders participate equally in department decisions?
- Do you think the male\female voice is dominant in making department decisions? Why?
- To what extent do you think male\female participation influences the final decisions?

6. Could you tell me how your department can benefit from academics' participation?

Prompts:

- What factors might enhance\hinder your degree of participation? e.g. leadership.
- What motivates\de-motivates you to participate in department decisions?
- To what extent do you benefit from participation in your department's decisions?

Appendix 4. Extracts from an interview coding

(Professor, male) Department B

Extract	Emergent themes and sub-themes	Comments
Question: How are your department's decisions made? Answer: They are made through the departmental meeting, which comes up with recommendations that are first sent to the faculty meeting, and then sent, depending on the type of issue, to the specialised unit within the university for approval {LP}. The decision begins in the department with active participation from the department's members, especially in the case of teaching decisions {PTD}.	Decision making process Linear process of decision-making Bureaucracy Participation depending on the decision area.	Theme: decision-making process This shows the linear process of decision-making, starting in the department and moving to the specialised unit in the university, a process that indicates features of bureaucracy. Also, it shows that departmental decisions are not final as they need to be approved by a number of other units and could be rejected. Levels of participation vary depending on the decision area. Participation in teaching is higher than other areas.
Question: Well, who plays the critical role in making the decisions? Answer: Actually, there are some factors that enable members to play a critical role in making the department's decisions, which derive firstly from members' scientific positions, by which members with a higher position always have an important role in	Facilitators of active participation	The decisions are influenced by some members' contributions, for personal reasons such as scientific position, leadership characteristics and experience.

making and directing the decisions {SP}; secondly, from members with leadership characteristics whose opinions are always valuable and respected in making the decisions, regardless of their academic position {LC}; and finally, experienced members with wide knowledge which enables them to deliver valuable contributions that influence the decisions{Ex}.	Sub-theme: Personal factors in being active in making departmental decisions.	This suggests that the absence of these factors leads to being passive. Also, there are some personal factors involved in being passive.
Question: What is your role in making department decisions? Answer: As a professor, and sometimes because I am the only one in the meeting due to the different absence reasons of other professors, meeting attendees look to what I would say on any issue where they have different opinions about it, so I do not talk unless I have an opinion that I am sure about and others will totally agree with it, or at least the majority of them will Sometimes when there is disagreement about an issue, I am also asked to speak to stop the disagreement between two different opinions, so my decision is expected to solve the problem{SP}. Most of the time, the decisions that I participate in are approved by all other high meetings, because I used to be a Faculty Dean and held high managerial positions at the university, so I know the process of making academic, administrative and	Facilitators of active participation Sub-theme: Personal factors in being active in making departmental decisions	Scientific position and experience in making departmental decisions with deeper understanding of the university procedure are personal factors of being active and influential, which makes the contributions influential and desirable by other members. Experience in managerial positions facilitates active participation in the decision making process. These personal factors explain

academic-administrative decisions {MP}.		how a minority active group can influence the decisions.
Question: In which areas of the department's decisions do you prefer to participate? Answer: Well, according to the university's policy, teaching decisions are the responsibility of the department's meetings {TRs}. So, I am very keen to participate in them and I always have something to say about them {PTD}.	Participation depending on the decision area.	This shows the preference for participation in teaching decisions, as this is the responsibility of the department.
Question: Well, could you tell me about your participation in teaching decisions? Answer: Sure, but you should know that the issues which are attached to the meetings are normally discussed by specialised committees first {DOM}. So, as I am the chair of the postgraduate studies committee and the comprehensive exam committee, I participate in studying the issues referred to the committees and in coming up with recommendations which are sent to the departmental meeting {LP}.	Decision-making process Sub-theme: Contrived collegiate decisions. Decision-making process Linear process of decision-making.	Committees within the department play a critical role in making decisions as most decisions originate in the department's committees. This explains the small number of issues, which require members' contributions during the meetings.
Question: Well, could you tell me about your participation in the meeting regarding recommendations from other committees that you are not part of? Answer: In the meetings, I always support the recommendations when they come from specialised committees and I respect my	Decision-making process	Limiting participation of others in the meeting when committees' recommendations are read. Other points of view are prevented regarding the committees'

colleagues' opinions in those committees, even though I do not participate in them. I participate in the meetings by supporting their recommendations because the issues have been studied by specialised members, and I do not allow unspecialised members or those who have not studied the issues to disagree with the committees' decisions. I always like members to talk about what they know; otherwise, they should respect other specialists who are more knowledgeable about the issues {DOM}	Sub-theme: Contrived collegiate decisions. Decision-making process Sub-theme: Contrived collegiate decisions	recommendations, either by some members with leadership characteristics or by a committee member – as was observed in one of the meetings.
Question: are you satisfied with your level of participation in teaching decisions? Answer: Of course I am. But, the problem occurs when some decisions have academic and administrative aspects at the same time. The decisions are then made at the university level, which is wrong because they are academic aspects and the department must make its decision first {DOD}. However, sometimes when these decisions come to the department we stop them because it's a departmental matter and the decision should be made in the department, not at the faculty or university meeting level, because it is the department or a special committee's responsibility{ DOD}.	Decision making process Sub-theme: Centralisation	Some of the departmental issues are made outside the department by higher units, which prevents participation of the department members – an implication of the centralised system.
Question: Could you tell me about your participation in research decisions in your		

department? Answer: Research decisions in the department are very limited, because the core of the academic staff's role is about teaching {TR}. At the university level in general, research matters are limited and depend largely on each member's effort {D&UF}.Usually, academic staff concentrate on their own individual research for promotion reasons. There is no initiative from the department with regard to research activities, which we are awaiting from the department {LoRI}.	Participation depending on the decision area.	The level of participation in research issues is low because the research issues are limited compared to the teaching issues, which is the focus of the department and the university.
Question: Are you satisfied with your level of participation in research decisions? Answer: No, as I said research decisions are limited {LOoP}.	Participation depending on the decision area Sub-theme: level of satisfaction	
Question: Could you tell me about your participation in administrative decisions in your department? Answer: The role of academic staff in administrative decisions is very weak {WAR}. The issues are brought to the meetings just to inform the staff about them {PD}. The department actually should not waste its and the academic staff's time in administrative decisions, such as allocating the teaching rooms, which should be dealt	Participation depending on the decision area. Decision making process Sub-theme: Procedural decisions Participation depending on the	Academic staff have no interest in administrative decisions as these are not regarded as part of their role, unless they hold a managerial position. This explains the low level of participation in administrative decisions. Also, administrative decisions are mostly procedural, in which case decisions are straightforward with no

with by administrative staff in the department{ WAR}.	decision area.	discussion in the meeting.
Question: What factors might hinder your degree of participation? Answer: The department, when preparing the meeting agenda, should include the details for each issue, allowing the meeting attendees to read and, therefore, discuss them at the meeting effectively; otherwise, members' participation will not be effective or they will keep silent due to the lack of information about the issue being discussed {LoD}. Moreover, sometimes there are some issues attached to the meeting minutes that have not been discussed at the meeting, which makes some members careless about participation because they know there are some decisions being made without their awareness {EsI}. Really, the decisions that wanted to be delayed are included in the meetings for bureaucracy. Another reason preventing members from effective participation is that, sometimes, there is an attempt to direct decisions in the interests of someone outside of the department, such as new members being considered for appointments, thus preventing some members – but not me – from participating in the decisions {SD}.	Hinders active participation Leadership factor of being passive	Some leadership behaviours regarding the integrity of meeting agendas prevent or limit members' participation, such as the lack of providing sufficient detail for the issues, which leads to being passive. Another leadership factor that prevents active participation – which could not be observed because it happened outside the meeting – is making decisions outside the departmental meeting. As observed in some of the meetings, the Head of Department tried to sell the decision, rather than letting others discuss the issue and come up with their own recommendations. These are some of the leadership and management factors that hinder active participation.

Key to codes

Abbreviation	Meaning	Theme
SP	Scientific position	***Personal factors leading to active participation***
LC	Leadership characteristics	
Ex	Experience	
MP	Managerial position	
LP	Linear process of decision-making	***Decision making process***
DOD	Deciding outside the department	
DOM	Deciding outside the meeting	
PD	Procedural decision	
PTD	Participation in teaching decisions	***Decision areas and different levels of participation***
D&UF	Department and university focus	
TR	Teaching role	
TRs	Teaching responsibilities	
LoRI	Lack of research initiatives	
LRIs	Limited research issues	
WAR	Weak administrative role	
LoD	Lack of detail	***Management and leadership factors hinder active participation***
EsI	Excluding some issues	
SD	Selling decisions	