AN EXPLORATION OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF SAUDI ARABIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Copyright statement

Abstract

The influence of culture on leadership is an area of significance. While the contribution of research to cross-cultural leadership in industry and business sectors has been substantial, the same cannot be claimed with regard to Higher Education, and in particular, Saudi Arabian Higher Education. This research study addresses this significant gap and explores societal and organisational cultures, and their influence on University Deans' leadership perceptions and practices. The research has been conducted in eight, main governmental universities under the Ministry of Education control. Qualitative data has been collected, involving interviews with fifteen university Deans, with data scrutinized by an interpretive thematic analysis. The study's findings conceptualise the cultural influence on leadership in the context of Saudi Arabian higher education with nine distinct themes identified: the influence of societal culture, tensions between traditions and change, limitations in Deans' leadership preparation, a centralised environment, strict regulations, the authority of top management, selection and promotion features, reputational factors, and human resources issues. Moreover, due to these factors, five culturally conditioned leadership practices were identified: a reliance on authority, a lack of motivation, limitations in Dean-subordinates' relations, autocratic decision making and limitations of planning techniques. The research yields a number of contributions to the existing understanding of this area. This includes the impact of culture on leadership practice in this context, particularly cross-cultural leadership. Further, by answering the questions of what is needed *for* leaders to be effective, the research offers a new dimension for leadership effectiveness, which was extensively explored by considering what is needed *by* leaders to be effective.

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List of abbreviations

HEI	Higher Education Institution
SAHE	Saudi Arabian Higher Education
ARAMCO	Arabian American Oil Company
SABIC	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation
ALC	Academic Leadership Centre
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness
IBM	International Business Machines Corporation

Academic Biography

Part of this research's outcomes has been previously published as an article in the special issue of Societal Culture and Educational /School Leadership Journal:

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research explores the influence of organisational and societal cultures on Saudi Arabian University Deans' leadership perceptions and practices, a previously underexplored topic. The research is conducted in relation to cross cultural-leadership studies aiming to conceptualise a contextual theoretical framework for cultural influence on leadership practice. In Saudi Arabia, it is currently unclear how university Deans are negotiating the balance between organisational cultural values and contemporary influences, and how the values they embrace may influence their leadership practices and effectiveness. Research on leadership has proved that organisational success is highly linked to effective leadership practice (Behrendt, et al., 2017). Leadership practice is deeply connected to culture, as the actions of leaders and responses of followers reflect the cultural values, attitudes and behaviours of each individual (Miller, 2017). In reference to its influence on an individual's perception and behaviour, Hofstede (1991:19) defines culture as *"the collective programming of the mind"*. Culture does not only influence how leaders emerge, improve and are selected, but also influences the success of their educational organisations (Bush, 2011).

This chapter introduces the research by firstly presenting important background information. In addition, it presents the study's aims, provides a rationale for conducting it, and highlights the expected contributions to knowledge by discussing potential theoretical and practical contributions. It also presents details of the research methodology adopted for the study. Furthermore, the chapter considers the context of the study, including information regarding the country in which the research has been conducted, its demographics, social and economic issues, as well illustrating their effects on the development of higher education. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the thesis' structure.

1.2 The Research Problem

The researcher and author of this thesis is an employee at a Saudi university and is responsible for the preparation and execution of strategic plans within the faculties. Furthermore, he is interested in leadership training and has conducted several training sessions on the themes of leadership and management inside Saudi business, charitable and educational institutions. With this contextual background, some concerns have been raised by the researcher regarding leadership performance within the university and the ability to implement measures to achieve the university's mission statement. This has raised the question regarding the applicability of leadership development programmes and the extent to which organisational and societal cultural factors influence Deans' leadership experiences. What is apparent is how unique the Saudi context is in terms of leadership practice and what is needed to ensure effective academic leadership within this particular milieu. These concerns have illuminated the problem, leading to the formation of the questions examined within this current research.

There are a multitude of leadership theories as well as leadership models; however, effectiveness of such leadership theories in enhancing certain organisational performance has been under debate for many years. In their critical review of several leadership models, Schreisheim and Neider (1993) questioned whether we have "developed general approaches to leadership which, when applied to training and development of leaders, clearly increase their organisational performance" (p. 17). Consequently, for the sake of leadership effective practice in the Saudi context, there is a real need to comprehend the relationship between culture and leadership in the light of Deans' leadership practices. Idris (2007) highlighted the growing suggestion that the context of leadership in Saudi Arabia requires development in terms of the cultural values that have become deeply embedded over time. Higher education is a major sector that receives a high concentration of government funding and plays a vital role in the economic and social development of the nation. If leadership is not well practised

and developed, the teaching and educational outcomes of universities will be negatively influenced and consequently impact on the national economy.

1.3 Research Aims

The researcher established the following three primary aims to guide the research process and to facilitate a systematic use and understanding of research stages and methods:

- To analyse the contextual factors that may influence the experience of leadership in Saudi Arabian Higher Education (SAHE).
- To explore how leadership is perceived and practiced by academic Deans in SAHE.
- To contribute to the existing knowledge by conceptualising a model of cross-cultural leadership.

1.4 Research Questions

This research explores three main questions as follows:

- What are the contextual, cultural factors influencing Deans' leadership experience in SAHE?
- What are the features of Deans' practiced leadership in SAHE?
- How do identified cultural factors influence Saudi Deans' leadership practices?

1.5 Research Significance

Due to the limited empirical studies and data in the field of leadership in SAHE (See discussion at the end of the literature review chapter, Section 3.6), the researcher considers this a valuable opportunity to examine this topic in this particular context. Although the field of leadership is widely discussed and globally recognised, there is limited research and great opportunities for investigation in the context of Saudi Arabia. This research's findings illustrate academic leadership as it is at the time of writing and as it could be in order to

develop leaders' performances and effectiveness. Moreover, the findings may also be critical to leadership, academic life, social studies and the knowledge economy.

The contribution of this research to the existing knowledge can be underscored by a number of significant factors. Generally, there are insufficient theoretical works and published research regarding academic leadership, leadership and culture, and organisational behaviour, particularly in the context of SAHE. In spite of the number of studies on leadership that have been conducted in Saudi Arabia in the fields of business and industry (see, for example, Aseri, 2015; Alzoman, 2012), these do not provide sufficient background regarding the nature of leadership in higher education or develop the required leadership characteristics and adaptations in that specific context.

Therefore, this research project has been inspired by several factors, and contributes to the development of knowledge through the following dimensions:

- *The Context:* Very limited focus on the chosen sector, SAHE, which is considered as one of the most important Saudi Arabian sectors that receives extensive support from the government.

- *The Research*: Limited theoretical research exists and there is a paucity of studies exploring academic leadership in SAHE that discuss the beliefs, values and practices of academic Deans as leaders.

- *Challenges of the Process*: The need for such a study is increased due to the growing demand for Deans' roles to meet the challenges of the rapid national development of Saudi Arabia, (Gonaim and Peters, 2017).

- *Impact of Culture on Leadership*: Cultural studies primarily target Western culture, with very limited research conducted within Arab contexts. Further, very few of these include specific aspects of Saudi Arabia's cultural context.

- *Customisation of Leadership Theories:* the adaptation of Western theories and styles of leadership for other nations is no longer sufficient (Shahin and Wright, 2004). Therefore, the customisation of leadership drivers in the Saudi context and the

understanding of the special case of academic leadership in SAHE are two of the most important factors that have inspired the researcher*.*

- *Deans' Perspectives*: In spite of the very limited body of research in the field of academic leadership in Saudi Arabia, all of the existing studies have either investigated the academic leaders (primarily Department Chairs) through the perception of their followers, or employed quantitative approaches to collect the data (Chapter 3 considers a number of these works). Meanwhile, none has applied a strategy to study academic leadership in the Saudi context through the experiences of the Deans themselves.

Consequently, this research explores, in depth, the influence of diverse factors of organisational culture, and the deep rooted societal culture, on the Deans' practices of leadership, within the specific context of Saudi Arabia. The scarcity of data is further considered in the literature review chapter, particularly given the discreet nature of higher education.

From a theoretical perspective, deep insights of the effect of cultural factors on academic leadership practice, as well as contributions to the extent of applicability of Western-derived theories in the Saudi context, are presented. From a more practical perspective, the research will be of value for SAHE's policy makers, particularly in the domains of leadership development and the preparation of future academic leaders. Methodologically, the research contributes to knowledge of leadership and culture in Saudi Arabia, contributing to the small, but growing, body of qualitative studies focused on the country.

1.6 Deanship in Higher Education Institutions

In a world exposed to unprecedented changes in the domains of technology and knowledge transfer, the need for leaders with strong personal qualities and a sense of inspiration is great. Basham (2010) illustrates that:

> *Higher education is at a crossroads where it must redefine its mission accompanied with measurement standards as to how it is going to meet the needs and obligations to citizens demanding higher education in the 21st century. Higher education should take into consideration the impact of globalisation, the development of information and advanced communicative*

technologies, the rapid change in demand in employment, and the critical need for highly qualified faculty members who have practical experience in their discipline.

(Basham, 2010, p. 143)

Institutions of higher education need to develop leaders well-grounded in functional skills (Alnaser, 2016). Therefore, it is essential for these leaders to have the necessary leadership knowledge to ensure their competency and sensitivity to a diversity of beliefs and social forces, while they must also be aware of the impact of their personal cultural background on their leadership, and vice versa.

In higher education, effective leadership is imperative to a university's success, with university Presidents (Vice-Chancellors) relying heavily on Deans and other administrators to provide internal leadership. Birnbaum (1992) explored this topic by asking academics to name those campus leaders who they felt were important, with forty-four percent of the respondents naming the Dean, and in general the Deans were mentioned more frequently than other leaders, including the Presidents.

Academic Deans, as members of the university president's cabinet, are in a unique position to share leadership responsibility for the institution as a whole. The Deans acquire a broad understanding of the university's concerns, while remaining involved in the teaching and learning process of the institution. Furthermore, Deans play a critical role in building the university vision: not only do they "predict the future like futurists, but they create a new future like science fiction writers", as well as "plan[ning] and design[ing] how the dreamed future will be realized" (Baskan & Ercetin, 2000, p. 2). In addition, academic Deans have resources that can be utilised to guide and direct the work of the faculty; moreover, they can influence decision making, shape the curriculum, and play a major role in the culture of the university. Deans can also act as agents of change, but first they need to become experts in the change process in order to transform their organisation from its current state to the ideal one (Huffman-Joley, 1992). Leadership succession at the senior executive level of the university is often driven by external pressures and factors; delivered through institutional factors, which are typically influenced by individuals throughout the organisation to reflect their interests and values (Baldridge et al., 1977). To that extent, the "leadership skills necessary for today's educational leaders are difficult to develop" (Huffman-Joley, 1992, p.

7); for instance, Deans may need to relinquish their power without losing control by persuading others and enforcing the university's policies, and take the initiative by listening to members within their organisation. Researchers, such as Baskan and Ercetin (2000), asserted that Deans have an important role in sustaining the learner-centred universities of the 21st century.

Clark (2005) further developed the key role Deans have when arguing that they are responsible leaders that should assess the institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for growth, and threats from competitors. For thriving colleges and universities, this particular task is challenging since one of the most difficult functions of a successful organisation is to question the assumptions upon which its success is attributed. Academic Deans, as per all managers, must plan, organise, and control (Gmelch, 2004). Within these typical management duties, the Dean must delegate and, with the assistance of those in his or her authority, direct, report, set goals and determine how the university will achieve them. Packard (2008) referred to one of the most critical challenges facing today's leaders as being their ability to adapt to a consistently changing environment while balancing and maintaining the internal dynamics of the organisation.

In order to cope with these growing challenges, Deans must have good competencies for leadership and interpersonal skills (Sypawka, 2008). In his research, Del Favero (2006) highlighted that effective academic Deans must be cultural representatives of their college, good communicators, skilled managers, forward-looking planners, advocates for the university, and develop the ability to manage change. In future, because of this changing environment, it appears that Deans will confront a new level of leadership challenges that will be increasingly complex and intense (Harvey & Newton, 2004). Consequently, the practises of Deans and the type of leadership style they employ, play a major role in the successful completion of their duties and the overall success of their academic faculties.

There are many challenges facing higher education leadership, which are pertinent for Deans of faculties, such as leadership effectiveness (Basham, 2010), organisational setting (Chen & Huang, 2007), organisational culture (Latham, 2013), leadership styles (Bass & Avolio,

2000), leadership practices (Astin & Astin, 2000), management styles (Northouse, 2004), decision making (Muhammad et al., 2009), subordinates' commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) and follower satisfaction (Verhaegen, 2005). However, these specific challenges are not the only ones that impact on academic Deans' perceptions and practices, although it is reasonable to argue that these are some of the contextual contemporary challenges that need to be considered and addressed. Deanship in the Saudi Arabian context is considered further in Section 1.9.1.

1.7 Research Methodology Approach

A qualitative exploratory design (Creswell, 2007) is adopted in this research. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected sample of Deans (15 in total) employed inside Saudi higher education institutions. The data was subjected to thematic analysis based on the themes adapted through the flow of findings that emerge from the study and those addressed through the research questions (King, 1998). A detailed overview of the methodology and methods applied will be illustrated in Chapter 4.

1.8 Context of the Study

The study is conducted in government funded universities in Saudi Arabia and investigates the influence of cultural factors on Deans' leadership practices. In the Saudi context, leadership has a number of constraints (Gonaim & Peters, 2017), where a certain degree of obedience and respect for superiors is prevalent amongst followers, based on their authority. This is clearly evident in the Islamic regulation that governs the political and managerial systems in Saudi Arabia (Bjerke & Al-Meer, 1993). Furthermore, honour as well as reputation is vital in the Saudi community, where it is imperative to respect a leader's position within the organisation. Meanwhile, it is not uncommon for some managers to secure their position due to their family status, social connection, or age group (Ali & Swiercz, 1993).

An additional constraint for leadership in the Saudi context lies in that social relationships play a key role in terms of leaders and their subordinates. This includes taking into account the contextual environment when contacting people, where the value of family and

relationships takes priority over the immediate business concerns (Bell, 1986). A trend towards a strong hierarchy and regulation, together with unequal power relations, can also be noticed in Saudi organisations, which is reflected in the tendency for autocratic decision making (Ali & Swiercz, 1993; Aseri, 2015). The research contributions to leadership in the Saudi context will be illustrated in greater depth in Chapter 3.

Another contextual factor motivating the researcher's decision to focus on this sector of SAHE lies in his observations regarding the applicability of leadership and management training, and the leaders' preparation and selection for administrative positions. Moreover, university Deans in the Saudi context are all Saudi nationals, who typically represent their societal culture and its effect on their preparation, development and training needs (Gonaim & Peters, 2017).

1.8.1 An Overview of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is the largest nation located on the Arabian Peninsula, covering approximately 830,000 square miles. The country is bordered by Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait to the north; by Oman and Yemen to the south; and by the Arabian Gulf, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar to the east; with the Red Sea located to the west of the country (see Figure 1.1). Saudi Arabia is situated between the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe, which has given the country as well as the peninsula a vital role in the development of civilisation since it represented an important intersection for traders crossing from the East to Western and Northern destinations (Alfarsi, 1998).

Figure 1.1 Political map of Saudi Arabia.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2018)

According to the Saudi Central Department of Statistics and Information (CDSI, 2014), the total population of the country was approximately 30 million in 2014, with around sixty-six percent being Saudi citizens and thirty-four percent representing the non-Saudi population.

The majority of the country's land mass comprises rugged desert, with a central plateau and a narrow western coastal plain bordered by high mountains. With a population of approximately seven million, Riyadh, the capital and largest city, is centrally located within the desert of the country. The second largest city in Saudi Arabia is the Red Sea port of Jeddah, featuring a population of around five million, with the city representing the gateway for Muslim pilgrims arriving in the country by air or sea to perform their Hajj (the Pilgrimage) or any other religious duties. Medina (the Prophet's City) is located to the north of Jeddah, while Makkah, the most holy city for Muslims, representing the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammad and the religion of Islam itself, is in close proximity to the east of Jeddah. Meanwhile, Khobar, Dammam, Dahran and the industrial city of Jubail are situated on the eastern coast of the Kingdom. Other population centres include Tabuk in the north, Abha to the south and Buraidah in the central region (Alfarsi, 1998).

Saudi Arabia is considered as being central to the Islamic religion, which means the country plays a vital role in the Islamic community. Furthermore, it is the location for the two Holy Mosques in the aforementioned cities of Makkah and Medina, where millions of Muslims from around the world come to fulfil their Hajj (a religious duty for those financially and physically able to undertake). Consequently, the social, economic, educational and legislative systems of Saudi Arabia can be found within the framing pillars of Islamic heritage. Arabic is the formal and most widely used language in the Kingdom, while English is only employed on a minor level in the domains of business and health (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MOFA], 2018).

Two major strands impact on the Saudi Arabian culture: Bedouin tribal traditions, and Islamic culture (Champion, 2003). According to Aseri (2015), the primary feature of Saudi culture is the centrality of the family in the social structure of the tribe. This tribal culture forms family networks, personal relationships and connections (Vassilieve, 1998).

Although the country is experiencing major social and economic changes (discussed in the next sections), people are still very connected to their families and tribal identities (Gonaim and Peter, 2017). Consequently, such cultural factors are expected to influence how leadership is practiced and how leaders are being developed.

1.8.2 The Saudi Economy

From its establishment in 1932 until the first discovery of oil prior to the Second World War, Saudi Arabia was an economically poor country that depended on the influx of pilgrims on their Hajj to Makkah and Medina, while other small villages in the central, northern and eastern regions of the Kingdom relied on farming and fishing. In 1936, oil was discovered in the Eastern Province, and was first produced for commercial use in 1938, with a bright future awaiting the desert Kingdom following the discovery of this resource under its sands (Champion, 2003).

As per other Gulf monarchies, such as, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE, income from crude oil has played a major role in developing the economic and social lives of Saudi citizens, with earnings from oil exports currently contributing up to ninety percent of the nation's income. The majority of this has been directed towards the development of

infrastructure and modernising the consumer lifestyle. Throughout the past five decades, the Saudi economy has been positively affected by the rise of not only the price, but also the demand for crude oil in the world markets.

According to a Ministry of Economy and Planning report in 2015, the revenue of the country was approximately 1,046 billion Saudi Riyals (approximately £183 billion), with total expenditure in the Kingdom exceeding 1,100 billion Saudi Riyals.

1.8.3 National Development Plans

Saudi Arabia is a member of international bodies such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation, the latter of which gave assistance to the government to launch five-year plans that first covered the 1970–1975 period. Nine more plans were also launched, but not fully implemented (Alfarsi, 1998). The first two plans were devoted to developing the infrastructure and other facilities necessary for health and educational development, as well as developing a road network between the main cities.

The next three plans concentrated on the development of human resources and supporting a rise in the gross domestic product (GDP). Therefore, new industrial zones were established in the coastal cities of Yanbu and Jubail to increase the production of petrochemicals. The sixth plan (1996–2000) introduced the significance of replacing non-Saudi manpower with Saudi nationals (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2015), with the government urging Saudi citizens to take on a more prominent role in the economic development unfolding in their county.

The seventh and eighth development plans (2001–2010) targeted cultural diversity and addressing the challenge of unemployment in Saudi citizens, as well as opening the country to greater interaction with the global economy. Moreover, the plans introduced the "Saudisation" process that is supported by the government and intends to reduce the reliance on expatriate employees within private and governmental institutions by replacing them with Saudi nationals. This was evident in the vast project of external scholarship offered for Saudi students to pursue their higher education in Western countries.

1.8.4 Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030

Due to the international developments in the fields of economics and social change, and as a result of an emerging generation of the Royal family to rule the country, in April 2016 the government adopted a roadmap for economic and developmental action in the Kingdom, with its aim to grant the nation a leading position in all fields (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

Vision 2030 relies on three principal pillars: a vibrant society, thriving economy and an ambitious nation. It outlines 24 specific goals for the Kingdom to achieve in the spheres of economic, political and societal development, articulating 18 commitments to achieve these goals through specific initiatives that address the three main themes of the vision in the domains of renewable energy, manufacturing, education, e-governance, entertainment and culture (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

At the time of writing, an ongoing process of change is unfolding and continuous workshops are being held inside ministries, including educational institutions and universities, in order to align their strategic and operational plans with the priorities of this contemporary vision.

1.9 The Saudi Higher Education System

The Ministry of Education is considered as the central body of the SAHE system. It is worth noting that prior to 2015 there were two ministries—one for education and another for higher education—that were recently merged into one entity titled the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2018). The Ministry directs universities in accordance with the country's vision, while supervising the development of education and the outcomes of universities (Al-Sunbul et al., 1998). In reference to a Ministry of Higher Education's (2010) report, *The Status of Higher Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, the SAHE system has passed through three stages. The first stage occurred between 1949 and 1960, and is considered as the foundation period when the first college for Islamic studies was opened in Makkah. Within five years, this was followed by the establishment of two further colleges in Riyadh, while the Kingdom's first university was established in Riyadh in 1957 and named the University of Riyadh—later renamed King Saud University. The second stage can be found between 1961 and 1980, and

is considered as the expansion period. New higher institutions were added in other cities such as Jeddah, Makkah, Medina, Riyadh, and Dhahran with branches of these universities also opened in other cities including Abha, Qassim and Elhasa. The period between 1980 and 2010 is deemed as the third and the most rapid phase, where many new universities were established with new faculties in medicine, science and humanities. Table 1.1 presents certain statistics about SAHE in terms of the number of students, faculties and Saudi students studying abroad.

According to the Ministry of Higher Education (2017), twenty-six public universities are now functioning in the Kingdom (see Appendix 1 for a list of State Universities), alongside nine private institutions, with sixteen of these public universities being established in the last decade. This serves to illustrate the significant modern expansion that has occurred in the educational system of Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Education, 2017).

When reviewing the development of higher education in Saudi Arabia, the contribution of the previous monarch King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz deserves special attention. During his rule, in May 2005 he launched the most ambitious Saudi educational initiative of recent years. This was titled the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) and aims to support and sponsor Saudi students to pursue their higher education objectives in other developed countries. (See Table 1.1 for the number of Saudis studying abroad). The scheme is supported and financed by the government and is considered as the most well-financed and utilised of such programmes (Abouammoh et al., 2014). After China, India, Korea and Germany, Saudi Arabia is the nation with the fifth highest number of students pursuing their education overseas, comprising four percent of the international student population (Ministry of Higher Education, 2013, cited in Pavan, 2016, p. 93). The most popular disciplines chosen by these overseas Saudi students in 2013 were the Social Sciences, Business and Law; followed by Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction; Health and Welfare and Science (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014, cited in Pavan, 2016, p. 93). The English-speaking nations of the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and Canada are the most popular destinations for sponsored students and receive the largest numbers, while Egypt, Jordan,

Malaysia, China and Japan also receive reasonable numbers of such students (Abouammoh et al., 2014).

Table 1.1 Statistics on Saudi governmental universities based on the 2015–2016 academic year (Source: Ministry of Education, 2018)

Demographic	Number	Total
Students registered in the 2015–2016 academic year	1,400,292	
Saudi faculty members	41,399	67,748
Non-Saudi faculty members	26,349	
Saudi administrators	66,680	71,839
Non-Saudi administrators	5,159	
Saudis studying abroad	174,333	

Meanwhile, several challenges are facing higher education, with the majority of these being situated in the need to meet international trends in world-class higher education. The notions of academic accreditation and world ranking are dominant in the higher educational environment of Saudi Arabia, with many universities seeking Western benchmarking for their educational and research outcomes. In 2010, King Saud University (the oldest and largest such institution in the Kingdom) was ranked 221 in the Times Higher Education and QS ranking, while King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran was ranked 255 and King Abdul Aziz University (the second largest) was ranked in the 401–450 band (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). However, the struggle between globalisation and consideration of the domestic culture of the country is still influencing the ongoing transformation in SAHE, as noted by Pavan (2016) below:

> *At present, the Saudi vision of higher education is experiencing a struggle, rather than witnessing a reconciliation, between globalisation and tradition. The issue is not simply a matter of importing or not importing Western-style higher education into the Kingdom. From a broader perspective, Saudi Arabia is confronted with a major challenge: to become a worldwide and authoritative economic and educational competitor, while retaining its freedom to decide what is the right and the best path to human development for its people. The outcomes of the Saudi experiment, as this struggle to balance traditions and globalisation could be defined, will impact not only on the country itself, but also on the Gulf region.*

(Pavan, 2016, p. 95)

Within these challenges, the question is whether the current social reality of the Kingdom with its effect on higher education can co-exist with the ongoing economic reforms taking place in the country, in a world where rapid changes are the norm rather than the exception. In the context of the current research, this tension between societal culture, national culture, the demand for rapid and transformative development, and their influence on Deans' leadership behaviour govern the contours of this research.

1.9.1 Deanship in SAHE

The university Deanship is a fundamental unit for transforming a university's goals into reality. Hence, the vigorous contribution of the faculty, which depends to a large extent on the effectiveness of the Dean, is important to the achievement of the university's goals and for the advancement of the wider institution. Deans are in a critical position that links the top management of the university with the academic departments and faculty members, and vice versa. Nevertheless, with the increased responsibilities and pressures levied on Deans and mid-level leaders at universities, they can lose sight of the basic principles of leadership (Lees et al., 2009). In their book, *Higher Education in Saudi Arabia: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities*, Smith and Abouammoh (2013) pointed to the need for effective leadership that satisfies the growing challenges while promoting creativity and collaboration inside universities. They encouraged:

> *The development and implementation of processes for ensuring strong and effective leadership for the Saudi higher education system and for all levels of Saudi universities. The provision of professional preparation and support courses and/or centres focussed on educational leadership was strongly supported at the workshop, but it was emphasised that assistance from specialists in educational leadership from outside the Kingdom would be required in order to achieve quality outcomes. The leadership and management of change—particularly the leadership and management of staff during change—was seen to be a very important element of this initiative, as was a strong understanding of business processes and entrepreneurialism.*
>
> (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013, p. 176)

Furthermore, despite increased numbers of faculty members having graduated from western universities, only a small number of Saudi Deans attempt to apply foreign approaches to leading their department; moreover, in some cases this Western approach negatively affects

their faculty, consuming time and resources due to the resistance they face from their subordinates (Alamri, 2011).

Although the characteristics and duties of middle administration is a topic that has been intensively studied in recent decades (Murry & Stauffacher, 2001), there is a paucity of literature that investigates the effective leadership approaches of this segment in higher education in general (Bryman, 2007; Trocchia & Andrus, 2003), and in higher education in Saudi Arabia in particular. Meanwhile, the majority of these studies on leadership effectiveness have been conducted in Western contexts such as the US, Canada, the UK and Australia (Bryman, 2007; Shahin & Wright, 2004). Consequently, what might be an effective leadership style in one context, might not be applicable to different segments of leadership in differing settings. This emphasises the need for in-deep research to understand the impact of administrative culture, education, societal factors, and economic status on academic leadership in SAHE.

It is worthy to note that Saudi University Deans are all Saudi citizens, as it is almost forbidden for any expatriate faculty member to be a Dean or head of a department. Therefore, the expatriates (primarily originating from Egypt, Jordan, and Sudan) are engaged in direct teaching tasks, while the administrative roles are carried out by the Saudi faculty members (see Table 1.1 for numbers of Saudi and non-Saudi faculty members). Moreover, due to the gender segregation in the country, Deans are typically male, with females being the deputies of male Deans, Vice-Deans for women's affairs or Deans in the female branches. Accordingly, since the educational system in the country separates absolutely between the male and female branches, a male researcher cannot easily interview a female faculty member, and thus, for this reason the current research is restricted to male Dean participants due to the researcher's gender.

1.9.2 Academic Leadership Centre

In 2006, the Ministry of Higher Education adopted the strategic guidelines from the national five-year plan and focused on developing the human resources at universities, with academic leadership development representing one of the Ministry's projects. Later, in 2009, the

Ministry established a specific centre called the Academic Leadership Centre (ALC) to achieve the following five goals:

- Contribute to the development and spread of leadership culture that fosters innovation, success, and excellence.

- Advance effective leadership behaviours and practices through services and programmes on the themes of higher education leadership and management.

- Assist in decision making through information and the diagnostic assessments of leadership and management.

- Facilitate leadership development and succession planning in HEIs.

- Be responsive to the evolving and changing leadership challenges and the needs of stakeholders.

(Academic Leadership Centre, 2017)

The ALC has concentrated on designing and executing nationwide workshops and training programmes for academic leaders, including Deans, as well as publishing and translating certain scientific articles in the field; however, the ALC's scope of work is still limited in terms of effect:

> The recent establishment of the Academic Leadership Centre in Saudi Arabia was unanimously endorsed by workshop participants as a strong step in the right direction, but this endorsement was accompanied by the firm assertion that the centre, on its own, would not be sufficient to develop and maintain the educational leadership capacity sought and needed by the Kingdom.

(Smith & Abouammoh, 2013, pp. 176–177)

The experience and the role of the ALC is considered in greater detail when analysing the data that emerge from the research.

1.10 Thesis Structure

Following the introduction, the thesis is organised into eight chapters:

Chapter 2 informs the selection of the study's theoretical framework where culture is first conceptualized; levels of cultures are considered; both organisational and societal cultures are framed; and finally leadership in the context of culture is examined.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature concerning both leadership and culture. This situates leadership in a context of culture that contributes to the identification of gaps in the literature in this area. In addition, the chapter provides literary readings on leadership in the context of Saudi Arabia, and SAHE in particular.

Chapter 4 presents the methodological approach applied to answer the research questions, introducing the rationale for adopting the social interpretivist stance (Bryman & Bell, 2003), as well as the research approach for this study. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the developed research design, and the data collection and analysis procedures related to the research method. The reliability and validity of the data, and the instrument used for collecting the data, are also discussed. Finally, ethical considerations and research limitations are provided.

Chapters 5 and 6 present and analyse the findings of the study resulting from the data analysis. Chapter 5 provides the findings around cultural themes, while Chapter 6 presents the findings around leadership practices as influenced by the identified cultural factors. These findings illustrate the results from the research and explain how the research questions were responded to and how the research objectives were targeted. Furthermore, the findings facilitate the discussion, which takes place in the following chapter, and adds a contribution to the body of knowledge in this area.

Chapter 7 provides a detailed discussion on the findings and compares them with the research theoretical framework and the studies analysed in the literature review. It further proposes a suggested contextual framework for the influence of culture on leadership within the context of the research.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis and summarises the contribution to knowledge that this study has made to the understanding of leadership in this context. The chapter also presents some limitations and recommends avenues for further research.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This research is concerned with the influence of culture on Deans' leadership practice in Saudi government funded universities. Several studies have highlighted the relationship between culture and leadership (see, for example, House et. al, (2004) and Aseri, (2015)). This chapter attempts to do four things: first, to conceptualise the definitions of culture; second, to introduce the levels of culture (particularly organisational and societal); third, to present a narrative regarding cultural dimensional frameworks on both levels; and finally, to situate leadership in the context of culture.

2.2 Conceptualisation of Culture

Similar to leadership, the concept of culture is difficult to define (Taras et al., 2009), although it was explored and defined in relation to many disciplines. This makes the journey to define it much more challenging. A range of definitions exist, but only a few effective ones will be outlined in this thesis.

The British anthropologist Edward Taylor was believed to be the first to define culture, describing it, in 1871, as *"that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society"* (Tharp, 2009, p.3). Although Tylor's attempt to conceptualise culture was efficient in that time, however, labelling culture as something acquired and static opened the venue for other contributions in the field. Geertz (1973) defined culture as*, "the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action" (p. 145).* Although this contribution related the concept of culture to human 'meaning-making', it has been criticized for failing to draw attention to the role of other external surrounding factors in the changing nature of culture*.*

In an attempt to use culture as technique distinguish groups of people, Hofstede (1980: 260) referred to culture as *"the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another"*. In the GLOBE project, House et al., (1999:13) conceptualized culture as: *"shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations".* Bik (2010) argues, that in recent years, culture has often been perceived as a set of values adopted by a group of individuals, representing the way of life they live, and translated into norms, beliefs and practices.

At an organisational level, Edgar Schein (2010), defined culture as: *"A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems that has worked well enough to be considered valid and is passed on to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems". (p. 14).* Consequently, he introduced his three-layer framework (discussed later in this chapter) considering assumption as the basic of perceived values and practices of people in organisations.

Despite the large number of definitions and the fluidity of the meanings it carries, common factors can be seen in the concept. Firstly, culture is a shared notion between groups of people. Secondly, it develops over time. Thirdly, it is a complex concept that has various meanings and various levels. Consequently, the relationship between these levels should be carefully observed when studying culture across its elements. Thus, this research adopts the definition of culture introduced above by GLOBE. This definition is adopted as result of the nature of GLOBE study that investigated both national and organisational cultures linked to leadership. Moreover, it covers the transformation of culture through ages and generations, which represent the Saudi society, where development of tribal and societal values influences leaders' practices.

2.3 Levels of Culture

This section justifies research at both national and organisational culture levels and introduces other levels that, it is argued, were not important to this research study. As a phenomenon, culture can be approached and investigated at more than one level. The most common levels used to target culture are: the national (called societal) and organisational levels. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) listed three levels of culture: national, organisational and individual. National culture concerns with shared values, attributes, beliefs, among people in a certain country or society. Organisational culture is composed of shared common values and attitudes within a specific organisation. Chung et al., (2012) argued that national culture is what sets the people of one nation apart from the people of another, while organisational culture is limited to the differences between two organisations. However, individual culture refers to the individualistic values or attitudes which are carried by a certain individual and are not shared with a group. Although, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, (1997) labelled individual values as a level of culture, they argued, and based on the basic assumption that culture is shared, personal values should not be considered as a culture and therefore not included within the exploration of this research study.

National and organisational levels of culture have received the most attention where dimensional frameworks have been applied to measure cultural values and practices on both levels. However, the way they both interact with and are influenced by each other, is not clear in these studies (Sing, 2010). It is quite rare to find a study which investigated both of them (Erez and Gati, 2004). The GLOBE project, (which is discussed later in this chapter), is one of the interesting studies investigating leadership at both cultural levels: national and organisational.

Both national and organisational cultures are central to the current research due to their influence within the context of SAHE. Therefore, prominent theories, as well as the contributions to national and organisational cultures, are reviewed in this section in order to

strengthen the theoretical framework of the research. Furthermore, it has been noticed that culture, when applied effectively, has played a decisive role in the success of an organisation (Pinho et al., 2014; Schien, 2010).

2.3.1 National Culture Frameworks

As stated earlier, one way to approach culture is through the measurement of cultural dimensions, with national culture being one of the most prominent levels of culture that has received attention in the research literature. This section presents three of the most prominent conceptions used to frame culture based on societal distinctions.

2.3.1.1 Hofstede's Approach

One of the most applicable frameworks for understanding differences based on the national cultural dimensions is that proposed by Geert Hofstede (1980, Hofstede et al., 2010). Hofstede's (1980) well-known original study was based on a survey among IBM managers and employees in over 40 countries. From this sample, Hofstede extracted four main dimensions of cultural differences in the workplace:

- *Power Distance,* which focuses on the degree of equality, or inequality, between the citizens of a country. Essentially, it is the degree of inequality among people which the population considers as normal. In high power distance societies, the centralisation of authority is popular and inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow. These societies are more likely to follow a class system that does not allow any significant upward mobility of its citizens. In contrast, a society ranked with a low power distance indicates one that de-emphasises the differences between citizen power and wealth. In these societies, equality and opportunity are stressed, while decentralisation is popular, subordinates are expected to be consulted and employers tend be democratic (Hofstede et al., 2010).

- *Individualism* focuses on the degree to which the society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships. Essentially, it is the extent to

which people perceive that they are supposed to take care of, or to be cared for by themselves, their families or the organisations they belong to. In highly individualistic societies, individuality and individual rights are paramount. Individuals in such societies may tend to form a larger number of less constrained relationships. Contrary to this, low individualistic societies feature a more collectivist nature with close ties between individuals being reinforced. These cultures emphasise extended families and collectives, where everyone takes responsibility for the fellow members of their group.

- *Masculinity* focuses on the degree that the society reinforces, or not, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control, and power. It is the extent to which a culture is conducive to dominance, assertiveness, and the acquisition of possessions versus a culture which is more conducive to people, feelings, and the quality of life. In high masculinity societies, a greater degree of gender differentiation is shown. In these cultures, males dominate a significant portion of the society and power structure, with females being controlled by the male domination. In contrast, in low masculinity societies a reduced level of differentiation and discrimination between genders is practised. In these cultures, females are treated equally to males in all aspects of the society.

- *Uncertainty Avoidance* concentrates on the degree of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity within the society, and demonstrates the extent to which the citizens of a nation prefer structured over unstructured situations. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity is emphasised, resulting in a rule-oriented society that institutes laws, rules, regulations, and controls in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty. However, in low uncertainty avoidance cultures, a lower concern in terms of ambiguity and uncertainty is noticed, with increased tolerance for a variety of opinions. This is reflected by a society that is less rule-oriented, more readily accepts change, and takes on more and greater risks.

Later, Hofstede (1991) developed a fifth dimension to his previous contribution, based on data from 23 countries that participated in the Chinese Value Survey. He called this

dimension the *Long-Term Orientation*, which illustrates the degree to which the society embraces long-term devotion to traditional, forward-thinking values. Actually, long-term refers to values oriented towards the future, such as saving and persistence, while short-term refers to values oriented towards the past and present, such as respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations. High long-term orientation cultures prescribe to the values of long-term commitments and respect for tradition (Hofstede, 1991). This is thought to support a strong work ethic, where long-term rewards are expected as a result of today's efforts. In contrast, in low long-term orientation cultures, the traditional orientation is not reinforced; while change can occur more rapidly as long-term traditions and commitments do not become impediments to change.

In spite of the frequent citations of Hofstede's contribution in the management and leadership literature concerned with culture, the theory has received relative criticism. For example, McSweeney (2002) challenged Hofstede's methodology and conclusions, questioning the representativeness of Hofstede's sample by referring to the fact that the number of questionnaires was large, but the number of respondents per country was small. Moreover, McSweeney (2002) noted that the data were taken from one single company, while he criticised Hofstede's claim that differences were categorised based on sequences of national culture, since the data could be categorised into further different dimensions and not necessarily the national ones.

In response to McSweeney's (2002) criticism, Hofstede (2002) argued that the same criticism could be applied to survey data and tests across cultural studies, with the use of statistical interference being common practice among social scholars. However, further criticism of Hofstede's theory was highlighted by Williamson (2002), who emphasised the notion of cultural functions and argued that accepting Hofstede's views might lead to a rejection of all other functionalist models of national culture, and could lead to the loss of considerable insights on "[w]hat is otherwise a black box of cultural functions" (p. 1393). Meanwhile, Williamson (2002) claimed that it would be premature to neglect either functionalist or

interpretive approaches to perceiving cultural contexts, with more research necessary applying various paradigmatic stances.

2.3.1.2 Trompenaars's Approach

In spite of the criticism of his works, Hofstede has attracted other contributions based on the nationality–cultural distinction. Trompenaars (1993) and Schwartz (1994,1999) both contributed to the notion of cross-cultural studies. In his survey of 15,000 managers in 28 different countries, Trompenaars (1993) found seven dimensions for national culture distinctions. One of these dimensions was named "Achievement versus Ascriptions", which focuses on the extent to which power is distributed based on the achievement or ascriptions. It was found that in the Arab world, people are ascription-oriented. Saudi Arabia, as part of this world, was found to be consistent with this perception as respect depends on background and social relations. Another important dimension of Trompenaars's (1993) contribution is called "Universalism versus Particularism", which focuses on the generally united goals, policy and procedures in contrast to unique and individual circumstances. The author found that Eastern people (including Arabs) were relatively more particularistic than their counterparts in the Western world, indicating the prioritisation of individualism and personal connections over united goals and procedures. "Equity versus Hierarchy" is Trompenaars's (1993) other dimension, which shows similarity to Hofstede's power distance, where the former found that Arab countries scored highly for hierarchy. Another dimension of Trompenaars's (1993) is "Person versus Task orientations", where Arab counties scored high in terms of person orientation.

2.3.1.3 Schwartz's Approach

 Another contribution to the theories presented to discuss cultural distinctions based on national frameworks is Schwartz's (1994, 1999). The author built his model based on a survey conducted in 40 countries with 88 contributors featuring students and professors, and proposes important dimensions similar to Hofstede (1980) and Trompenaars's (1993). One of Schwartz's significant dimensions is "Conservatism versus Autonomy", where the Arab

culture recorded high on conservatism, which indicates respect for social order and traditions. In contrast, people from high autonomy cultures are encouraged and motivated by their own individual achievements, where they perceive each person as an autonomous entity who can express his/her own preferences and emotions.

"Hierarchy versus Egalitarianism" is another dimension proposed by Schwartz (2006). This dimension invites a relative comparison with Hofstede's (1980, & Hofstede et al., 2010) dimension of power distance. In high hierarchy cultures, behaviour is governed by a hierarchical system with strict roles where the unequal distribution of social power, authority and decision is both accepted and legitimated. On the other hand, in egalitarian societies individuals appear to be more equal with shared interests. Arab cultures, according to this dimension, are scored with high hierarchy, which implies that the organisational culture and relation are distributed unequally, while a high reliance on the approval of superiors is easily noticed. More about the application of these dimensions including linkage to the Saudi culture will be discussed in Sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2

2.3.2 Organisational Culture Frameworks

While Hofstede's, GLOBE and other contributions targeted culture at the national level, another approach also relevant to this research is the examination of the specific work values at the level of the organisation. Hofstede (1991) highlighted the importance of recognising that national culture and organisational culture differ in their nature. His research indicated that national culture primarily considers consistency in values, while organisational culture primarily considers consistency in practices.

Organisational culture can be understood by uncovering how employees in an organisation perceive themselves and how they see the organisation itself. Thus, the concept of *organisational culture* entered the academic literature in the late 1970s and was introduced by Pettigrew (1979), who believed that organisational culture can be transformed to achieve strategic aims, suggesting that organisations have the ability to transform their cultures from within. Schein (2004) introduced the notion that organisational culture has become more

important than it was in the past, and because organisational culture involves assumptions and shared values that assist in defining experiences that are important for maximising the value of employees. This requires a culture that promotes participation across organisational units. The following sections present prominent approaches to organisational culture.

2.3.2.1 Schein's Approach

Edgar H. Schein's (2010) model considers culture as three levels – visible, implied and invisible. The first visible level (Artefacts) introduces the shown elements such as myths, symbols, stories, and rites.   The second (Values) deals with the implied adopted values inclusive of the strategies, goals, or philosophies that are shared among the people in a company.   The third level (Assumptions) deals with those invisible factors that are often overlooked such as espoused beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (Schien, 2010), and these primarily address the basic nature of being human in terms of their communication and beliefs. The relationship between these levels is presented in Figure 2.1 and described below.
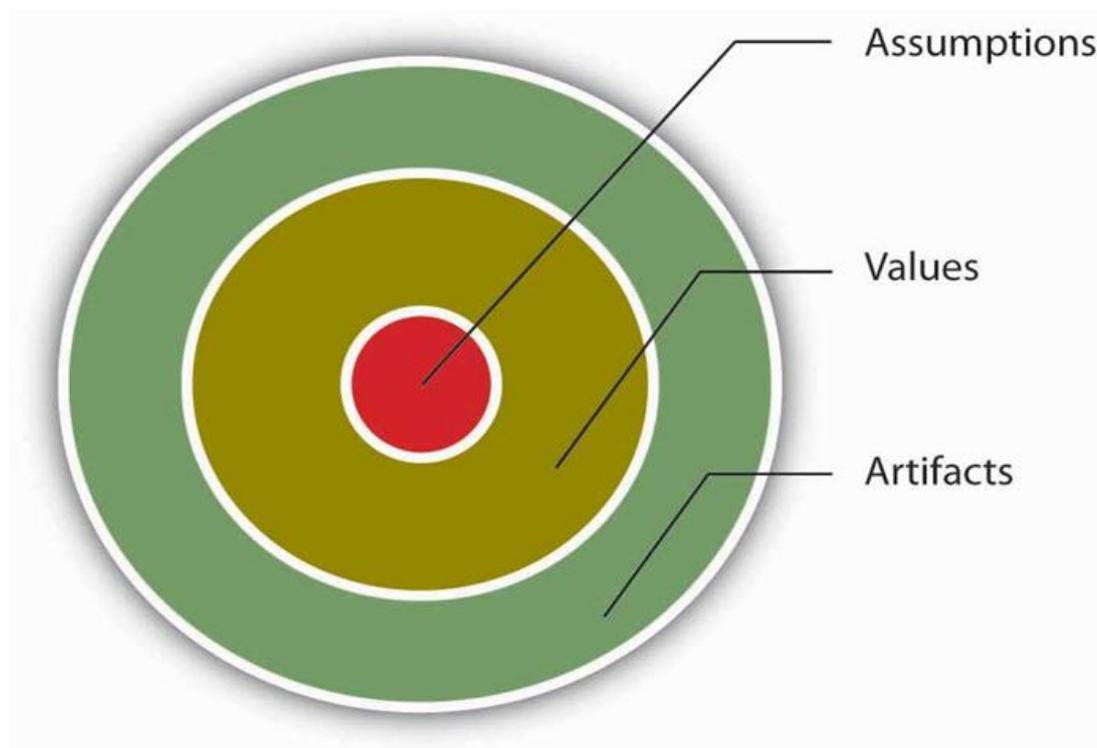
Figure 2.1 the Three Levels of Culture Model

(Source: Schien, 1992:17)

41

Level I: Artefacts

Artefacts are visible, and offer significant signs regarding the culture of the workplace. This level includes elements such as architecture, decoration, design of the workplace, the style of the doors, attire of the employees, and the general pace of the workplace, among others (Schien, 2010).

Level II: Espoused Values

Values are of significant impact to the organisational behaviour of individuals, often being learned over time and defining the internal environment. For instance, an organisation may advertise itself as one that relies on teamwork, while in reality, most employees are rarely included in the decision-making processes (Schien, 2010).

Level III: Shared Tacit Assumptions

Tacit or embedded assumptions are impacted by the values and beliefs of the leaders in an organisation, which are prominent and play a significant role in its success (Schien, 2010). As a result, this kind of organisation will attract individuals who are disciplined and prefer order in their workplace, believing that the success of an organisation is heavily reliant on following hierarchy and discipline. Although Schien's contribution is not widely established in cross cultural organisational levels due to the lack of classifications of organisations' cultures to be measured, his linkage between values with their influence on leadership practice will help this research in the on discussing the relation between Deans' values and their leadership practice.

2.3.2.2 The Competing Value Framework

One of the major models used to determine organisational culture is the Competing Values Framework introduced by Cameron and Quinn (2006) that can help to determine which of the four cultural categories an organisation falls into: the Hierarchy culture, the Market culture,

the Clan culture, or the Adhocracy culture (See Figure 2.2, and the subsequent illustration of each category). When the organisation's category is established, further study is required to determine the changes necessary for a more efficient and promising outcome related to each category.
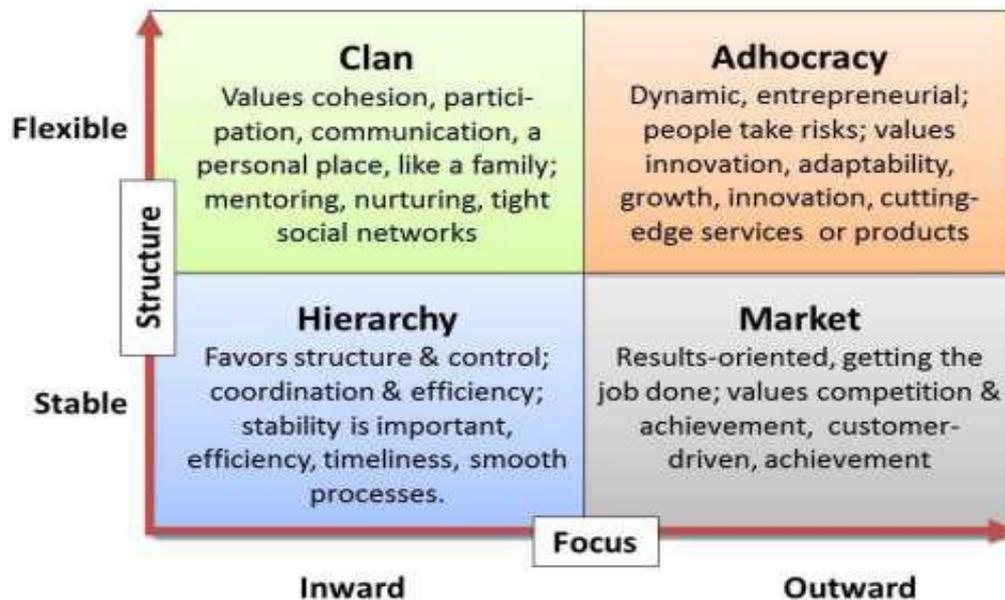
Figure 2.2 Competing Values Framework (Source: Cameron & Quinn, 2011:39)

- *The Hierarchy Culture:* This is often the more formal culture, frequently found in structured organisations that prioritise smooth running, stability, predictability and efficiency (Cameron, 2003). The environment in these types of firms is typically unchanged, with the roles of each person formally defined within their boundaries; therefore, very formal rules are followed in this type of structure, which leads to a balance in products and services rendered. There is a distinct role for decision making, standard rules and procedures within the hierarchy, and the extent to which this is maintained determines the success of this system (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

- *The Market Culture:* This type of culture is more externally focused, that is, towards the suppliers, customers, contractors, unions, and regulators (Cameron & Quinn,

2011). Hence, this type of culture is primarily impacted by monetary exchange and other external economic processes, unlike the aforementioned Hierarchical culture, where the practices are controlled by internal rules and regulations. These organisational goals are focused on profitability, the results, and strength in market niches; therefore, customer-base security is of prime focus. In short, market-oriented culture focuses on results and success (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

- *The Clan Culture:* This type of culture is strongly family-based; for instance, there is a sense of pride in terms of sharing values, goals, inclusion, and individuality, as well as a sense of loyalty (Cameron & Quinn, 2011), to the extent that it may appear more like an extended family than a business. No set rules or regulations are stipulated, with the focus placed on employee development, teamwork, involvement, and cooperation among employees (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

- *The Adhocracy Culture:* Adhocracy originates from the Latin phrase *ad hoc*, which suggests something as being unarranged, not systematic, temporary, specialised, and dynamic. The mentality of "tents rather than palaces" is followed so that when circumstances change and the need arises, change can be made effortlessly (Cameron & Quinn, 2006:43). The goal is flexibility, creativity, and adaptability, which often leads to an uncertain, ambiguous workplace. The adhocracy culture often encourages individuality, risk-taking and planning for future scenarios (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

At the Saudi level, this framework was recently adopted by a researcher in the business sector. Basahel (2016) qualitatively studied three organisations in the field of business, investigating the influence of organisational culture and leadership on the customer relations management of employees in three different places of work, where her study found that the "Hierarchy culture" dominated the environment in the organisations.

2.3.2.3 Working Values Framework

Another interesting framework applied to examine organisational culture is Flowers et al.'s (1975) Working Values Framework. This approach consists of six dimensions for organisational values (Yavas & Rezayat, 2003):

- Existential, featuring a high tolerance for ambiguity and those with different values.

- Socio-centric, with a strong need for affiliation and little concern for wealth.

- Manipulative, where materialism and calculation are applied to achieve the end goal.

- Conformist, featuring a low tolerance for ambiguity and the need for structure and rules.

- Egocentric, where aggressive, selfish, and impulsive attributes dominate.

- Tribalistic, where submission to authority and tradition are widely noted.

Some aspects of similarity can be seen between the above dimensions and Hofstede's (1980). Conformist and Existential could fit with Hofstede's dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance, while Tribalism's values incorporate Hofstede's Power Distance. Moreover, Socio-centric and Egocentric could have some similarity with Collectivism and Individualism in Hofstede's contribution, although the Egocentric dimension carries negative implications, while Individualism has both negative and positive significance.

In similarity to the Competing Values Framework, the Working Values Model was previously applied in the Saudi context, where Ali and Al-Shakis (1985) examined the change in working values in a number of Saudi corporate organisations, while Yavas and Rezayat, (2003) compared the Saudi employees' values with those of expatriates in a variety of manufacturing and service organisations. The first study found that Socio-centric and Tribalistic scored the highest when compared to the other dimensions, while the latter reported weak scores in all six dimensions among Saudi and expatriate managers, with the

study relating this to the socialisation between these two segments of managers that may create a tendency towards cultural convergence. Thus, given such low reliability scores in the framework, a level of caution should be applied to its findings.

Although the last two organisational frameworks (the Competing Values and the Working Values) investigated organisational culture in isolations of its societal culture. Their applications in the Saudi context will guide the outcomes of in the purpose conceptualising framework to the influence of culture on Saudi Deans leadership practices.

2.4 Leadership in the Context of Culture

Culture affects the extent and the manner in which societies achieve or fail to achieve progress in the context of economic and social development. Since the concept of culture was broached as an important element in understanding organisations, companies have been seeking the right kind of culture and recruiting consultants to foster or instil this (Schein, 1996). In their contributions on educational leadership and culture, Miller and Hutton (2014) argue that "school leadership is 'situated' within an individual but emerges from how they engage with and manage, negotiate and navigate factors in a school's internal and external environments" (cited in Miller, 2017 p.14).

The applicability of Western leadership theories in other non-Western cultural contexts remains under question (Shahin & Wright, 2004). The practices of leaders that have emerged in Western studies and that characterise certain successful theories or models, does not necessarily mean they are applicable to other non-Western societies.

House et al. (2004) reported an interesting contribution in the body of cross- cultural leadership based on nationalism, referred to as Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE). The research was designed to investigate culture in relation to leadership in 62 countries. With great reliance on Hofstede (1980, 1991) and Schwartz's (1994) work, the study was conducted by engaging more than 170 collaborators from around the world who brought a deep understanding of their culture and its notion of

leadership practice to the project. The study proposed nine dimensions to distinguish culture and human behaviour:

- *Power Distance:* The degree to which the members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally.

- *Uncertainty Avoidance*: The extent that a society, organisation, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate the unpredictability of future events.

- *Humane Orientation:* The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others.

- *Collectivism I (Institutional):* The extent that organisational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward the collective distribution of resources and collective action.

- *Collectivism II (In-Group):* The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organisations or families.

- *Assertiveness:* The extent that individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others.

- *Gender Egalitarianism:* The degree to which a collective minimises gender inequality*.

- *Future Orientation:* The extent that individuals engage in future-oriented behaviour such as delaying gratification, planning, and investing in the future.

- *Performance Orientation:* The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence (House et al., 2004).

From the dimensions above, it can be noticed that Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Future Orientation echo Hofstede's (1991) dimensions, while others can be seen as a collaboration of both Hofstede's (1980, 1991) and Schwartz's (1994). The GLOBE clustered the countries into ten groups, one of which was identified as the Middle-East Cluster and included two Gulf counties (Kuwait and Qatar) and another two Arab countries (Egypt and

Morocco). Turkey was also included in the same cluster. Although Saudi Arabia was not included in the study, the five countries in this cluster have similarities with it in some respects; for example, all of them are Muslim countries with Islam playing a prominent role in the social life, while two of them (Kuwait and Qatar) are located in the Gulf region and have common ethnic and Arabian traditions, as per Saudi Arabia.

The GLOBE results classified the two Gulf States as collectivist, and with a strong preference for personalised relationships characterised by deep and extensive group influence. However, more variation was noticed among the countries in the same cluster; for example, the uncertainty avoidance score in Kuwait was 4.21, while in Qatar this was 3.99. Kuwait exceeded the global average of 4.10 while Qatar did not. Differences were also noticed in terms of the gender equality, with Kuwait scoring 2.58 while Qatar scored 3.60 (the global average was 3.32). This indicated that gender values are more open and less rigid in Qatar in contrast to Kuwait. These variations could be taken as an indicator of the relative limitations of GLOBE, where generalisations about the Middle-East, Arab societies or even Gulf countries should be made with caution.

In addition to the cultural dimensions, House et. al (2004) have developed a global leadership practice scale which have begun with 21 prototypes and have been reduced to six main styles of practice as a result of the interrelationship between certain characteristics of these prototypes. The six leadership styles have been used in establishing cross-cultural interactions between cultural dimensions and leadership practices. Therefore, these six leadership styles will be operated in the current research when targeting the university Deans' leadership practice. The styles are:

- *Performance Oriented or Charismatic Leadership* is labelled by House et al. (2004) as the leader who has the capability to inspire subordinates with subcategories that have been attached to this style: "visionary, inspirational, self-sacrifice, decisive, integrity performance oriented" (p. 675). Fiedler (1996) points in the charismatic leaders have "unshakeable faith rightness of their mission and their eventual success" (p.242).

- *Team-Oriented Leadership* which emphasize*s* the group work and is identified by five subcategories: "collaborative team orientation, team integrator, diplomatic, malevolent (reverse scores) and administratively competent" (House et. al, 2004, p. 675). Euwema, Wendt & Emmerik (2007) referred to this style as *supportive leadership*, however, they described it as having similar characteristics particularly the leaders practice in promoting the initiative subordinates.

- *Participative Leadership* identified by House et al. (2004) with the attributes of participative in contrary to autocratic. Somech, (2003) argues that this kind of leadership styles prefers a decision making where the subordinates are consulted and involved.

- *Humane-Oriented Leadership* is referred by House et. al (2004) with modesty and human orientation. The humane orientation is represented through developing relationships with the followers which are based on trust; these practices are similar to the ones identified in leadership literature under theory of *transformational leadership* (Burns, 1978). For further discussion about Transformational Leadership, see Section 3.2.1. They are similar to the attributes to *servant leadership* which is also inspirational, moral. Van Woerkoma & De Reuvera, (2009) referred to the fact that both the transformational leadership and servant leadership is proven to be predicted by cultural empathy and open-mindedness

- *Autonomous Leadership* is classified by House et al. (2004) as individual and independent style of leadership. Euwema, Wendt & Emmerik (2007) in their study to the effect of culture on the relation between leaders and their subordinates in the organisations, have depicted similar attributes but under the name of *directive leadership*. This directive leadership is task oriented, supervising the process closely emphasizing the targets (Euwema, Wendt & Emmerik, 2007).

- *Self or Group Protective* leadership which emphasises procedures, status respect and consciousness and face-saving behaviors. This style of leadership focus on the safety and security of the individual and group (House et al.,2004).

These leadership styles were examined and labeled by scores in the ten global clusters (See Table 3.1 for Leadership styles in Middle Eastern countries). Scores between 1 and 3.5 indicate that a style is seen as inhibiting outstanding leadership, while scores from 4.5 to 7 indicate that a style is seen as contributing to outstanding leadership. Scores between 3.5 and 4.5 indicate that a style doesn't much matter for outstanding leadership.

Table 2.1: Middle Eastern societies and their scores of leadership styles in the GLOBE

Country	Performance Oriented (Charismatic)	Team Oriented	Participative	Humane	Autonomous	Self and Group-Protective
Turkey	5.69	6.01	5.09	4.90	3.83	3.58
Egypt	5.57	5.55	4.69	5.14	4.49	4.21
Morocco	4.81	5.15	5.32	4.10	3.34	3.26
Kuwait	5.90	5.90	5.03	5.21	3.39	4.02
Qatar	4.51	4.75	3.92	4.66	3.38	3.92
Cluster Average	5.29	5.47	4.81	4.80	3.69	3.80

Source: Adapted from House et. al (2004)

The above leadership styles presented by House et al. (2004) will be part of the framework of the current research when approaching leadership practice of university Deans in the context of SAHE.

One of the advantages of the GLOBE study over other contributions is that it included both organisational and societal levels, and studied leadership practice in the light of these cultural levels. However, various important points were neglected by the study. The first lies in the fact that leadership practices were not linked to cultural dimensions to justify why such leaders, in a society, perform a certain leadership style. In addition, it has not approached the notion of leadership development in the cultural context i.e. what is required culturally to create effective leadership practice. Moreover, the study was conducted in organisations and not within educational institutions (Miller, 2017). Further, the study covered small countries like Qatar and Kuwait and neglected the largest country in the gulf region, Saudi Arabia,

which creates a concern regarding the criteria of including countries in social clusters (Taras, et. al, 2010). In spite of these concerns about the GLOBE project, and as being a key project in cross cultural leadership research, its results in the Middle East culture will serve as an important part of the theoretical framework for this research study's analysis and outcomes.

2.5 Summary

It is worth noting that cultural frameworks considered above, whether organisational or national, differ not only in their constituent dimensions and their relation to leadership practice, but also in the research methods, their samples, locations and interpretations. The studies of Hofstede, Trompenaars and House and colleagues, have the most resemblances and are linked to the work practice of people in their work environment (Aseri, 2015). Therefore, these frameworks will serve as foundation in understanding the cross-cultural leadership experience of university Deans as part of this research study.

To sum up, this chapter has focused primarily on designing the theoretical framework of the research. It introduced conceptualisation of the term "culture", referring to the level of fluidity and complexity in the concept. The chapters discussed the levels of culture whilst giving detailed consideration of both organisational and national culture. It also proposed different models used by researchers to identify both levels of culture. The chapter ends with situating leadership in the context of culture concluding that leadership practice is culturally constrained.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of relevant empirical research in order to support the research investigation regarding how organisational culture, with its societal factors, influence the leadership practices of academic Deans in Saudi Arabia. Saunders et al., (2012) argues that the significance research findings is usually judged in relation to that of other studies, which is considered in the Discussion Chapter in this thesis (See Chapter 7).

The chapter is structured in four main sections. The first section presents the literature related to leadership, exploring the conceptualisation of leadership and the development of leadership theories. The second section introduces literary readings for the concept, as well as theories, of educational leadership with particular concentration on the cultural contexts, including the challenges facing cross cultural research in educational leadership. The third section discusses leadership in the context of HEIs, which focusses on leadership development in HE. The fourth section explores leadership in the cultural context of this research. Cultural factors and leadership themes are brought together in a further consideration of leadership in the context of this research. The treatment of Arab, and specifically Saudi, as well as SAHE reviews are included with the purpose of illuminating the existent gap in knowledge in this area, and the need for this research study. The review also provides a rationale for the selection of issues under investigation.

3.2 Conceptualisation of Leadership

As a concept, leadership is nebulous and thus difficult to describe. It has been a subject of development in thought and debate since the time of Aristotle and Plato (McCaffery, 2004). Grint (2005) proposed that leadership can be conceptualised as either a person, a result, a position, or a process. As a person, leadership implies that who a person makes him/herself as a leader. This notion ignores the fact that leadership is rational, as a leader needs

subordinates, and, as leadership is a function for a community, it requires attributes to interact with and influence others. Consequently, leadership implies that people become leaders because they achieve results, although this perception is not adequate since even nominal failure can be construed as successful leadership (Grint, 2005, p.3). The third element refers to the concept of leadership as a position, which suggests individuals become leaders as a result of their position; for example, a head teacher or a Dean might be regarded as leaders because of their positions and by virtue of the authority they hold. However, such a notion may not fit as the authority may be delegated and leadership could be practised in separation of a formal position. Finally, as a process, leadership implies that it considers how leaders get things done. In this notion, Grint (2005) refers to the fact that the process could be determined by the surrounding culture and could be an occupational culture.

Meanwhile, Northouse (2016) managed to amalgamate several components and proposed that leadership is (a) a process, (b) involves influence, (c) occurs within a group context, and (d) entails goal achievement. Consequently, he introduced the well-known leadership definition "as a process where by an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2016, p.6).

Leadership is important to all aspects of life and organisations, and represents a competency whereby leaders can learn to expand their capabilities, set the context of their goals, understand the dynamics of employees' behaviour and take the initiative to enable the organisation to reach its future objectives. Leadership involves empowering the other, and can be characterised as a set of qualities attributed to leaders who can successfully employ them (Jago, 1982). Leadership also "revolves around vision, ideas, direction, and has more to do with inspiring people as to direction and goals than with day-to-day implementation" (Bennis, 1989, p. 139). Therefore, leadership succeeds when relationships function and fails when they do not. Leaders' self-awareness and intrapersonal skills are central to their effectiveness (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). These contributions imply that leadership is linked to people and context, and aims to achieve a united vision. Further conceptualising of leadership

is discussed in the next section by considering the development of the main theories of leadership.

3.2.1 Development of Leadership Theories

The nature of human social sciences tends to be relative rather than absolute. Leadership is part of these sciences, which could justify the series of theories developed over the years. However, the link between leadership effectiveness and organisational effectiveness has been the core of leadership theories under development over the last five decades (Bass, 1990). Theories have sought to explain the components of effective leadership and how potentially effective leaders might be selected and developed. In light of this, several of the most important leadership theories are now presented. The reason behind this lies in the need to create a linkage between other efforts of leadership investigation and the theory of transformational leadership, which is applied as a part of the theoretical framework of the current study.

3.2.1.1 Trait Approach

The trait approach is an early approach to leadership effectiveness that appeared in the latter half of the twentieth century. Theories of such an approach were attempting to identify the characteristics or attributes that categorised leaders and distinguished effective ones. This line of theories assumes that the optimum leaders, with the required traits, will succeed in any situation. The trait approach also concentrates on the selection of leaders rather than their development (Grint, 2000). Meanwhile, leaders do not all comprise identical attributes, since no set of traits can characterise all leaders in all situations (Bass, 1990), or even reliably differentiate between them.

One of the crucial disadvantages of this approach lies in its subjectivity, and it is not helpful in training and development as traits are psychologically structured and not easily changed (Northouse, 2001). Furthermore, this approach neglects situations where leadership is practised in relation to people and context.

3.2.1.2 Style Approach

As part of the developmental nature of the leadership phenomenon, and due to the lack of applicability of the trait approach, a new stream of behavioural leadership emerged. Blake and Mouton (1964) argued that it possible to identify leadership behaviors in two dimensions. A leader's style can be classified as (a) high concern for people, low concern for task; (b) low concern for people, low concern for task; (c) high concern for people, high concern for task; or (d) low concern for people, high concern for task. Their effort opened the door for a new contribution to emerge.

The assumption of this approach lies in the need to identify the best leadership style and to determine which styles are more effective than others (English & Anderson, 2005). Under this theory, consideration is identified as a human-centred style and is the degree to which people show concern for others in the workplace. According to English and Anderson (2005), this style focuses on concern for the well-being of subordinates, amicable relationships, and the equitable treatment of all employees. Alternatively, initiating structure is a leadership style that focuses on the leader's concern for the task and the manner in which it will be accomplished (Locke, 1965), while recognising that effective leaders ought to have a balance between these two styles (Northouse, 2001).

Compared to the trait approach, this strand of leadership could have an advantage that lies it its assumption that leadership qualities and styles are not inherited but rather can be learned and developed. However, researchers have not found a clear link between certain leadership styles and performance outcome (Yukl, 1990). In addition, Northouse (2001) pointed to the fact that it is challenging to identify universally effective leadership styles that fit all situations.

3.2.1.3 Situational Approach

Due to the shortcomings of the style approach, the situational approach gained in popularity as it functions in three main dimensions: the leaders, the subordinates, and the specific situation in which they interact. Fiedler (1993) argued that no single method of leadership

can be deemed optimum in all situations, referring to the issue whereby leadership is based on situational factors, and claiming that in order for organisations to achieve their goals it is better to change the leaders than for the leaders to change their style. Fiedler (1993) proposed that the needs of the organisation are best fulfilled when there is a link between the manager's style and the nature of the work.

Based on this perception, Hersey and Blanchard (1977) introduced the situational leadership model that relies on the behavioural style of leaders in certain situations (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1993). Situational leadership considers the relationship practices between the leader and the follower as that of the relationship between a parent and child (Robbins, 2005). Based on the simplicity with which followers could be developed using the four levels of follower maturity, Yukl (1989) claimed that situational leadership is one of the most popular and engaging leadership styles in many fields, including education. According to Hersey et al. (2001), the four levels of a leader's relationship with a follower's maturity introduced by this theory are telling, selling, participating and delegating.

In terms of being easy to understand, this approach is well known and widely adapted in leadership training and quantitative investigations of their behaviour (Kao et al., 2006). Various scales have been developed to measure this style of leadership, including the Leadership Effectiveness and Adaptability Description (LEAD) developed by the Centre for Leadership Studies, Inc. (Moore & Dyer, 2002), and the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (1996). Despite being a well-recognised theory (Northouse, 2001), the number of studies that has been conducted to illustrate the assumptions and propositions put forth by situational leadership theory is limited (Kao et al., 2006). This could be considered to be a result of the concentration on the leaders and followers' relationship, without taking into account the cultural changes in the organisation that affect the context where leaders and followers interact. In the context of this study, it is suggested that organisational culture, for example, might influence the contributors' preference for a certain leadership style.

3.2.1.4 Transformational Approach

In the area of leadership theories, transformational leadership is commonly considered in the company of transactional leadership. Transactional leadership depends on two behaviors: *Contingent Reward* and *Management by Exceptions* (Basham,2010). Contingent reward is shown through mutual benefits experienced between a leader and his subordinates in terms incentives and motives. Management by exception is seen through corrective criticism, negative feedback, and negative reinforcement (Basham, 2010). Transformational leadership does not necessarily detract from transactional leadership, but rather builds on it, thereby broadening the influences of the leader on subordinates' effort and performance (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

During his study of political leadership, James MacGregor Burns first introduced the concept of transformational leadership in his book *Leadership* (1978), with this term now also being widely utilised in the organisational field. Burns (1978) described transformational leadership not as a set of specific behaviours, but rather as an ongoing process through which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (p. 20). This concept was later developed by Bass (1985) and Bass and Avolio (1993) to include other element such as charismatic and human oriented behaviours. Transformational leaders offer a purpose that transcends short-term goals to focus on higher-order intrinsic needs.

Transformational leaders raise the effectiveness of the organisation by appealing to the higher ideals and values of their subordinates. In doing so, they may model the values themselves and employ charismatic methods to attract people to the values, and consequently to themselves as the leader (Burns, 1978). These elements of leadership have several consistencies with cross cultural styles introduced as features of outstanding leadership in the GLOBE study, particularly charismatic, humane, team oriented and participative.

Burns was influenced by Abraham Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Needs, which recognises that people have a range of needs, and that the extent to which they will perform

effectively in the workplace will be affected by the extent to which these needs are satisfied. Transformational leadership aligns with the higher levels of Maslow's Theory, as it requires a high degree of self-esteem and self-actualisation to successfully become an authentic, transformational leader.

Transformational leadership often commences with the development of a vision, where the leaders develop trust and guide their employees. Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as a process through which both leaders and followers believe in inspiring and uplifting one another to higher levels of moral ethics and motivation. Moreover, transformational leadership is a practice that discovers those values that are mutually held by both leaders and followers; it is also concerned with intellectual stimulation and individual consideration among all constituents (Burns, 1978; Kouzes & Posner, 1996).

Transformational leadership is differentiated from other leadership styles in terms of its emphasis on moral leadership. For example, a transformational leader leads with an ethical philosophy and provides the organisation with its ultimate measure of worth, while satisfying the needs and aspirations of the organisation's constituents (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Basham (2010) claims that "transformational leadership is value driven. The leader sets high standards and purposes for followers, engaging them through inspiration, exemplary practice, collaboration, and trust" (p. 145).

Bass (1990) proposed four components of transformational leadership:

- *Idealised Influence,* where leaders behave as strong role models, trusted and highly respected by their subordinates.

- *Inspirational Motivation*, whereby leaders effectively communicate with subordinates and inspire them to participate through engagement and creating a shared vision.

- *Intellectual Stimulation*, through which subordinates are encouraged to be creative, innovative, and prepared to share their ideas.

- *Individualised Consideration* or Individualised Attention, where leaders concentrate on and support the individual needs of their subordinates.

One of the strengths of the transformational leadership approach is that it recognises leadership is a process that depends on interaction between leaders and subordinates. Transformational leaders express strong value-oriented behaviour; moreover, they are tolerant of other viewpoints while fulfilling roles to support and empower their subordinates (Northouse, 2001). In spite of the extensive treatment of the transformational leadership style among scholars and the relative preference of its components as the ideal leadership model, a number of questions arise; for example, the potential for abuse may occur, while the values, vision or even the shared goals espoused by transformational leaders may not always be beneficial or able to create change, since change still features some degree of ambiguity in this approach (Northouse, 2001). Some remain unable to conclude whether it is the most effective leadership style in all contexts, and even if it were, whether it can be acquired by individuals through training remains to be seen (Bass, 1990). Furthermore, Spreitzer et al. (2005) concluded that the traditions of the leader and their cultural environment have an influence on the leadership behaviour, and thus these factors require further investigation. Moreover, this kind of leadership practice, which develop and communicate a vision and a sense of strategy and "find clear and workable ways to overcome obstacles, are concerned about the qualities of the services their organisation provide, and inspire other members to do likewise" (Swail, 2003, p.14), are critical to higher education institutions.

Transformational leadership is important to this research since, within higher education, practice of such leadership could be adopted to meet the constantly changing economic and academic environment within Saudi Arabia (see Sections 1.6 and 1.9.1).

These elements of transformational leadership are important to the current research, not only because they are the most ideal styles in higher education as Basham (2010) argued, but also because they represent challenges for cross cultural research in the level of ideal and

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actual leadership practices.   Further, and the way we can consider transformational leadership as actually practiced or theoretically preferred.

3.3 Educational Leadership

Like famous leadership theories, one of the major criticism of cross cultural leadership studies lies in the fact they were developed scales and dimensions with concentration on business sectors. Hofstede developed his dimensions based on samples from IBM international company, while the GLOBE investigated culture and leadership in business companies not educational institutions. The same occurred in the Saudi context where Alzoman (2012) and Aseri, (2015) studied leadership in the industrial field, while Basahel (2016) explored organisational culture in the business sectors. This section provides an overview of the theories of educational leadership with concentration on its relation cultural issues.

Educational leadership a is subfield of leadership. The process employed to describe this field has developed over time from educational administration to educational management, and finally to educational leadership (Gunter, 2004). Theories and models of educational management have been categorised by different studies; for example, Cuthbert (1984) placed educational management theories into five groups: analytic–rational, pragmatic–rational, political, phenomenological, and interactionist models.

Based on four elements including the level of agreement about objectives, the concept of structure, the level of environmental influences and the most appropriate leadership strategies within the educational organisations, Bush (2011, pp. 34–35) categorised the models of educational management into the six clusters of formal, collegial, political, subjective, ambiguity and cultural models, and finally linked these six models with nine different leadership styles in the context of educational organisations. The nine leadership styles are managerial, transformational, distributed, transactional, postmodern, participative, emotional, contingency and moral.

The following are models of educational leadership introduced by Bush (2011):

- *Formal Model*, where structures, systems, bureaucracy, rational and hierarchical models are vital. These models assume that the structures of the educational organisations are hierarchical and the authority and power of heads are the product of their formal positions in the hierarchy and also these managers are responsible to work on agreed policies in their organisations (Bush, 2011).

- *Collegial Model*, where sharing the power among members of the organisation who are considered to have a common perception of the organisational objectives. In this model, policy formulation, decision making is made based on discussions, agreements and consensus (Bush, 2011).

- *Political Model,* which assumes that educational policies and decisions in organisations stem from a complex process of compromising and negotiation over the goals of each unit or individuals; and common organisational goals are pursued by interest groups through formation of alliances (Bush, 2011).

- *Subjective Model*, which mainly stress the aims and perceptions of individual members in the organisation rather than subgroups, units or the whole organisation and, therefore, the concept of organisational objectives is rejected based on this perspective (Bush, 2011).

- *Ambiguity Model,* which emphasizes turbulence, confusion, instability and ambiguity of organisational life, loose coupling within constituent groups, uncertainty and unpredictability, sensitivity to the signals emanated from the external environment, emphasis on decentralisation, and a lack of clarity of organisational objectives.

- *Cultural Model*, where focuses on how perceptions and viewpoints of members are integrated into shared organisational meanings. Concepts such as ideas, beliefs, norms, values, attitudes, attributes, traditions are considered as central to this model.

The context of educational institutions is under consistent change, and there has always been a need for new adaptations to the environment. Based on this, and in spite of Bush's (2011)

great contribution to the field of educational management, Desimone (2009) and Miller (2017) argued that the complexity of the nature of the context of organisational cultures in educational organisation makes adaptations to any of these models highly linked to the context of where the organisations operate.

3.3.1 Educational Leadership and Context

Within her research focusing on educational leadership, Desimone (2009:185) refers to context as 'an important mediator and moderator'. Thus, context is critical to leadership practice and cannot be treated as only a secondary factor influencing leadership. Jepson, (2009:39) identified three levels of context influencing leadership practice:

- the immediate social context (e.g. job, technology, department, organisation, industry etc.)

- the general cultural context (e.g. organisational culture, national culture); and

- the historical, institutional context (e.g. education, socialisation etc.)

However, research on leadership has been dominated by the attempt to find best universal leadership practice that distinguish leaders from non-leaders and effective leaders from non-effective leaders (e.g. Blake and Mouton, 1964; Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2001). Little focus has been given to the influence of context on leadership practice. As a result, it remains unclear how far context influences individuals and, alternatively, the extent to which individuals draw on different contexts at different points in time to construct their own perception of leadership. In his contribution to Pashiardis & Johansson's (2016), Paul Miller concludes his exploratory study on Effective School Leadership: A Caribbean Perspectives, stating:

> *Successful and effective school leadership is not something that can be seen out there. Instead, it must be theorized and understood in the contexts in which people are located and in the line with the values present in a society* (p. 91).

Considering this, attention has to be paid to the dynamics within the context where leadership is practiced, thus providing in depth understanding of the complexity of leadership in that context. In the case of this research, components of the context of Saudi government funded universities is a major concern, where organisational cultural factors with their influence of university Deans' leadership experience are investigated.

3.3.2 Challenges of Cross-Cultural Educational leadership

Since this research explores leadership in the context HE and examine the applicability of cross cultural dimensional frameworks in the culture of SAHE, it is worthy to present several challenges facing cross-culture educational leadership. In their study, *School Leadership in Context: Societal and Organisational Cultures contributing* to the Bush and Bell's (2002), Clive Dimmock and Allan Walker outlined three challenges facing cross-cultural studies of educational leadership.

The first lies in the fluidity the concept of culture that carries multiple definitions and ambiguities which:

> *alone, does not have the explanatory power to account for all difference between schools in different societies and regions. Economic, political religious and demographic factors for example, may also play a key role, and their relation to culture is equivocal (p. 81).*

Another challenge is related to the dynamic nature of many societal cultures as they appear to be multi-cultural and create diverse within the same culture. One example of this notions lies in the tension between traditional notions of cultures (representing tradition and historical origins of society) and other modern notions (representing the recent changes). The third challenge concerns with extent cross- cultural research in educational leadership influences the globalisation of leadership, and consequently contributes for a better policy formation and a better understanding of various interpretations of leadership.

3.4 Leadership in the Context of Higher Education

Several contributions have been put by researchers as models of leadership practice in HEIs. Most of these models were developed in certain contexts as ideal styles for leadership

practices. This section considers the development of these approaches with HE. However, further consideration is needed within higher education, which identifies whether leadership theories applied in the business sector might cover leadership in higher education (Astin & Astin, 2000).

The following are the most common approaches employed in the available literature on leadership in higher education:

- *Hierarchical approaches* associated with authority (Astin & Astin, 2000), and power and top-down autocratic views of leadership (Amey, 2006).

- *Individualistic approaches* based on personal status and professional recognition, usually encountered within academic faculty positions, and identified in US colleges as a key reason for driving the higher value of research versus teaching (Astin & Astin, 2000).

- *Collegial approaches,* referring to mutual supportiveness among staff (Bryman, 2007).

- Collaborative approaches that support engagement and cooperation among faculties (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

- *Transformational approaches* that have tended to dominate the understanding of leadership within the HEIs (Astin & Astin, 2000) and tend to be linked positively with their apparent foundation upon human interactions, which suits the demands of faculty and leadership roles. Moreover, the transformational approach is also perceived to meet the ongoing challenges facing HEIs (e.g. globalisation and rapid technological changes), and is a leadership approach that will better enable the creative solutions necessary to meet those challenges (Amey, 2006).

Meanwhile, the applicability of one or more leadership approaches in higher education is still under concern. An effective leader needs to apply both transformational and transactional leadership approaches (Bass & Avolio, 1993), depending on the individuals and tasks being undertaken in the various contexts. The current challenge for leaders is to be able to perceive

which element to manage within the context of each particular situation (e.g. people, task, team, and other contextual factors) (Seddon, 2003). The current research appears to fit within this approach, as it assumes that leadership in the context of SAHE is influenced by other contextual factors such as the organisational and societal cultures, and part of this culture is the system.

3.4.1 Leadership Development in the Context of Higher Education

The demand and call for leadership development is widely noticed in the recommendations of relevant literature reviews. Consider the case of academic Deans, who rise to their leadership position without any prior preparation in leadership and management, but rather as a result of their success in an academic committee, education or research (Gmelch & Buller, 2015).

Leadership development has adopted more than one approach, with some concentrating on identifying the gap between the current level of leaders' competencies and organisational goals when designing development programmes (Schein, 1985). Meanwhile, others called for attention to be placed on the difference between inherited skills and other skills that could be developed through training (Connaughton et al., 2003). Alternatively, Gmelch and Buller (2015) highlighted that leadership development entails more than merely attending training for a short period of time, as it seems to involve the long-term development of a career path that includes other steps rather than solely training. They argued that "the transformation from successful faculty member—which involves one set of highly developed skills and attributes—to effective academic leader—which involves an entirely different set of highly developed skills and attributes—cannot be accomplished by reading a book or attending a seminar" (Gmelch & Buller, 2015, p. 8). Supporting this argument, in their study, *Establishing and maintaining high-performing leadership teams: a primary perspective,* Abbot and Bush (2013) argued that:

> ....the message from the case studies is that sustainable improvement takes time. A firm foundation is required to underpin strategic development and 'quick fixes' are unlikely to succeed (p. 598).

Inside universities, a long period of time is required for a faculty member to pursue their doctoral degree in a certain discipline, and another five or six years to be promoted from one academic rank to another. Therefore, if we assume that it takes between ten and twenty years for a faculty member to become an expert in an academic discipline, then why do we assume that we can train academic leaders in a three-day workshop? (Gmelch & Buller, 2015).

Day (2001) argued that leadership development is distinct from management development to the extent to which it involves preparing people for roles and situations beyond their current experience. Management development, he argues, equips managers with the knowledge, skills and abilities to enhance performance on known tasks through the application of proven solutions whilst leadership development is defined as "orientated towards building capacity in anticipation of unforeseen challenges" (p. 582).

As Mike Myatt, managing director and chief strategy officer at N2growth, concluded in an article aptly titled "The #1 Reason Leadership Development Fails":

> *You don't train leaders; you develop them—a subtle yet important distinction lost on many. ... Don't train leaders, coach them, mentor them, disciple them, and develop them, but please don't attempt to train them. Where training attempts to standardize by blending to a norm and acclimating to the status quo, development strives to call out the unique and differentiate by shattering the status quo. Training is something leaders dread and will try and avoid, whereas they will embrace and look forward to development. Development is nuanced, contextual, collaborative, fluid, and above all else, actionable.*

(Cited in Gmelch and Buller, 2015, p. 7)

Thus, the literature supports leadership development as extending beyond training to include various processes such as Deans' selection, coaching and mentoring programmes.

3.5 Culture in the Context of Saudi Arabia

In the purpose to highlight the cultural issues related to the unique culture of Saudi Arabia, this section considers findings of relevant studies examined the cultural values in the Saudi business and industrial sectors. A number of writers have explored the manner in which cultural factors affect the workplace behaviour in the Saudi or even the Arab contexts. Bjerke

and Al-Meer (1993) reported a tendency for uncertainty and high power distance in Saudi Arabia through the practice of and reliance on authority. Their study found that in spite of Saudi managers' preference for informality and a personal approach, in practice subordinates' engagement in decision making was limited as the subordinates expressed a high reliance on their managers and expected them to behave autocratically. Meanwhile, Alamri et al. (2014) applied Hofstede's approach to draw a comparison between his 1980 findings and the perceptions of a small segment of Saudi e-learning students, with the study finding that the Saudi culture scores are almost typical of Hofstede's findings on the Arab culture, and reporting that Saudi culture has high power distance, and is a collective and dominantly masculine society, featuring high uncertainty avoidance.

Mohammad and Mohammad (2011, p. 412) defined the Arabic term *Wasta* as the interventions of a patron in favour of a client in an attempt to obtain privilege or resources from a third party. A *Wasta* network begins with the family and tribe connections, and extends to a wider community among organisations (Iles et al., 2012). In the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, social networks play a vital role at all levels of decision making. The influence of family connections carries over into the organisation and workplace, including career development (Al-Harbi et al., 2016). Ali and Swiercz (1993) pointed to a similar impact of *Wasta* and social power on people's rewards inside organisations, whereby in "Saudi Arabia and in the rest of Arab states, pay is determined without regards to the merit of performance and the promotion and salary increase are largely determined by personal connection and maneuver, nepotism and sectarian and ideological affiliation" (p. 40). Moreover, Hunt and At-Twaijri (1996) found that friendship and personal connections among Saudi employees might be dominant over organisational performance.

Another interesting factor in the Saudi community is the respect given to traditional, religious and tribal values. In Saudi Arabia, great respect and authority are proffered to the tribal and religious leaders, which provides an explanation for the country's high score in Hofstede's power distance scale. Furthermore, Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) argued that this tribal tradition is one of the roots of Saudi Arabia's high score in Hofstede's dimension of

uncertainty avoidance. These values certainly affect the workplace values and are mirrored in the relation between leaders and their subordinates. Saudi managers view business organisations as part of their extended family, which explains the transfer of tribal values to the workplace. At-Twaijri et al.'s (1994) study concluded that Saudi managers tend to employ managerial power in a more autocratic manner than their counterparts in the US. Regarding the loyalty to family and friends, the Saudi managers were perceived by their subordinates as being less fair than the US managers (At-Twaijri et al., 1994), with the researchers pointing to the fact that Saudi managers are bound by tradition and they face cultural pressure to favour family and social relations. This may justify the classification of the Saudi society as a collectivist, which implies a group-based society (Bjerke & Al-Meer, 1993).

Meanwhile, At-Twaijri et al. (1994) and Ali and Al-Shakis (1985) reported that the exposure of Saudi managers to Western styles of education and multicultural diversity affects their traditional behaviour. They argued that managers' reliance on authority and preference for tribalistic, egocentric and conformist values as a result of their Western education leads to socio-centric and manipulative attributes. This implies that Saudi society, as any other, is influenced by educational and technological changes. However, this greater preference for alternative ideas, reduced reliance on authority, hierarchy and traditions, and a more goal-oriented management is still under debate in terms of the prevalence in all sectors in the country.

3.5.1 Leadership in the Cultural Context of Saudi Arabia

This section offers an extensive review of the literature contributions examining leadership in the context of Saudi Arabia, with the findings discussed and relevant approaches selected that facilitated in creating linkage in relation to the respective research findings. In addition, it highlights the gab in the existing literature where lack of investigation of the cultural factors influencing leadership practices was apparent.

Ali and Swiercz (1993) referred to the fact that despite Saudi managers attempting to create a sense of consultation by referring to a particular style of leadership, their behaviour is firmly entrenched in the authoritarian and hierarchical structures of their organisation. Moreover, their aim behind the legislative methods is to encourage the acceptance of decisions already made by managers, and to enhance their perception as opposed to empowering their subordinates. In their study of 83 managers in different Saudi cities and various private and public organisations, Ali and Swiercz (1993) found that twenty-eight percent preferred the pseudo-consultative style and thirty-nine percent preferred the consultative style, with twenty percent claiming the adoption of the participative style and eleven percent the use of a predominantly autocratic style, while only two individuals cited the adoption of a predominantly delegative style.

Alzoman (2012) investigated effective leadership and cultural diversity in the Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), where he found that social identity and leadership behaviour can interact to create a more effective leader, which may reduce conflict while increasing the group cohesion and affective commitment to the organisation. The researcher examined the impact of two leadership styles and considered their influence on the multinational work environment, namely, the charismatic leadership style (Conger & Kanungo, 1998) and the ethical leadership style (Masuda, 2005). Alzoman's (2012) findings indicate that in order to enhance leadership effectiveness, there must be a sufficient relationship between the team identity and leaders within the organisation, together with a great concern for cultural diversity. Although the study illustrates the importance of culture and identity, the researcher argued that applying different leadership styles that have been developed in different contexts is no longer an adequate approach. He rationalised this conclusion by claiming that adopting different styles of leadership—primarily Western—has its limitations when applied to other contexts because social identity, the surrounding administrative factors and the impact of national culture have a much greater influence (Alzoman, 2012). On this caution of the applicability of Western theories isolated from

contextual factors, Alzoman's (2012) findings agree with Abdalla and Al-Homoud (2001) and Shahin and Wright (2004).

Aseri (2015) highlighted leadership's relation to the global and cultural context in Saudi Arabian organisations. She intended to examine leadership within the Saudi construction and manufacturing sectors, addressing the organisations' environment, influential factors and current leadership practices. As per other relevant studies on Saudi and Arab culture, in terms of the purpose of establishing effective leadership within organisations, Aseri (2015) proposed a framework based on the data she collected through matching between social influence (emotional intelligence dimensions), leadership in action, and knowledge management. However, the study findings and even the proposed framework were not sufficiently clear to determine the practical steps necessary to develop leadership practice in the context of the culture of Saudi Arabia.

Applying the perception of subordinates, and in a comparative study, Drummond and Al-Anazi (1997) surveyed four public and private organisations—Saudi British Bank, SABIC, Saudi Telecom Company, and the Saudi civil service—using Bass and Avolio's (1993) Multi-Factor Questionnaire to measure the leadership styles of managers as perceived by their subordinates. They found that in the civil service (a purely governmental agency) transformational and transactional styles were significantly lower than in other organisations. Moreover, another finding lies in the fact that the transactional style was significantly higher in SABIC then in the Saudi Telecom Company. The researchers justified the lower civil service score in terms of transformational and transactional leadership as a result of their high reliance on rules and regulations. Drummond and Al-Anazi (1997) clarified this further through arguing that the civil service is the least likely organisation to be exposed to Western engagement and cultural diversity, and the most strongly linked to Saudi social and cultural values. Nevertheless, these interpretations are inadequate to form generalisation as the impact of these cultural factors was not examined in the other three organisations.

Shahin and Wright (2004) investigated the suitability of solely adopting western originated theories as ideal styles of leadership in the Arab world. The researchers, supported by the

findings from 70 managers and 173 subordinates in ten Egyptian banks, noticed that other cultures may reveal leadership dimensions that have previously emerged in North American cultures, where the majority of these theories were born and successfully applied. Relatively, and similar to Saudi Arabia, Egypt is an Islamic, Arab country with family-centred societal values, a high degree of authority and reliance on a strict hierarchy. The authors applied Bass and Avolio's (2000) Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire, which measures aspects of transformational and transactional leadership, while other questions were added to measure social interaction and a more authoritarian and personalised style of charismatic leadership. Bureaucratic leadership, social integration and authoritarian leadership emerged from the study as separate factors with relative concerns expressed by the respondents, although these were not included in the elements of Bass and Avolio's model. This supports the need for caution when adapting Western leadership theories to other cultures where societal factors may differ.

The GLOBE methodology was also applied as a basis for Abdalla and Al-Homoud's (2001) investigation of Qatari and Kuwaiti leadership values, which reported similar outcomes, with the authors concluding that their study's findings confirmed the reliability and validity of the GLOBE measures in the Gulf region. Nevertheless, one interesting point clarified by the authors lies in the disparity between the leaders' preference for certain values and their actual practice of other values. The authors referred this to the ongoing transition occurring in the region that resulted in dual values, particularly among the educated (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001). This distinction was also noticed by Argyris (1993), who differentiated between Espoused and Exerted cultures, and by Klien et al. (2009), who noted the disconnect between Ideal and Operational cultures.

3.5.2 Leadership in the Context of SAHE

The paucity of literary contribution on leadership in the context of Saudi Arabia is a major issue noticed by researchers: "There is a remarkable scarcity of solid studies on leadership theory and practices in Saudi Arabia" (Metcalfe & Mimouni, 2011, p. 180). The situation

becomes even more difficult in the context of leadership in SAHE. However, over the last five years increasing interest among Saudi researchers has been noticed, albeit at a slow pace. This section presents three related literary works.

In his study on the leadership practices of Department Chairs at King Saud University (the largest university in the country), Alfayez (2014) investigated the perceptions of the university's heads of departments regarding their leadership practices in their departments, including an analysis of gender differences. The researcher applied the Leadership Practices Inventory instrument, created by Kouzes and Posner (1995), and surveyed 150 male and female Department Chairs, with the study finding no significant differences among the participants' perceptions of leadership practices based on gender, years of experience, and the academic rank. Alfayez pointed to the need for awareness of their leadership practices as a step towards becoming more professional academic leaders, discussing that this would be beneficial as it would help the administration to deliver a more proficient and effective educational environment for the faculty and its students. Meanwhile, not only did the research not approach the contextual factors influencing the practices of leadership in Saudi Arabia, or even classify distinctly certain leadership style of respondents, but the context was also limited to one university. Furthermore, the researcher applied a quantitative approach to determine the most desirable practice of Deans, without analysing or referring to the reasons behind such practices.

For the purposes of identifying effective leadership characteristics and practices for female Department Chairs at King Abdul-Aziz University, Gonaim and Peters (2017) qualitatively investigated and found Chairs face two categories of difficulty: challenges with people, and challenges with rules and regulations. Evaluating faculty members, dealing with diverse personalities and student/faculty complaints are examples of the challenges with people, while the challenges with rules and regulations include unclear rules and regulations, technological issues, and the pressures of work. In spite of the small scope of this study and the researchers' concentration on the leadership characteristics among female Departmental Chairs at one university, the study's findings dedicate considerable space to the surrounding

and cultural factors that affect these female Chairs' leadership practice. Using empirical data from a HEI, this study supports the ongoing argument of the importance of considering the surrounding environmental factors when formulating academic leaders' practices.

In an investigation targeting general education in the city of Riyadh, Al-Fozan (1997:250) studied the leadership style of head teachers and its relationship with primary school pupils' achievement in the Saudi city, with the research findings indicating three leadership styles as the major characteristics in these primary schools: "spokesman and manager", "striving for achievement and professionalism", and "autocratic". Although the findings reveal no direct link between pupil achievement and these styles of leadership, they do indicate how head teachers' qualifications influence pupil achievement. Generally, Al-Fozan's (1997) study highlights the critical need for head teachers to have leadership qualifications and experience. This supports the current study's argument that leadership background and qualification influence leadership practice from different perspectives.

Shifting away from cultural impact towards a focus on the analysis of academic leaders' training needs, Alnaser (2016) surveyed a sample of academic leaders at the Northern Border University, where training needs were considered at three levels: individual, job, and organisational. The results showed that the degree of need for training programmes was high, and that there were no statistically significant differences between the study variables (years of experience, job title, qualification, and gender). The researcher concluded that many academic leaders feel they need to be prepared and identified early for leadership, where the institution should expose them to more leadership opportunities through various experiences, and offer them part-time roles before they accept any leadership positions. Essentially, many of the participants did not feel to be well prepared for leading.

Excluding Gonaim and Peters (2017), the other two studies by Alfayez (2014) and Alnaser (2016) targeted leadership away from the context where the leaders engage. Alfayes (2014) applied a qualitative approach to examine a hypothesis of leadership style changes based on different variables, where no justifications were raised for the reasons why the Department Chairs might apply their particular style(s). Meanwhile, Alnaser (2016) studied the training

need of academic leaders from their own perspective, where no clarification of the contextual factors that made the training and development effective was illustrated, besides the leaders being aware of their training needs. The current research goes beyond these and widen the scope to deeply explore the cultural factors with their influences on Deans' leadership perceptions and practices at a number of Saudi universities.

3.6 Summary

The current chapter has reviewed the empirical research on issues of leadership and culture. First, leadership has been investigated and shown to be a matter of influencing others towards a particular goal. Theories of leadership have been reviewed, with concentration given to transformational leadership, because of its wide application in various contexts, including the cultures of the Arab world. The section on leadership presented a further review of educational leadership, educational leadership and context and the challenges facing cross-cultural research in educational leadership where outcomes of these sections came up with a conclusion that culture is part of the context that influences the experiences of educational leaders. The third section concerned with readings of leadership the context higher education as well as academic leadership development, with the suggestion that leadership development extends beyond attending training workshops, to include other contextual factors.

The fourth section of this chapter reviewed literary works on leadership in the cultural context of the research. Previous Arab and Saudi leadership studies empirically found that the applicability of using Western leadership theories in isolation of contextual factors should be viewed with relative caution (Shahin and Wright, 2004). Other conflicting findings reported among scholars include the distinction between preferable and actual leadership styles on the one hand, and the declared and practised values on the other, as well the cultural reasons behind this conflict (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001). Still, in spite of the extensive international research on leadership and leadership and culture, a level of ambiguity and

contradiction obscures the scene in the Arab and Saudi cultures, which confirms the need for the current research.

All cultural frameworks presented in Chapter 2 neglected the Saudi context (GLOBE) or neglected the combination of culture and leadership (Hofstede's). Moreover, this intersection between leadership and culture, in the context of HE, has not received research to present a holistic view. Bolden et al. (2009) argues that contextual factors and systematic nature of effective leadership practice on HEIs need to be recognised and investigated through a macro lens. This considers the need for this research in exploring the influence of culture on leadership practices within SAHE. The next chapter provides the research methodology adopted to achieve the research's aims.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This research methodology chapter aims to convey a comprehensive understanding of the research process. In social sciences, reality cannot be easily considered as a single fact (Creswell, 2014). The current research discusses multiple meanings, realities and experiences as it explores the phenomena of culture and leadership in SAHE from the perspectives of Academic Deans. As Creswell states:

> *In this worldview, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals´ lives.*

(Creswell, 2007, pp. 20–21)

Figure 4.1 summarizes the components of this chapter where the researcher begins with the outer layer, which represents the research philosophy, and then gradually moves towards the centre. In doing so, he addresses each layer in turn, shifting from the general world view and narrowing the focus to specific data analysis techniques. As seen in the diagram, research philosophy, research approach, research design, sampling and data collection methods, as well as, data analysis are discussed in turn to provide the rationale and background of the research. This is followed by quality issues in terms of reliability and validity. Finally, the expected research limitations and ethical considerations are presented.
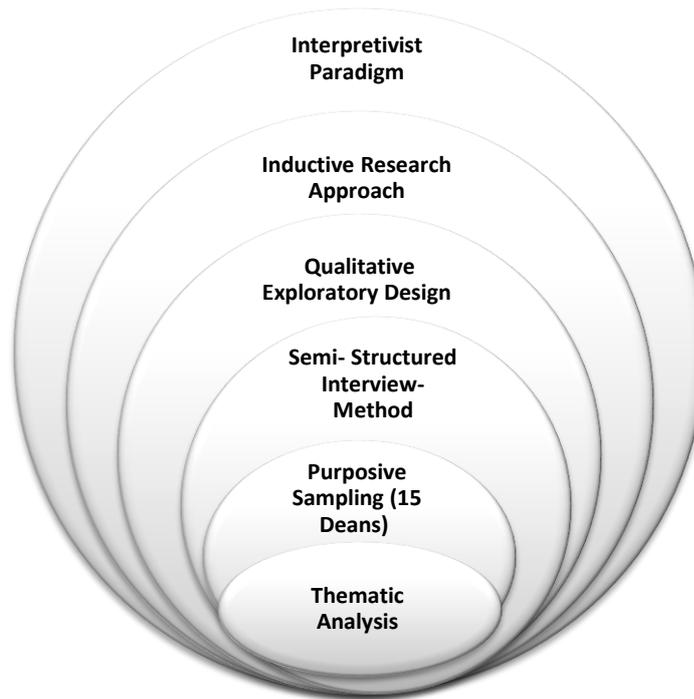
Figure 4.1: A Summary of Research Methodology

4.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is the first step in any research process, with Saunders et al. (2009) arguing that as a model, it relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. At the beginning of the research journey, it is of vital importance for the researchers to consider why they are conducting such a study, what the value is behind it, and what it means to others. Guba and Lincoln (1994) defined the research philosophy, and referred to the paradigm as "a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimate or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts" (p. 107). It is important to begin any discussion of research methodology with consideration of the research philosophy, as such philosophies offer different views about the nature of the social world and knowledge, and, consequently, influence the manner in which research questions are designed and formulated (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Furthermore, the research philosophy has

implications for the way that research claims can be legitimately evaluated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Guba & Lincoln (1994, p. 116) develop this point by stating "paradigm issues are crucial; no inquirer, we maintain, ought to go about the business of inquiry without being clear about just what paradigm informs and guides his or her approach". Thus, this section presents a discussion of the philosophical position underpinning this research's paradigm and provides an explanation of the selected choice.

4.2.1 Ontology

Bryman and Bell (2003), as per other research philosophy scholars, distinguished between two components of research philosophies: ontology and epistemology. Ontology is concerned with "the nature of social entities" (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 19). The authors argue that ontology "identifies the nature of the reality studied i.e. are the social actors given weight in the research to influence reality or are they considered to be separate from their entities?" (p.108). Accordingly, ontology concerns our perceptions and viewpoints on the nature of reality. Researchers drew a basic distinction between two lines of ontological philosophies: objectivism and subjectivism (Saunders et al., 2009). Objectivism views a social phenomenon as existing in a reality where social factors have no influence on it. Objectivists considered the entities and social actors as two separate existences that have little, if any influence on one another. Such a philosophical standpoint conflicts with this study's author as individuals employ their cognitive values and experiences as a filter to perceive the social and organisational context that surrounds them (Pettigrew, 1990).

Alternatively, in subjective situations, researchers give social actors importance, with the impact of the reality of the social phenomena being a result of the former's actions. This standpoint entails continuous change in the researcher's view, due to the nature of the social factors. Subjectivism (sometimes referred to as constructivism) is usually associated with social constructionism, which aims to understand the subjective meanings that cause the social actors' behaviour, in order to comprehend it. In contrast to objectivism, subjective scholars view reality as being constructed in the minds of people and expressed through their perceptions and experiences (Saunders et al., 2009), while being influenced by the context

(Bryman & Bell, 2003). Consequently, with regard to ontology, the current study adopts a subjectivist ontological stance as it treats leadership and culture as subjective social constructs, composed of individuals' values, perceptions, and experiences.

4.2.2 Epistemology

The ontological position of the researcher has implications for the epistemological nature of his/her research. Saunders et al. (2007) argued that epistemology "concerns what constitutes acceptable knowledge in the field of a study" (p. 102), which can be summarised as "knowing how you can know" (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 13). It concerns how good knowledge can be generated and how reality can be presented and ascribed.

Contrary to ontological objectivists, who believe that reality is stable phenomena that can be targeted by measurable facts, where rule-like generalisations can be made to explain it (Bryman & Bell, 2003), ontological subjectivists who believe that reality is created by interaction between the social phenomenon and its social actors argue that human behaviour differs from objects of natural sciences and cannot be understood by applying the same approach (Saunders et al., 2009). Human behaviour can be understood by investigating the participants' views of the world they are located within (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

Saunders et al. (2009) identified two paradigmatic positions for the researcher: positivist and interpretivist. Positivist epistemology researchers are primarily concerned with collecting and analysing generalisable facts in a cause and effect relationship with variables, and in a controlled setting, arguing that this will be "bias-free" and more objective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The results from such an approach are likely to be rule-like generalisable findings, which are mostly suited to research in the natural sciences (Remenyi et al., 1998). Alternatively, interpretivist epistemology emphasises the importance of humans' different roles as social actors in the research. Interpretivist scholars shed light on the individual's interactions within the researched context; for example, interpretivist scholars concentrate on the "empathetic position" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 116) taken by the researcher, and do not

separate the researcher from the researched context. This justifies why interpretivist epistemology is one of the suitable research philosophies when investigating managerial, cultural and business-related topics (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Consequently, the current study adopted an interpretivist epistemology, which is consistent with the ontological position stated above as the social world is investigated as being subjective and thus cannot be observed or even measured through the natural sciences. On the contrary, understanding social phenomena requires the researcher to enter the participants' world and get close to them with the intention of gaining access to their perceptions and experiences. This seem typical with the current research where the researcher aims to investigate the influence of cultural factors on university Deans' leadership experiences where familiarisation of the environments where Deans perform their leadership practices

For interpretivist researchers, it is important to understand motives, meanings, reasons, and other subjective experiences, which are time and context bound (Neuman, 2000). Unlike positivist research, interpretivists avoid strict structural frameworks and adopt more personal and flexible research structures (Carson et al., 2001), which are receptive to capturing the meaning in human interaction (Black, 2006) and make sense of what is being perceived as reality (Carson et al., 2001). They believe that the researcher and their participants are interdependent and have mutual interactions (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). In interpretivist ontological positions, the researcher remains open to new knowledge throughout the investigation and allows it to develop with the help of contextual factors and informants. The application of such a collaborative approach is consistent with the interpretivists' belief that humans have the ability to adapt, and that no one can gain prior knowledge of time- and context-bound social realities (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). This is distinct from the positivist philosophical stance, where the researcher neither influences nor is influenced by the subjects he/she researches.

Axiology concerns the role of value in research, and was defined as the "values of being, about what human states are to be valued simply because of what they are" (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 287). Positivist researchers view the research process as being value

isolated. They consider themselves as being independent and isolated from what they are researching, deeming the researched phenomenon to be an object (Table 4.1). This consideration might fit within pure and natural sciences, but it is criticised when treating social sciences since this is where individuals' behaviour interacts with the phenomenon under investigation (Saunders et al., 2009). On the other hand, when considering reality, interpretivists as subjectivists claim that individuals' beliefs, norms and values exist in the research and must be explored (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Interpretivists argue that the researcher's value is important in the research process and needs to be demonstrated throughout the stages. They argue that researcher value is vital in interpreting findings and forming judgments (Saunders et al., 2009). Table 4.1 summarises the distinction between the positivist and interpretivist philosophies in terms of the ontological, epistemological and axiological aspects.

Table 4.1 Comparison between two broad research philosophies in social research

(Source: Adapted from Saunders et al., 2009, p. 119)

	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology The researcher's view of the nature of reality or being.	External, objective and independent of social actors.	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple.
Epistemology The researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge.	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data and facts. Focus on the causality and law such as generalisation, reducing phenomena to the simplest elements.	Subjective meaning and social phenomena. Focus on the detail of a situation, the reality behind these details, subjective meaning motivates action.
Axiology The researcher's view of the role of values in research.	Research is undertaken in a value-free manner, where the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance.	Research is value-bound. The researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective.
Data collection Techniques most often used.	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, qualitative, but can use qualitative.	Small samples, in-depth investigation, qualitative.

Each of the paradigmatic positions has its own advantages as well as limitations. St. Pierre (2006) claimed that our role as researchers should be to "produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently" (p. 259). On the other hand, interpretivist research is concerned with capturing in-depth qualitative data from a relative albeit purposively small sample, which may be more valid and relevant to the context being studied; however, the issue of generalisation remains a challenge for the interpretivist researcher. Meanwhile, although the choice of any paradigmatic position involves certain challenges in relation to generalisation and validity, the issues are associated with the field being studied.

Consequently, in reference to the discussion above, and due to the nature of the current research that aims to investigate the interaction of leadership and culture within a certain context, the interpretivist philosophical paradigm is adopted here since insight is sought into two subjective phenomena (leadership and culture) as perceived by the individuals' experiences. Sashkin and Garland (1979, cited in Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) referred the application of scientific knowledge to investigate leadership not fitting the expectation of producing universally acceptable, practical, and widely applicable principles and concepts. In addition to this, being an Arab who has lived for a long period of time in the country of focus and with direct engagement of the phenomena under investigation, the researcher eventually brings his own beliefs and experiences of the culture to the research. Fleck (1935, cited in Von Glaserfeld, 1989) asserts that "every thinking individual, insofar as it is a member of some society, has its own reality according to which and in which it lives" (p.123). Accordingly, the research cannot be value isolated.

4.3 Research Approach

After responding to the philosophical questions of the research and selecting the appropriate paradigmatic position for the study, the research approach refers to the logic of the investigation. Hartley (2004) perceived the research approach as "the argument for the logical steps which will be taken to link the research question(s) and issues to [the] data

collection, analysis and interpretation in a coherent way" (p. 326). The research approach can be described as the logical relation between theory and research (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Saunders et al. (2009) and Bryman and Bell (2003) referred to two broad types of research approach: deductive and inductive. The following section treats each one of them in terms of their respective characteristics and the distinctions between them, followed by a justification for the choice being adopted.

4.3.1 Deductive and Inductive Research Approaches

The reasoning of either approach echoes the previous discussion on the field of study. Saunders et al. (2009) and Bryman and Bell (2003) argued that inductive logic is more closely related to management and business research, while deductive logic is related to positivist paradigms that address scientific sciences. Deductive reasoning extends from the general to the specific. It describes a study where a conceptual or theoretical structure is already developed and tests each empirical finding in relation to the theory. Initially, a theory regarding the topic of interest is devised, and then narrowed down into more specific hypotheses that can be tested. Next, we refine them still further when we treat the empirical observations that address the hypotheses. This inevitably enables the researcher to test the hypotheses with specific data to confirm or reject them with the given theory (Bryman & Bell, 2003). In this approach, researchers identify concepts that need to be translated into measurable entities and assume the relation between them, while the data are analysed statistically to determine where the original theory is supported and to indicate whether further modification of the theory is required (Bryman & Bell, 2003). In deductive research, a logical and strict sequence of methodology is applied and researchers tend to reduce and simplify the occurring problem, specifically those that can be tackled with generalisations, which are crucial to this type of research (Saunders et al., 2009).

Inductive reasoning flows in the opposing direction to deductive reasoning. It is linked to interpretivist philosophical positions and travels from specific observations to broader generalisations and theories. It begins with specific observations and measures; detects

patterns, regularities and norms; and formulates tentative hypotheses that can be explored; before finally developing certain general conclusions or theories (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Through this, inductive reasoning employs a different approach to link the theory to the research. This kind of research addresses generalisations, although this is not necessarily the aim of such reasoning (Bryman & Bell, 2003), by drawing inferences from observations, which in turn may be generalised. Saunders et al. (2009) argued that inductive research extends to "why" things occur, rather than "what" occurs. Accordingly, inductive reasoning tends to understand rather than describe, is concerned with the in-depth treatment of reality, is strongly linked to the context, and employs qualitative data while aiming to involve a relatively purposive and representative small sample (Saunders et al., 2009). Table 4.2 summarises the distinctions between the two research approaches.

Table 4.2 Major distinctions between the deductive and inductive approaches

(Source: Adapted from Saunders et al., 2009, p. 117)

Deduction Emphasis	Induction Emphasis
Scientific principles.	Gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events.
Moving from theory to data.	Close understanding of the research context
The need to explain causal relationships between variables.	More flexible structure to permit changes to the research emphasis of the research process
The collection of quantitative data	The collection of qualitative data
The application of controls to ensure the validity of data	A realisation that the researcher is part of the research process
The necessity to select a sufficient sample size in order to produce generalisable conclusions	Less concern with the need to generalise

In practice, the distinction between the two reasonings may appear to be empathetic rather than rigid (Bryman & Bell, 2003). A particular study may appear to be purely deductive; for example, an investigation designed to test the hypothesised effects of some treatment on some outcome, where various social research involves both inductive and deductive approaches at some point in the project. It can be noticed, even in the most constrained investigations, that the researchers may observe patterns in the data that lead them to develop new theories.

4.3.2 Adopted Approach in the Current Research

In terms of the purpose of research, Collis and Hussey (2009) presented three research types as follows:

- Descriptive Research: describes the nature of the study's variables and components, with the purpose of presenting accurate data regarding the phenomena.

- Explanatory Research: tends to understand (Saunders et al., 2009) and explain the relation between the variables and components of the study in terms of cause–effect relation. This type of research fits with deductive reasoning (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

- Exploratory Research: typically investigates what is happening, exploring the flow of the emergent patterns and ideas, seeking new insights and treating new phenomena (Saunders et al., 2009). This justifies the familiarity of such a type in deductive-based studies, since it is vital to acquiring an in-depth understanding of an issue and gaining familiarity with the situation being researched (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Moreover, Saunders et al. (2009) argued that this type of research is noted for its flexibility as the researcher has the ability to change their direction when new data or insights emerge.

Based on the above discussion, the current study features a number of characteristics of descriptive research as it provides information about leadership in the context of Saudi Arabia in general, and SAHE in particular. However, it is predominantly exploratory research since it aims to understand how the context and culture of SAHE affect the leadership practice and leadership development. Due to the lack of social research in leadership in relation to culture in the Saudi Arabian context, and particularly SAHE, the study does not aim to test an existing theory through prepared hypotheses. Rather, the intention is to investigate individual behaviour and the context of their relations, in depth, so that patterns and inferences can be generated to explain the influence of culture on leadership practice and leadership development. This justifies the suitability of the inductive approach for the current study.

4.4 Qualitative Research

The choice of any research method is influenced by both the researcher's paradigmatic position and his/her research approach. Interpretivist researchers follow the inductive approach and are associated with the application of qualitative research, (Saunders et al. 2009), which aids in the deep understanding of individuals and their context (see Table 4.1).

The major disadvantages of quantitative research lie in the fact that the researcher remains distant from the phenomenon of study, since it is framed with strict measurements that do not allow the researcher to interpret what has been collected (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Meanwhile, adopting qualitative research will enable the researcher to gain a "deeper understanding of the social phenomena that would not be obtained from purely qualitative data" (Silverman, 2005, p. 10). It also assists in establishing a relationship with the participants, which facilitates enhanced understanding of their perspectives, experiences and self-perceptions in terms of the concepts and practices of academic leadership.

Moreover, qualitative research promotes the collection of data as it is available in the field along with its surrounding environment and culture. Participants narrate their own experiences, which can focus the lens at the centre of the issue or problem under investigation (Creswell, 2007). This experience is gathered by talking directly with the respondents and observing their behaviour within their own context. In essence, qualitative researchers focus on understanding the values people have constructed, that is, how the participants view the world through their own experiences (Merriam, 2009). Patton (2002) adds:

> *Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what´s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting – and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting … The analysis strives for depth of understanding.*

Another added value given to qualitative research over its quantitative counterpart lies in the importance of understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, as opposed to the researcher's. The flexibility of the qualitative approach helps researchers to employ a range of strategies and methods that support understanding. The participants' narratives provide a sense of originality through expressing their experiences. This enriched understanding and interpretation of individual cases in that context results in responses to the research questions. Lambert (2002) states:

> *….all humans bring [something] to the process of learning … formed by prior experiences, beliefs, values, socio-cultural histories, and perceptions. When new experiences are encountered and mediated by reflection, inquiry, and social interaction, meaning and knowledge are constructed … The concept of constructivist leadership is based on the same ideas that underlie constructivist learning: Adults, as well as children, learn through the processes of meaning and knowledge construction, inquiry, participation, and reflection. Leadership can be understood as the enactment of such reciprocal, purposeful learning in community.*

In qualitative research, the researcher's role is to provide and develop an explanation for the participants' responses in order to induce a theory that enables a wider inference. Through this process, the issue of the researcher's value in qualitative research emerges, which is considered as the interference of the researcher in the research process. Hara (1995) argued that in qualitative research, the researcher's value, interpretation and the research outcomes all combine to produce a broader inference. The researchers confront their opinion with that data, providing original evidence to support their judgment and interpretation.

Another interesting characteristic of qualitative research lies in its flexible design, implying that the questions and sample may change and develop in response to the situations encountered. This leads to the development of the research over the course of the study, as well as its applicability to capture a wider perspective to fulfil the research aim (Creswell, 2014).

However, as per any research approach, qualitative research has received certain criticism, such as the lack of the ability to generalise and the lack of transparency. Pro-quantitative researchers underscored that the findings emerging from qualitative research are restricted to the research context and cannot be generalised (Bryman & Bell, 2003). However, this may reflect a misunderstanding of the nature of such research as generalisation is not a major aim of a qualitative approach, since it does not seek to test a theory via a large sample of participants. Moreover, critics argued that qualitative research lacks transparency, which may impact on quality due to an evaluation based on vague or inappropriate criteria (Hammersley, 2003). As discussed earlier, transparency can be achieved thorough linking the researcher's values with the research outcomes, supported by evidence from the primary data gathered. Moreover, quality data acquisition in qualitative research involves appropriate steps and criteria (Hammersley, 2003), as discussed later in this chapter (Section 4.5).

Despite the relative criticism of qualitative research, in order to listen and observe the academic Deans in the context of the current study, qualitative research was adopted for the following reasons, in addition to those stated above:

- The ability for the researcher to identify issues from the perspectives of those leaders, and to comprehend their meanings and interpretations of their behaviour, events or objects (Hennink et al., 2011). The qualitative research approach involves interviewing people in issues related to their natural settings, which offers opportunities to make sense of or "interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4), in order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the overall experiences of the participants.

- The opportunity to study those experiences in detail through interviewing participants for their perceptions over a period of time.

- As per other social aspects of human behaviour, leadership and culture are relative rather than absolute; they are dynamic and ever changing. Therefore, it is impossible to perceive a person through a common or static lens. Through creating

and developing a level of trust and being situated close to the person's own context, the qualitative researcher is able to gather rich and in-depth data.

- The qualitative researcher, who plays the role of a "passionate participant" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), is often able to uncover data that may not be visible through a more objective and rational, that is, quantitative lens. The application of qualitative methods can provide a valuable addition to the methodologies in higher education studies, which have been traditionally conducted using quantitative methodologies. Most researchers who have studied this topic have either developed their own surveys or utilised an existing leadership instrument. However, surveys, and purely quantitative studies, are limited in their ability to delve into the participants' own insights regarding the effective and desirable practices of academic leaders (Gonaim & Peters, 2017).

Therefore, providing participants with the opportunity to express their views, through qualitative interviews, allowed them to ground the data in an authentic platform of relevant experience. Moreover, their narratives provide a sense of originality through expressing their experiences of the relation between culture and leadership which in addition to the above arguments justifies the adoption of qualitative design.

4.5 Data Collection

Creswell (2007) identified a variety of tools applicable for qualitative data collection: interviews, field notes, observations, discourse analysis, and document analysis. This section presents the selected method as well as the justification of reasons why this method was adopted.

4.5.1 Why Qualitative Interviews?

As a method of qualitative data collection, interviews are one of the most powerful means of understanding human beings (Fontana & Frey, 2005), while Kvale and Brinkmann (2009)

argued that "knowledge is produced socially in the interaction of interviewer and interviewee" in a qualitative research interview (p. 82). The choice of interviews as a significant method is based on Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) argument that "interviews are particularly well-suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspectives on their lived world" (p. 116). Interviews by nature have a higher response rate than questionnaires (Robson, 2002), because respondents become more involved and hence motivated to speak; therefore, more information can be elicited. As Kvale & Brinkmann state:

> *An interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose, it goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views in everyday conversations, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge.*

(Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3)

The most vital quality of interviews is that they enable the studying of aspects about the participants that cannot be observed directly such as feelings, thoughts, experiences and intentions, (Corbetta, 2003). Observing and noting non-verbal cues enables researchers to add greater depth to the verbal data. Such a characteristic of interviews cannot be obtained by using other methods such as questionnaires. Interviews are also flexible in terms of their capability for changing the lines of inquiry to follow up on unexpected responses made by the participants (Robson, 2011). They also allow for the exploration of unpredictable themes that might emerge during the process.

Creswell (2014) discussed the acceptability of a researcher studying his/her own organisation in terms of the advantages such as gaining accessibility to data, and the risk that the quality of data will be affected by the researcher's bias. However, in the case of the current research, this potential risk is overcome by selecting twelve respondents from different universities and engaging only three participants from the university where he is currently employed. Moreover, familiarisation with the context and being part of it assists in addressing the issue of accessibility for such qualitative research involving busy individuals such as the Deans, which is considered as an added value of the insider researcher.

In this research, the researcher interacts with Deans in various universities, exploring a range of perceptions. The aim is to interpret their perceptions and experiences into a level of inferences that leads to reality. For this reason, it was crucial to listen to their voices about their perceived reality and afford them the required emphasis as social actors in the situation (Corbetta, 2003).

4.5.2 Semi- Structured Interviews

There are various types of interviews, which include structured, unstructured, non-directive and semi-structured interviews. A structured interview (also referred to as a standardised interview) is a type of interview whereby the same questions are asked of all respondents in the same order. Corbetta (2003) stated that structured interviews are "interviews in which all respondents are asked the same questions with the same wording and in the same sequence" (p. 269). Contrary to this, unstructured interviews are non-directed and are a flexible method, offering greater freedom than the aforementioned structured interview. In an unstructured interview there is no need to follow a detailed interview schedule; each interview is different, with the interviewees encouraged to speak openly (Robson, 2011).

Non-directive interviews are the type where no predetermined topic is pursued. The interview questions are not generally pre-planned; the interviewee leads the conversation with the interviewer listening, but without taking any steps to direct the interview. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews are non-standardised and are commonly utilised in qualitative research where the interviewer does not conduct the investigation to test a certain hypothesis. Semi-structured interviews are recommended when the researcher has a list of major proposed themes, issues, and questions to be investigated (David & Sutton, 2004). They offer flexibility in that the order of the questions can be changed based on the direction of the interview; an interview schedule is used (see Interview Schedule in Appendix 2), but additional questions may be asked. Corbetta (2003) offers further explanation of the semi-structured interview as follows:

The order in which the various topics are dealt with and the wording of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion. Within each topic, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation as he thinks fit, to ask the questions he deems appropriate in the words he considers best, to give explanation and ask for clarification if the answer is not clear, to prompt the respondent to elucidate further if necessary, and to establish his own style of conversation.

(Corbetta, 2003, p. 270)

For this study, a semi-structured interview is vital due to its flexibility. In exploratory research, semi-structured interviews are frequently adopted to understand the nature of the relation between the contextual components (Saunders et al., 2009). Although the semi-structured interview presents questions on a number of themes, it still offers the potential to change and modify the sequence, wording and format of the questions in response to the answers given by a participant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). All questions and interview techniques are to some extent unified for each sample in order to achieve familiarity, while the questions are open-ended to encourage rich responses and avoid any danger of directing answers. This encouraged the Deans to generate meaningful responses and perspectives that might not have been obtained by another method, which can be deemed as an additional advantage of the interview. Moreover, providing explanations when needed to clarify meaning ensures the collection of relevant information and arouses interest to enhance insights into the topic of study. In addition, semi-structured interviews strike a balance in terms of the power relationship between the interviewer and interviewee since the latter are given the opportunity to "talk freely in ways that can reveal the distinctiveness and complexity of [the] perspectives" sought by the researcher (Hammersley, 2008, p. 24), with the participants having the opportunity to negotiate and add their own comments and points of view, which enriches the interview and assists in its flow. Thus, an interviewer is "free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined" (Patton, 2002, p. 343).

Using probing questions helps the interviewee "keep talking on a matter at hand, to complete an idea, fill in a missing piece, or request clarification of what was said" (Rubin & Rubin,

1995, p. 137). The steering umbrella of all points raised will be the qualitative research questions, which are usually developed or refined at all stages of a reflexive and interactive inquiry journey (Agee, 2009).

4.5.3 Piloting the Interviews

Prior to the data collection process, and in order to evaluate the method, the interview questions were piloted on several representatives in the Strategic Planning Unit at the researcher's university. Conducting the pilot helped to refine the questions, and gain familiarity within the context of interviewing and collecting notes. For example, technical terms of the leadership styles presented by the GLOBE (Autonomous and Self-protective) were not clear enough at the beginning and required to be adjusted with familiar concepts related to their cultures.

In relation to the interview questions and framework, they were developed based on the research questions and the related literature in the field of leadership behaviour in academic institutions, and the cultural impact on leadership. With regard to leadership, the participants were asked how they conceptualised the situation of leadership in SAHE. Other questions focused on their perceptions and satisfaction with several of the components of outstanding leadership style given by the GLOBE. The last main question concerned their perceptions of the required road map to develop leadership in the context of SAHE.

Piloting interviews resulted in two key changes to the research design. The first was that cultural influences appeared far greater than leadership practices when considered in relation to the transformational leadership theory. The second lies in the fact that technical terms of leadership theories and GLOBE's dimensions of leadership practices were not clear enough to the participants and they need to be simplified to practices that could be easily understood.

Consequently, due to the outcomes of piloting the research, the researcher amended the research design in the following ways:

-Adaptation conducted to the theoretical framework applied to underpin analysis of the research findings. Within this framework, concentration on the dimensions of leadership theories (Transformational and Transactional) was reduced to a minimum since the emerging data was rich in relation to cultural issues. Instead, cross cultural dimensional frameworks of Hofstede, (2010) and House et.al's (2004) the GLOBE study were considered as the basics of the theoretical framework of the study.

-Slight changes occurred to the interview questions where technical terms related to transformational and transactional leadership were removed and replaced by components of the leadership practices relating to the GLOBE study. This was amended whilst considering the difficulties of using technical terms that were apparently new to the Deans. These terms were replaced by single behaviors or components that could be easily understood by such Deans who are not familiar with these theories and their components. An example of this change can be shown in the researcher's realisation that instead of asking Deans "how do you apply Idealised Influence (a component of Transformational Leadership) or Participative style of leadership as reported by the GLOBE, the Deans were asked about the level of motivation and consultations afforded to their subordinates in their faculties.

Interviews can be conducted with individuals, or focused groups, in a relatively informal style. The interviews were conducted in the Arabic language, since this it is the mother tongue of all the participant Deans. Discussion and tackling of the participants' personal experiences would be facilitated and more productive where Arabic was the medium of communication, since participants would show some resistance at speaking English in the interviews. Moreover, this procedure supported the interviewees to freely communicate their ideas, lowering the barrier between the interviewer and interviewees to a certain extent. Additional notes were taken both during and after each interview, and recorded in a fieldwork notebook for further reference. The researcher used two recording devices and saved the files in different locations to avoid any potential for data loss. After conducting each interview, the researcher

commenced the transcription and translation process. (For more details on the interviewing procedures and questions, see Interview Schedule in Appendix 2)

4.6 Sample Description

Selecting the sample is a fundamental step in any research project since it is rarely feasible, logical or difficult to explore the entire population. In relation to sampling, there are two domains: probability and non-probability (Robson, 2011). Probabilistic or random sampling is typically applied in quantitative research to ensure the generalisability of the findings by minimising the potential for selection bias and to control for the potential influence of known and unknown confounders (Bernard, 2002). In contrast to this type, purposeful sampling is a non-probability technique that is widely used in qualitative research, since it aids in the identification and selection of information-rich cases to enable the most effective use of limited resources (Patton 2002). Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are specifically knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011). Moreover, Bernard (2002) referred to the importance of the respondents' availability in addition to their willingness to participate, and their ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive and reflective manner. Thus, among these techniques of sampling, the purposive approach serves the aim of the present study, which is, investigating the experiences, perspectives and beliefs of academic leaders. King (2004) stated that:

> *A study which is making realist assumptions about the interview data would want to be sure to include a sample representing important distinctions within the organisational population in relation to the change under investigation, and would assert that the analysis gains in validity by increasing the number of different viewpoints collected via interviews.*

(King, 2004, p. 16)

A purposive sample can only help find answers to the research questions from the perspectives of the participants. The essential aim is to collect the responses of Deans regarding their experiences and perspectives of being academic leaders, and how they perceive and practise leadership styles within their organisational culture. As a feature of

qualitative research, the purposive/judgement sample tends to be small in size. The logic and power of choosing a sample "derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding" that it offers to researchers (Patton, 2002, p. 46), who specifically select the most productive sample to respond to the research questions based on the typicality or qualities that the sample possesses (Tongco, 2007). A purposive sample yields insights and in-depth understanding, rather than seeking empirical generalisation (Patton, 2002).

Choosing participants to be involved in a study depends on its specific purpose (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The central research question of this study is that how do Saudi cultural factors influence university Deans' leadership practice? With this framework, certain criteria were set by the researcher to select a purposive sample:

- The research concerns with the Saudi context and particularly SAHE. Consequently, all participants represent the core of their both national and organisational cultures since all of them are Deans and are all well established in their careers within the context of the research.

- The research investigates the leadership and culture in Saudi government funded universities which express the origins of the national culture in a deeper way than private universities. Consequently, all participants were government official with these governmental universities.

- Level of Education: all participants are academic with post graduate studies from different western countries since Saudi universities have recently started to graduate PhD students, compared to the outcomes of scholarship programs that launched more than 50 years ago and expanded in the last decade.

- Variety of Disciplines: the researcher intended to interview Deans from different disciplines (humanities, sciences, medicine, and engineering) in order to create a variety of data.

- Age and Experiences: this included both young and experienced Deans with various academic ranking.

- Location: where the researcher's aim was to cover the main governmental universities in the main cities of the country with a selection of old and new universities.

Based on these criteria this study selected 15 participants, from 8 different governmental universities. Table 4.3 below gives more detail about participants and Section 4.6.2 considers steps applied to access them.

Only the most appropriate participants for the study were selected, as those who did not fit the criteria were eliminated (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Several research studies suggest that the results of purposeful sampling, as applied in this research, are usually expected to be more representative of the population, than those achieved with an alternative form of sampling such as probabilistic (King, 2004 and Bernard, 2002).

4.6.1 Participants

This research includes the perspectives of fifteen Deans at eight governmental universities under the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. Each of the Deans is established in his career and all are from an academic background. All currently hold a position as academic Deans (see Table 4.3). Researchers over the past two decades have noted that major leadership skills are learned from naturally occurring experience in the workplace (Brown & Posner, 2001, p. 279). All of respondent Deans are male, since female education is legally separated from male in the Saudi context. The female campuses at the targeted universities are under the responsibility of male sections, that is, each male Dean has a female Vice-Dean in the female branch of his faculty.

Pseudonym	Years of experience as a Dean	Age Group	Academic Rank	Research and Qualification Background	Location
D-1	5–10	46–55	Associate	Humanities	Dammam
D-2	3–5	46–55	Assistant	Medical and Health Sciences	Medina
D-3	10–20	46–55	Assistant	Humanities	Riyadh
D-4	5–10	46–55	Associate	Science	Jeddah
D-5	10–20	Over 55	Associate	Humanities	Dhahran
D-6	5–10	36–45	Assistant	Computer Sciences	Shagra
D-7	10–20	46–55	Assistant	Computer Sciences	Makkah
D-8	5–10	36–45	Assistant	Medical and Health Sciences	Makkah
D-9	5–10	36–45	Associate	Medical and Health Sciences	Makkah
D-10	3–5	36–45	Assistant	Medical and Health Sciences	Baha
D-11	3–5	36–45	Assistant	Science	Makkah
D-12	5–10	Over 55	Professor	Engineering	Jeddah
D-13	10–20	Over 55	Assistant	Science	Jeddah
D-14	5–10	Over 55	Professor	Science	Jeddah
D-15	3–5	36-45	Assistant	Engineering	Abha

Table 4.3 - Background Information about the Deans.

4.6.2 Accessing Participants

It can prove challenging for a researcher to secure an appointment with a busy Dean in order to interview him as a research participant, with failure to reply to an initial invitation to participate in an interview, or to complete electronic questionnaires. This is considered as common in the academic life.

To overcome this issue, through a workshop for Deans designed by the ALC, the researcher built a professional connection with two Deans who expressed strong interest in the study due to the paucity of research conducted in the field. Then, the researcher arranged appointments to visit them at their places of work and contacted other Deans by telephone or e-mail at each university. The process commenced by contacting one Dean from the

university where the researcher works. Then, formal email invitations were sent to eleven Deans located in other cities. Five of them replied positively, while three declined the invitation due to their congested schedule, and the final three did not reply. Directly, the researcher made appointments with those Deans who had agreed to participate and travelled to interview them. The researcher then used a different technique to contact Deans in other cities (Riyadh, Dammam, Makkah, and Abha), where he called ten individuals directly by telephone and spoke to them about the importance of the project. Two of them declined, while eight accepted to participate and appointments were made to conduct the interviews. Six of the Deans declared that this would be their first opportunity to speak about this important issue. Finally, the researcher succeeded in covering eight main universities and included a variety of medium to very experienced, with a range of disciplinary backgrounds.

All the Deans were confirmed for participation either by telephone or by email. Ten Deans were interviewed face-to-face either in their office (eight), or in cafes outside the university (two). The remaining five were interviewed by telephone aided by an electronic recorder. King (2004) confirmed that it is possible to conduct phone and Internet-based interviews, when their face-to-face counterparts would prove challenging or are not applicable. Depending on the fluency of the Deans, the duration of each interview varied between 20 to 30 minutes.

In Saudi culture, there is a danger that the researcher would be perceived as a government agent, who has power that might be harmful to the participant's position. This may lead to certain hesitation among participants as to whether to participate in the interview, or at least may lead to conservative responses. Crotty (1998) stated that "personal relation and familiarisation of the environment you target is usually effective to engage participation and adequate trust with informants" (p. 42). Moreover, it is not easy for a researcher to make an appointment to meet a Dean who is busy and holds a respected position within the university hierarchy. To cope with these two challenges, prior to the interview, the researcher introduced his academic background referring his Jordanian citizenship, the university initial letter (Appendix 4), and the consent form (Appendix 3). This was done in order to

demonstrate that the researcher had no other agenda for collecting such data. Furthermore, referring to his academic and professional background as an employee and trainer of strategic planning at a Saudi university, who has familiarisation of the ALC's programmes, aided achieving their approval to conduct the interviews.

4.7 Data Analysis

After collecting the required data, analysis becomes a crucial stage. Data analysis is an ongoing process that entails immersion in the data, resulting in understanding and interpretation (Hennink et al., 2011). It "involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (Merriam, 1988, p. 147).

Marshall and Rossman (1999) considered data analysis as "the processes of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data" (p. 150). Recognising emerging patterns and themes and assigning meaning to them are the aim of this stage. Depending on the research questions and the related literature as sources, a researcher can develop guidelines for the data analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam, 1988), whereas Patton (2002) considers analytic insights and interpretations that emerge during data collection processes as other sources that assist in organising the data analysis. Therefore, data analysis and collection are mutually inclusive.

Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1994) regarded data analysis as a continuous synthetic process in which construction emerges from the interaction of the research and the sources, and the data are reconstructed by the researcher into meaningful entities. Data analysis is a "dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorizing" (Basit, 2003, p. 143). Such management and analysis procedures need to be carefully planned prior to any actual data collection takes place. Therefore, Braun and Clarke (2006) introduced six analytic procedures:

- Familiarisation with the Data

- Generating Initial Codes

- Searching for Themes

- Reviewing Themes

- Defining Themes

- Producing the Report

As all the interviews were conducted in Arabic, two further steps were directly required: transcription of the audio scripts into written forms, and then translation of the written form into English. After each interview ended, all the content was transcribed into Arabic written form by the researcher. Then, he listened to the interview again to check that all the points had been documented. Following these steps, the transcripts were translated into English, and the translations were verified by a university colleague to ensure the consistency of the Arabic terms were reflected in the English version. Moreover, as a final check of the accuracy of the translation, the researcher returned to the original audio recordings and compared the participants' responses with the respective English transcript.

Analysis began with the thematic analysis approach considering Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis (see Appendix 5: A summary of the analysis process), where the researcher, after familiarisation of the data, identified data categories, and relationships between these categories. Identifying a possible theme or repeated patterns in the early stage of data analysis aided in further guiding the exploration, Moreover, thematic analysis assists the researcher's aim to compare different groups of thoughts from various perspectives in a particular context.

> *The essence of the approach is that the researcher produces a list of codes ('template') representing themes identified in their textual data. Some of those will usually be defined a priori, but they will be modified and added to as the researcher reads and interprets the texts.*

(King, 1998, p. 118)

Thematic analysis is located between content analysis—where the researcher predetermines the codes before analysing them—and grounded theory—where the researcher does not

predetermine the codes as a priori. Thematic analysis was applied in this study for two main reasons:

- The interpretivist nature of the research, where "thematic analysis was developed and applied largely as a methodology" (King, 1998, p. 118).
- The high degree of flexibility thematic analysis affords in defining codes, supporting the researcher in maintaining an open mind when investigating specific details in a cultural context.

Defining codes can be considered as labels or sub-themes that can be placed under identified emerged themes. King (2004) referred to codes as "a label attached to a section of text to index it as relating to a theme or issue in the data which the researcher has identified as important to his or her interpretation" (p. 257). The emergence of codes is guided by the extant literature, which shaped the research question and helped to create the interview questions. See Appendix 5 for examples of the process of data analysis applied in this research.

In this study, codes were listed hierarchically, as is common practice in thematic analysis (King, 2004), as seen in the list of themes provided in Appendix 5, the codes are labelled under the identified themes. This strategy allowed similar code groups to be clustered to form larger related themes.

In terms of the strategy used by the researcher to interpret the explorative data derived from the qualitative interviews, King (2004) presented two strategies to present the interpretation of data using thematic analysis:

- Providing a list of individual units of analysis, followed by the differences and similarities in a discussion.
- Presenting thematic analysis driven from the individual unit of analysis.

King (2004) described such a strategy as an approach that "most readily produces a clear and succinct thematic discussion" (p. 268). Consequently, the current study presented the data findings based on the main themes, supported by evidence in the form of examples from the data transcripts to support the claimed interpretations.

The researcher's field notes (diary) represented a device for recording his ongoing reflections throughout the data collection and analysis stages. The first step in the data analysis was recording and storing the interviews electronically as sound files under their respective names. This phase included recording the relevant information for each interview and any observations to avoid any data being lost over time. Next, transcribing interviews with the Deans commenced. This procedure was carried out while the data were still being collected, and thus the smallest details were also recorded, and integrated with the transcripts for further use. This process also assisted in identifying new issues that could be explored in subsequent interviews (Hennink et al., 2011). Such immersion enabled the identification of significant recurring patterns and themes, which could be separated from the data. Such analysis accelerates the process in terms of "locating coded themes, grouping data together in categories and comparing passages in transcripts or incidents from field notes" (Patton, 2002, p. 442).

After developing and coding the categories and themes, the researcher started to evaluate the emergent understandings and explore them again through the data (see Appendix 5). An integral part of this phase is to evaluate the usefulness of the data in relevance to its ability to answer the research questions. All major issues raised in the Deans' narratives would be explored, which might concentrate on certain areas of this inquiry, or could focus on new themes which were not considered at the proposal stage. All of these areas were considered.

4.8 Research Quality

Lincoln & Guba, (1985) view that the quality of research should be judged in terms of relevance to the paradigm adopted. Flick (2009) argues that there is no general agreement on which criteria should be used to test the quality of research within all paradigmatic positions. However, Sandberg (2005) highlighted that the criteria for validity and reliability are linked to the epistemological position of the researcher and are typically applied within the positivist tradition, since they view reality as being independent and stable and do not interact with the social actors of the context. Moreover, scholars such as Bryman & Bell,

(2003) argued that reliability and validity concern most qualitative research as ideas and reality are perceived in different ways, even in the same context.

4.8.1 Reliability

Reliability can be summarised as follows:

> *The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.*

(Joppe, 2000, cited in Golafshani, 2003: 598)

Moreover, the aim of in-depth qualitative research is not always to have generalisable data, given the typically small sample sizes. But the aims are for a deeper understanding of a particular cultural context. However, the current research applied different universities, cities and various disciplinary, ranks and years of experience areas, as these factors help the generalisability of the research

To enhance this study's reliability, details about the research sample and how the emerging data were treated have been included in the earlier sections. Furthermore, keeping a diary and record will help the researcher verify every step taken and to decide what might be needed for further ones. More details about the steps applied by the researcher to ensure reliability of data are available in section 4.8.3 with triangulation techniques applied for the research.

4.8.2 Validity

Validity can be described as evaluating whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure, and how truthful the research results are. Collis and Hussey (2009) defined validity as "the extent to which the research findings accurately reflect the phenomena under study" (p. 65). Researchers encounter two types of validity: internal and external (this latter will be considered in the next section). Internal validity concerns the

degree of correspondence and consistency between the findings and interpretations presented in the research and the realities that the participants perceive. This kind of validity is ensured by verifying that all the research steps are conducted according to the required criteria. In the current study, the following steps were followed to ensure the internal validity of the research:

- Issues such as favouritism, partiality or prejudice are crucial in qualitative studies at all stages, including the choice of the participants, conducting interviews, and analysing the data to ensure research validity (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In order for the researcher to address the challenge of bias in this research, he ensured that the participants included in the sample were from different universities, disciplines, age groups, locations and colleges.

- All the pertinent viewpoints presented by interviewees are included in the findings unchanged. Moreover, the researcher avoided leading questions or those that might include technical terms or suppose specific answers. The researcher developed different versions of the interview schedule until he and his supervisor were satisfied that all the questions were effective and appropriate. Through this process, several pilot interviews were conducted to verify the validity and accountability of the interview questions. For example, when the researcher asked the interviewee "How is the situation of academic leadership in SAHE?", and he answered "Average", the researcher would encourage him to expand on this through follow-up questions such as, "So what are the aspects of this situation, and why did you judge them as 'average'?", as opposed to asking leading questions such as, "So you believe academic leadership in SAHE is 'average?'".

- During the data collection period, all of the participants included in the study were serving as Deans. Thus, they were in an ideal position to provide first-hand accounts and expert-level knowledge about being a senior leader at their university. This is taken as an indicator of the importance of the research to them and to the sector of

higher education in the Kingdom. Furthermore, and without any prompting from the researcher, nine of the interviewed Deans asked the researcher to forward the results and recommendations of the study.

- To confirm the interview questions reflected leadership issues in SAHE, they were piloted with a group of coordinators from the Strategic Planning Unit at the researcher's university.

- A similar schedule of questions was used for interviewing the fifteen Deans. Each recorded interview was transcribed in isolation from the others, and the researcher confirmed the accuracy of the interview narratives by comparing the transcribed interviews with the audio-taped recordings after the translation. After that, the translation was revised by one of researcher's English-speaking colleagues at his institution.

- The researcher applied techniques for coding, analysing and interpreting the data that are considered standard in qualitative research (Neuman, 2003), as a means of reducing personal bias and strengthening the study's credibility and truthfulness. Quotes from the interpreted interviews are employed as evidence to support the research findings.

Further measures concerning validity are outlined in the following section about Triangulation.

4.8.3 Triangulation

External validity concerns testing the research conclusion with people and settings outside the research context. When the "reality" uncovered by the research is being conceptualised to a certain situation, either people's values or perceptions are bound to that context. It may be argued, then, that external validity is of little value. However, the researcher has applied this type of validation through the process of triangulation. Triangulation is a method of validating data based on the degree of coverage among information from different sources

(Rowley,2002). In the current study, the qualitative findings regarding Deans' leadership practices and cultural factors that affect these practices were triangulated in the following ways:

- At the end of the data collection process, the researcher participated in two leadership webinars for international speakers organised by the ALC (6 May 2016 and 30 October 2016), where similar issues to the research findings were raised by the participant Deans and Departmental Chairs.

- The researcher shared his findings with two of the ALC's certified trainers on academic leadership, who confirmed the relation between the research findings and the issues raised by Saudi academic leaders participating in their training courses.

- The researcher conducted two training workshops on the topics of "DISC Theory for Human Behaviour" and "Change Leadership in Higher Education" (3 October 2016 and 28 April 2017). These courses were organised by the Higher Education Development Centre at the researcher's university, with the training targeting academic Deans and Departmental Chairs at two different universities. Through both workshop discussions and aided by the social media forum organised for them, the participants shared similar issues to the research findings.

4.9 Ethical Issues

A component of the trustworthiness of research is respecting the ethical considerations. For this study, this included seeking informed consent from all the research participants (Appendix 3), as outlined in the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) guidelines (BERA, 2011). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), interview research features myriad ethical and moral issues. The human interaction that takes place in an interview has its own impact on the interviewees, in addition to the fact that the knowledge produced by an interview inquiry affects our understanding of the circumstances surrounding the individual.

Gibson and Brown (2009) outlined four general ethical concerns in qualitative research:

- Informed consent

- Confidentiality

- Avoiding harm

- Integrity and professionalism

At the beginning of the data collection process, the principles of informed consent were applied. Prior approval from each participant was sought and received, while they were informed of the extent and implications of their involvement in the research. Certain issues such as culture, gender, and religion may arise when conducting research in the context where you work and live (Creswell, 2014). As an employee working at one of the universities included in the study, the researcher was aware of such challenges. Moreover, not being of Saudi citizenship aided him in engaging with an open mind to investigate this area without any prior national influences and biases.

Before the interviews commenced, all participants were familiarised with the consent form, as it was given to them to be carefully read prior to the interview, and sent to the other five Deans, who were interviewed by telephone, via e-mail, to confirm reading prior to interview call. Through the consent form, all participants were reminded that participation was voluntary and thus they could withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Moreover, care was taken to prepare the interview setting and avoid any possible disruption. All the participants were familiarised with the use of the audio recording machines. (See ethical steps applied within the interview schedule in Appendix 2). As with any research that involves people, special attention should be given to ethical issues in relation to interaction, and one of the challenges that may arise is siding with the participants. To confront this threat, any prior assumptions the researcher had regarding the research context were, as far as possible, set aside, and every attempt was made to minimise any communication through body language or facial expressions while interacting with the participants.

In terms of privacy and confidentiality, conflict could arise in terms of the full protection of the participants' data and the notion of authentic reporting. However, revealing any details that lead to the identification of the participants and subsequent harm that may cause must be avoided at all costs. Therefore, the study excludes any details that could identify a participant in terms of their name, faculty, or university. Information on their age range, discipline and originating city has been included to demonstrate the authenticity of the study in respect to the sample of participants. Thus, when reporting the findings, particular consideration was taken to limit the information given by the respondents and to refer to them using generic codes. Another issue in relation to confidentiality is the possibility of idiomatic and cultural confusion between the Arabic and English languages, as discussed in detail in Section 4.7. Essentially, every effort was made to ensure that the participants' responses were transcribed and translated accurately, with any implied meaning in their contributions explained.

Two other remaining issues in relation to ethical consideration should be briefly noted. The first is that the data from this current research were stored in a safe and secure location, and will be directly destroyed after the final decision of the completion of this thesis. The second lies in the fact that through all the steps of this research, every effort has been made to acknowledge citations to the reader through the references, bibliography and all sources of data contained within the research.

4.10 Research Limitations

Peshkin (2001) described the subjective nature of qualitative research as a garment that cannot be removed. As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, due to the researcher being a trainer on strategic planning, leadership and management skills within his university as well as other universities and organisations nationwide, he shared a deep level of understanding and empathy with the issues being discussed by the Deans. While this background and respect helped him to gain the trust of his participants, it also introduced a certain threat from a methodological perspective.

Moreover, studying social phenomena in the Saudi context entails confronting sensitivity to gender, with gender segregation being unique to the Saudi context and influencing the empirical studies of the context. It is common in Saudi Arabia for women to restrict their studies to female only, due to this gender segregation (see for example, Gonaim & Peters, 2017), and this also applies to male researchers. Therefore, one limitation of this study is that the sample did not include any females due to said gender segregation, and the case that Saudi Deans are typically male, with females taking on the role of Vice-Dean for female branches. More about research limitations and directions for future research are considered in Chapters 8.

4.11 Summary

This chapter has presented an exploration of the research methodology applied in the study. It began by explaining how the theoretical understanding of the research philosophy was developed, together with the researcher's perspective of this philosophy, with the selected epistemological position being interpretivist. The adopted inductive approach was then explained, and that the study will be conducted using a qualitative approach. Justification of the selection of a qualitative method was also clarified. Semi-structured interviews were the chosen data collection method for the study, featuring a purposive sample of fifteen academic Deans from eight Saudi universities. The collected data was analysed by means of the analysis of themes presented in the research questions and supplemented by those derived from the participants' responses. Research quality procedures including validity and reliability were discussed, and how to ensure that the study will be perceived as high-quality research. Finally, the ethical considerations as well as research limitations were presented. The next chapters (5 and 6) will present the findings emerging from the research based on the main crux of the themes.

Chapter 5 Findings of Culture

5.1 Introduction

The findings of this research yielded to two major themes: Influence of Culture on Deans' Leadership Practices and Features of Deans' Leadership Practices influenced by the cultural factors, with different underpinning themes and subthemes for each. As discussed earlier in Chapter 4, the data were coded and linked through the use of thematic analysis, with support from individual cases, via narratives emerging from the interviews (King, 1998, 2004). King (2004) highlighted that researchers are advised to include both short and long excerpts from the cases to enable the reader to acquire a sense of the participants' discourse.

This chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the first major theme emerging from the data, that is, organisational culture with its deep societal culture that influences leadership in the context of SAHE. The theme explores responses to Research Question 1 on the contextual and cultural factors that affect the leadership practices of academic Deans. As perceived by the study's respondents, the culture theme yielded three underpinning themes. The first provides broad conceptualisation and evaluation of Culture. The second addresses the influence of societal culture on Deans' leadership practice. Third discusses the influence of eight organisational factors on Dean's leadership practices. These factors are:

- Influence of Societal Culture
- Tension between Traditions and Change
- Deans' Leadership Preparation
- Centralisation
- Regulations
- Authority of Top Management,
- Selection and Promotion

- Reputation

- Human Resources Issues.

Within the research's theoretical framework (see Chapter 2), it was clarified that national culture influences organisational culture, with a distinction between national culture and organisational culture presented in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2. However, it is valid to note here that national culture primarily concerns consistency in values, while organisational culture mostly concerns consistency in practices (Schein, 2004). Hofstede (1980, 1991) noticed that national cultural values are learned early, held deeply and change slowly over the course of generations. Furthermore, they contribute later in the influence of organisational culture. By considering national culture, societal culture is also implied here as both refer to a distinction based on a certain nation or society. As per other Middle Eastern and Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia has its own national culture that affects the higher education sector. The aim of this chapter is to be descriptive in presenting first-hand reflections of the influence of societal culture from the Deans' perceptions and to provide further explanation of the major organisational culture categories found to be influencing Deans' leadership practice. Then, the linkages and influences of both components of national and organisational culture will be discussed in Chapter 7 in relation of contextual literature review and theoretical framework.

5.2 Broad Conceptualisation and Evaluation of Culture

This section provides broad explanations of the research participants on the way they conceptualise culture around them and the level of their overall satisfaction of their cultural environment. Although the concept of culture was previously identified with the conceptual framework chapter, participants' insights here support the argument on the comprehensiveness and the fluidity of the concept. Their arguments support the main assumption of this research that culture is major factor influencing their leadership.

For example, D10 referred to culture as an umbrella including the level of planning applied by Deans and their prior preparation before they hold their positions:

According to the leader, culture includes the preparation of courses before he holds a position. He should have workshops related to this position and his performance in it, and workshops about the negative issues that may face him. All of these come under functional culture and leading culture. This issue is absent here. All come under planning, and planning comes under culture. In my opinion, courses are needed in planning and leading culture. … Culture is a large umbrella. I am still convinced and insist that culture is the basis of moving up in leadership situations. (D-10)

His reference to culture as umbrella that covers many aspects of leadership practices (planning) as well as other issues related to leadership development (preparation courses for Deans) reflects the level of broad conceptualisation of culture that includes other contextual factors that are not necessarily related to people's behaviour. In D-10's response, if we consider planning as a leadership practice, his reference here on the impact of culture on planning support the fact that leadership is influenced by culture. However, in his responses, he pointed to the weakness of culture which will be discussed now.

In terms of the participants' broad evaluation to their culture, twelve of the interviewed Deans expressed the view that the culture surrounding them was not a good motivator towards effective leadership, with two of the participants stating:

I think that these leading positions have a defective organisational culture. (D-10)

Leadership culture at our university is not motivated. There are many people who rejected being an academic position such as a Dean. If a person at the university were assigned to be a Dean, he would again refuse. I am one of them. This occurs as a result of an environment that does not satisfy me. (D-4)

This latter interviewee (who eventually accepted the Deanship) provided an overall evaluation of the culture he was embedded in. His argument on the Dean's resistance and reporting of the negative experience reflect his level of dissatisfaction with the surrounding culture. This argument was also supported by another Dean, who claimed:

Culture is not motivating for Deans, with the proof being that many refuse to become Deans, or to renew their contract of employment, and I am one of them. (D-8)

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D-4's and D-8's statements regarding the negative influence of their organisations to the levels that push them to think of leaving their positions represents the level of the influence of culture on Dean's leadership experience.

To summarise, this section had found that organisational culture, as perceived by majority of participants, is evaluated as demotivating and unsatisfactory in terms of influence on their leadership experience. The coming sections will present factors of this influence as reported by the research participants.

5.3 Influence of Societal Culture

Partial criticism of the dominance of the societal culture was freely noted by the Deans. Four respondents referred to the need for transformational thoughts among those holding higher positions in the educational system in order to change such societal culture, and for academic leaders to refine their behaviour as well as their skills. The following quotes are examples of the perceived impact of societal cultural on the Deans' performance:

> *We experience strong pressure from society when we refuse something. (D-8)*

> *We are a society which is controlled by our culture, the society we live in and the environment in which we grew up … Actually, I am not satisfied, because there is still cultural and social dominance controlling the basic leading concepts, so the main driver of these matters in the administrative educational leadership world is the culture of the society in which the Dean lives. (D-13)*

This latter respondent continued by referring to a transformation occurring, while also pointing to the need for development to cope with, and change, the prevailing culture:

> *There is change without doubt that exists, but I am still not satisfied. From my point of view and experience, the more Deans or faculty members participate in courses to refine their skills and values to change the culture around them, the more effective they will be. If not, we will lose. (D-13)*

In their contributions to explain the reasons behind the level of dissatisfaction in terms of their culture, the Deans referred to the term *Wasta* or social mediation. *Wasta* is an Arabic word referring to "the interventions of a patron in favour of a client in attempt to obtain privilege or resources from a third party" (Mohammad & Mohammad 2011, p. 412); this

was discussed in the Literature Review as one of societal culture categories that was perceived negatively. This subtheme was discussed by two respondents. One referred to this theme as a factor negatively influencing their culture. He states:

> *The most dominant factor in our surrounding environment is Wasta or "mediation for others"; it is one of the most important factors that prevents development in Arab countries. All other factors are minor compared with this factor. Personal connection and social connection all affect the environment. (D-1)*

The other respondent spoke about the direct influence of this factor of Deans' leadership practice, referring to the failure of preventing it to influence their academic life:

> *There is a significant factor: each Dean tries to manage his role but he is interrupted with mediations, which is a problem with no solution; regardless, we fight to prevent mediations from entering our academic life. (D-6)*

Although this societal theme is widely noticed in governmental sections, in higher education it is not as broadly practised as perceived in other sectors, especially those that deliver civil services. Moreover, Deans as academics do not have direct interactions with society, since they lead academic faculties rather than administrative departments that interact with the wider society, for example, the admission, registration, and finance departments. These factors appear to justify the minor reference to such categories in the Deans' contributions. However, the Deans viewed a similar internal category related to the influence of personal connections with university top management, which will be discussed within this chapter in Section 5.4.5

Another area of societal reflection inside universities is the perception of Islamic values. Although reference to Islamic values among the participant Deans was at a low level, one interviewee referred to this as an ideal model of behaviour that Deans should follow:

> *As Deans, we should take care of our Islamic principles and values such as loyalty and transparency. (D-7)*

Another participant touched on a rather sensitive issue related to the application of Islamic social values, where social conflict has been occurring in Saudi Arabia between two schools of thought on perceiving Islam. One tends to be "Conservative", while the other appears to be more "Liberal" and open to new thoughts (see Section 1.8.1: An Overview of Saudi

Arabia). Each of these schools of thought has their supporters inside the community and inside universities. The following respondent referred to them as "powers", which implies a sense of soft power that is constructed based on the intellectual networking within the university:

> *Many social parties interfere with your work, such as religious institutions. Each one attempts to dominate the culture in their own particular way. These powers could be social, family or currently controlling parties. … Different intellectual schools have conflict between them, and you as a leader may fall as a ball, thrown between the opposing parties. However, in fact they affect us and keep us in the zone of caution. This affects the work of Deans. (D-5)*

In spite of its minor reference in the narratives, this notion of competing schools of thought contributes to the ensuing conflict between traditional values and their modern counterparts, not only in Saudi society, but also within universities. It extends deeply into the establishment of the country, where the flowering of the conservative ideology now has a counterpart view that urges for social modernisation (Champion, 2003).

Moreover, D-5 referred to the issue of family as a power that influences Deans, which reflects a degree of tribal values among Deans. This family component contributed to the effect of outside influence on this participant since his further reporting on the influence of the competing schools of thought was widely evident through his narrative. Furthermore, the Deans, as discussed above, do not professionally interact directly with people from the broader society, which limits the impact of this notion.

In this section, a participant suggested the need for societal cultural adaption. He referred to transforming the culture of society that affects the organisational culture of Deans:

> *The most important factor is the internal society culture … During my 20 years' experience in Deanship of the faculty and my contact with a lot of Deans, I see this as being very weak … also, and society needs to change in its culture, whether internally or externally. (D-13)*

This view from D-13 commented on the need for societal cultural adaptation. He referred to the society's culture as being "weak", indicating that this is reflected within the university, while his reference to this being internal or external implies existent tensions within respondents around the need to transform and cope with the external changes. It is worthy

to note that the data collection period was conducted while the country was busy with the launching of Vision 2030, one of the major themes accompanied the vision was the need to modify cultural values, particularly societal ones, in order to achieve the objectives of the vision. This justifies D-13's complaint of the societal factors influencing their leadership practice at university.

Thus, the responses of the Deans clarified their dissatisfaction with the influence of societal cultural factors on their leadership, while contributing further to the aspects and extent of how societal culture is reflected in their work. Although a small number of Deans cited these social issues, the majority reported on the organisational cultural factors, which will be discussed in turn through the following sections. Nevertheless, these societal values will be linked to the organisational ones in Chapter 7 (Discussion), since the study argues that organisational culture is influenced by national societal culture.

5.4 Influence of Organisational Culture

Following data analysis and, although there were some overlaps, seven prominent themes emerged around leadership practices and perceptions, and organisational culture. A final issue, human resources, is included as an example of how broader organisational cultures can impact on Dean's day-to-day leadership experience. The themes are listed below and considered in turn:

- Tension between Tradition and Change

- Deans' Leadership Preparation

- Regulations

- Centralisation

- Authority of Top Management

- Selection and Promotion

- Reputation

- Human Resource Issues

5.4.1 Tension between Tradition and Change

This section presents the Deans' perceptions of the ongoing change in terms of the tension between modern approaches to developing their experience of leadership in their context. Reflections of this theme was apparent through Deans' responses to their perceptions of the cultural influence on their leadership development experience. The theme is categorised into three sub-themes: Deans' experience with change, benchmarking and their traditional counterparts reflected by the sub-theme of customisation.

5.4.1.1 Deans' Experience with Change

Research participants expressed their real will to the need for change. This was noticed through the tension between younger and older Deans' perceptions regarding the organisational factors that influence leadership experience. Eight of the interviewed Deans expressed a level of optimism and discussed the growing awareness and importance of academic leadership within the universities:

> *Recently, I started feeling optimistic ... We began feeling that there is interest. … As a topic, academic leadership is now necessary and the proof is your interest in this research. (D-9)*

> *Over the last ten years, there has been development by taking care of the abilities of the faculty members and the leaders at the university to prepare them. (D-13)*

D-7 agreed with the above perceptions on these unfolding changes:

> *Things are changing and have been developing over the last five or six years. The reason being that we have a new generation of Deans who are good and active. (D-7)*

However, he referred to the reason behind the change being related to the availability of a new generation of academic leaders who had recently entered their academic life after receiving their education in Western societies. Although it was not widely noticed through

the data, this pattern in relation to tension between "old" and "new" was also noticed in the leadership theme in Chapter 6, and particularly Section 6.3.3 regarding the Dean–subordinates' relations and section 6.3.5 regarding limitations of planning, where young Deans were believed to be more flexible and open-minded when dealing with the new changes. In addition, this argument seems to be related to the sequence of social and economic changes unfolding in the country that support the national development plans and the Vision 2030 which heavily relies on modernisation the country with new generations.

Moreover, D-1 supported the claim of a growing awareness of the new trend in leadership development, and referred to modern approaches as a strategy to develop the entire process of leadership. This view reflects the level of tension between the traditional models of developing academic leaders and their contemporary counterparts perceived by the Deans:

> *Deans manage academic staff, most of them are PhD holders, it is not a military or governmental sector. That is why all the processes need to be rebuilt based on new thoughts. (D-1)*

D-14 agreed with D-1 on the traditional versus contemporary tensions, applying the term "failure" twice in reference to the traditional approaches of developing academic leaders, although he contrasts this with an argument regarding the availability of a new generation as the older leaders have not been prepared to be replaced by them:

> *We have not seen any transformed or improved faculties, as each leader took his responsibility and went forward to achieve his goals. I do believe if there was a good leader, you would see this kind of development and transformation. … Failure comes from the sense that we haven't seen clear achievements. We have not seen a new generation of young academic leaders. Old leaders have not been prepared for new ones to take their positions. This is the failure I am talking about. However, nowadays there is some kind of awareness, although it needs increased emphasis because leadership needs much more training. (D-14)*

This criticism of the traditional approaches of leadership development appears to be an indicator of the growing awareness and occurring strain among Deans of the need to develop academic leadership in the Saudi context.

To summarise, this section presented the participants' perceptions on the change unfolding in their context, with more than half of the Deans (eight) expressing positive attitudes towards this change. A number of the participants highlighted the emergence of a new generation of Deans as one of the manifestations of this occurring change. However, others reflected on the issues of failure and tensions of thought between the generations as drivers for such a shift. More about this tension, which expresses a level of uncertainty about the future, will be presented in next sections that consider the sub themes of Benchmarking and Customisation.

5.4.1.2 Benchmarking

The contrasting of the SAHE's experience in leadership with other successful national and international organisations was clearly noticed through the Deans' contributions. Nine of the respondent Deans called for research into the experiences of successful institutions, whether inside (such as ARAMCO) or outside the country (such as renowned Western universities). Two of them referred to the experience of ARAMCO (the state oil and gas company), which is well known nationally as the best provider of in-service training, urging for this company to be utilised as a model for designing and developing in-service leaders:

> *Training, training, and then training. Training is essential. Companies like ARAMCO allocate a high budget for training their leaders. Training is like education, there are no differences between them. Leadership training is very important. You can place any well-trained Dean in a position, he may change the shape of the whole organisation. You need to spend a lot of money on training. (D-1)*

Although D-1 stressed the importance of training, his reference to ARAMCO as a model suggests a deficiency in Deans' training, as their training concentrates only on short workshops, not developing a career path, like ARAMCO's. Further, his reference to the financial resources allocated by the company implies dissatisfaction with the comparative investment in developing academic leaders in the SAHE context.

Similarly, D-8 supported the above argument of the need to benchmark against successful national companies:

> *Potential Deans need to be oriented with the tasks, regulations and environment to be engaged with, not just hiring them. This is done in ARAMCO. We should take care of the future orientation of each faculty member, if he is interested in management, research, teaching and so on. There must be orientation from the beginning for all young faculty members. (D-8)*

Further, his emphasis on ARAMCO's approach of leaders' orientation, whereby candidates are informed of their employment environments before hiring them, leads on to the selection and required training dimensions, which will be discussed in Section 5.4.2, which includes the influence of Deans' preparation for their leadership

Other Deans reported the importance of sharing experiences and comparing leadership practice and development with other successful Western universities, which could be the result of Deans studying overseas, as well as their immersive experience with academic accreditation and academic exposure to universities located in the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia. For example:

> *In the West, when they achieve something, they know what the next step is. (D-1)*

> *We should have cooperation with international universities to send Deans for training to see and share knowledge and experience. (D-7)*

> *Leadership plans needs to be internationally adapted. (D-14)*

D-6 supported the need for training and to benchmark against Western models. Moreover, he reported on the need to benchmark the practices of leadership with other successful schools:

> *First, training on leadership, which is the most important thing. It is not only an innate matter, but also acquired. Then, the second is benchmarking with leadership practices in other schools. (D-6)*

Moreover, D-4 extended this further by proposing the need to compare the case of his university with other leading universities internationally, which reflects tension between current practice and the ideal, not only in terms of leadership practice, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, but also in terms of leadership development:

> *We have to look at experiences, why our universities have not been developed like Harvard in America, Oxford and Cambridge in Britain, Sorbonne in France. Is it impossible to reach the standard of these*

> *universities? We have 50- and 70-year-old universities and more in the Arab world, why haven't we reached their levels? (D-4)*

The perceptions of the Deans in this theme highlight the extent to which they consider leadership training in Western countries as an approach not only to acquire knowledge and skills, but also to exchange experience. D-9 who received short training in England argues:

> *During my training experience in England, I was sitting in a conference room, listening to what they were saying and observing how they were behaving. This experience itself improves skills, but when do we see Deans, deputies and heads of departments now? If we meet simply to exchange thoughts and experiences, this would be very helpful. (D-9)*

In summary, the prevailing view of the respondent Deans was on the need to benchmark leadership practice and development against other institutions. Commonly, this was with Western universities or leading national examples such as ARAMCO, who offer, the participants' state, a successful model to follow. Such benchmarking was perceived positively by the Deans; however, in terms of practice, other priorities were cited. Chapter 6 on the theme of leadership practice will clarify this notion of ideal and actual.

This sub theme reflects another cultural issues related to the way Deans see Western educational and management, which does not go far from the tension occurring in SAHE's institutions on academic accreditation with western educational institutions (see Section 1.9). This notion of cultural docility where a call for following western model or successful national models (ARAMCO used to be managed by American Administration), reflects a societal cultural factor of uncertainty about the future which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7. It aligns with the organisational cultural theme of Reputation (Section 5.4.7), where Saudi Deans tend broadcast their performance linked with successful models.

5.4.1.3 Customisation

Suggesting a challenge to the previous section's emphasis on the need to benchmark with Western models, three of the Deans (D-10, D-3 and D-7) addressed the requirement for leadership programmes to be designed based on the needs of Deans and their specific culture:

I would begin firstly with training needs and their analysis, identifying the training directions of leaders. The programme designer should be well linked to the environment and its requirements, King Saud University and King Abdul-Aziz University's needs are different from Harvard University's. (D-10)

There are certain intersections. There may be special situations, there are sufficient programmes but we may not need them. We should design the programmes by taking into consideration the administrative, cultural and societal culture. (D-3)

This contradiction among the participants when addressing the categories of customisation and benchmarking reveals the tension occurring among Deans between perceiving Western models as "ideal", and the need to accommodate cultural factors as "practical". The tension between the ideal and practical, the preferred and actual practice of leadership (discussed in Chapter 6), as well as the traditional versus contemporary discussed earlier in this chapter, underscore the extent of conflict in Saudi Arabian social life, which, undoubtedly, impacted on the perceptions of the Deans.

D-7 supported the need to take cultural factors into consideration when designing leadership development programmes, although he appeared to contradict his view mentioned in Section 6.4 that the occurring change was related to the emergence of a new generation of Deans:

When Deans come from outside with this new thought, they need to customise what they have learned based on our case and requirements. (D-7)

This adds weight to the argument that the Deans are fluctuating between their hopes and admiration of Western and successful models on the one hand, and their realisation of the importance of the influence of culture not only on leadership practice but also their leadership development.

To summarise, the three sub-themes represented the occurring tension among Deans on the need for change and the need to benchmark their leadership experience with successful national and international models, with a contradictory theme regarding the call for customisation of their leadership development and practices based on the requirements of

their administrative culture. This prominent theme of tension reflects Deans' uncertainty about the future and their lack of united vision of leadership requirements in their context.

5.4.2 Deans' Leadership Preparation

As a theme emerging from the major theme of the influence of culture, leadership prior preparation, in terms of the respondents, appeared to be defective. This theme yielded to two sub-themes discussing both Deans' prior qualifications and Deans' experiences of training given to them.

5.4.2.1 Deans Prior Qualifications

Eleven of the participants expressed a lack of any prior qualification in effective leadership practices or even practical leadership experience. For example:

> *I do not know anything about leadership schools [of thought] or theories, but I know something about delegation. (D-8)*

> *The reason for this [leadership practice] is the limited thought. He has limited thought and experience in this particular field. He does not have considerable experience. (D-2)*

> *A lot of Deans think they are practising leadership but know nothing about it. (D-6)*

> *No, I have not acquainted with any leadership theories, but I do engage with simple articles on management. (D-11)*

> *It is rare to remember some Deans who practice according to leadership schools, or even refer to them. (D-3)*

Contrary to the other interviewees, D-8 and D-11 preferred to use the first person "I" rather than the third person "Deans", "he" or "they" to refer to this perceived weakness, with such third-person usage appearing to manifest among the participants when criticising their practice or knowledge. This implies certain societal culture values at play related to social reputation, where people tend to criticise others and highlight their own achievements. However, the most interesting issues noticed from the responses of Deans (D-3 and D-6) is their reference to lack of prior preparation as reason behind limitations in practice, which

supports the one of the major arguments of this research indicating that contextual, cultural factors influence leadership practice.

Two of the Deans referred to an issue whereby leading through experience tended to be as a result of personal input, and while the first reported on the transformation that occurred with his experience and how his beliefs changed, the second commented on the effect of the surrounding culture on leadership experience:

> *Actually, practising is based on personal effort and experience. … There is neither reading nor awareness, no transfer of experience. You speak with academic leaders about different managerial topics and find they do not know many of these concepts. So, it depends on practising and experience: You find his beliefs change after two or three years of experience ... as a result of practice. (D-1)*

> *Scientific aspects are fully absent. I noticed this through my 18 years of practice as a Dean. Leadership is practised as the Dean's personal vision and what he acquired from his environment. (D-3)*

Both D-1 and D-3 support the view about Deans' limited leadership awareness and background. However, they refer to the influence of cultural factors (D-3), or even awareness (D-1), as substitutes that moderate their behaviour in the absence of any theoretical background. Meanwhile, the main argument their quotes support is the weak level of leadership background when they commenced in their role as Deans.

D-5 used a first-person pronoun to create a positive personal impression or reputation about himself, which reflects other societal values as discussed above:

> *We can't generalise, because there are different experiences. Actually, I practised leadership when I was an assistant professor. In different departments, there were many employees under my control. I managed a team and had experience in this. Some people are still at the beginning of the leadership journey.*

In support of this argument, D-7 agreed with others on the need for previous experience and leadership qualifications to underpin their position as a Dean:

> *We as Deans need to have prior experience and prior qualification on the position requirements.*

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One respondent perceived the Dean's leadership background in terms of the application of their previous studies on leadership:

> *All of them must have read some articles on leadership, but the issue is how to extend this into their practice. (D-15)*

Thus, the majority of the participants agreed that their leadership prior qualifications were weak, while a small number pointed to the effect of a Dean's personal efforts and environmental factors in acting as substitutes for this deficit. The following section provides the Deans' perceptions on the training programmes afforded to them.

5.4.2.2 Deans' Experience of Training

The Deans' preparation is another sub-theme under the theme of leadership preparation, including the training and workshops organised by universities to prepare individuals either prior to holding their position or whilst serving as Deans. With no exception, the interviewed Deans deemed the preparation programmes as being unsatisfactory: the following are illustrative:

> *In reality, they [Deans] have not been prepared to be leaders. (D-5)*

> *The Dean didn't make their way practically to the leadership role and had insufficient preparation courses. (D-3)*

> *There is no prior preparation and training for the leader before he takes his position. (D-1)*

> *No reading or prior training is given to Deans. (D-2)*

Another respondent pointed to two important reflections on the defectiveness of the Deans' preparation: that no general plans are available to prepare effective Deans, and a conflict exists between what is delivered in training and what is actually practiced:

> *There is no application of any general strategic plan to prepare academic leaders inside universities, there is no application so far, or even different applications in some cases. This application is different from the reality, because they [Deans] have their own "theories" on application. (D-4)*

D-6 supported the above view on the lack of effective training, while highlighting that longer training courses were much more effective in preparing leaders:

> *There is a lack of long training courses on leadership … leadership training should be built based on long term programs. (D-6)*

Corresponding to the issue of course duration, another respondent reported that the poor training and preparation programmes were related to the unavailability of criteria for the selection of Deans, concluding that Deans would only attend if they were personally interested in the training:

> *There are no particular criteria to have such a background or attend certain courses such as courses in leadership, in behaviour, or in management. I do not think they are existent unless people are interested themselves. (D-12)*

This view was also supported by D-7, who reported that Deans attend training and preparation based on their personal preference:

> *If Deans like to be qualified, they will attend the training, and if they are not interested they will not attend. This is the case in our university. (D-7)*

Moreover, D-6 touched on a sensitive issue related to the Deans' need to be humble in order to participate in leadership training:

> *They should have big doses of humility to be engaged in courses, reading books, and reading the successful leaders' biographies, attending specialised conferences, and reading from the electronic webpages. (D-6)*

This reflection from D-6 implies features related to other cultural factors where, due to centralised environment and reliance on authority, some Deans seems to ignore their leadership practice assuming that authority is more powerful that leadership attributes.

Another line of perceived steps to the requirement of training was the need to ensure extended courses and leadership qualification:

> *Training should be for long and specific courses, not only short voluntary courses. For this training a Dean should register in an assigned institute. (D-14)*

Two Deans pointed to the importance of having long-term plans to develop potential Deans, with D-12 supporting the importance of extended planning and the need to develop a system for training:

> *To prepare, we should set a plan for 15 or 20 years. … The process is optimal in a certain system, not arbitrarily agreed by a certain committee. (D-12)*

D-9 echoed the above argument on the need for strategic plans, particularly to promote training and selection:

> *First, there must be a clear strategic plan for the university. One of the most important components of this plan is the existence of the criteria for selecting and training Deans and academic leaders. (D-9)*

Indeed, the proceeding argument of the respondents reflects that training programmes were perceived to be in need of modification by partial reference to the need to customise training in light of the university culture, and another reflection on the necessity for strategic planning in terms of training and extended long-term training.

However, optimism was expressed by three of respondents on the effect of the ALC, with a positive response to the centre's programmes. (An overview of the centre can be found in Chapter 1, section 1.9.2). However, the reference to the Centre's relatively recent opening (commencing its activities in 2009) reflects its level of influence and the coverage of its programmes inside the universities:

> *Some of this weakness may have disappeared with the ALC, its programmes and courses with experts who come to the Kingdom, who may have some experience, helps them to begin behaving practically. … [Although] these programmes are not suited for everybody. (D-3)*

This view on the modest impact of the ALC and its courses not being applicable for all cases supports the argument of the limited influence of the centre on the Deans' development.

Another interviewee expressed his view on the Centre as exemplifying the growing changes Deans were experiencing in their universities, while also calling for the need to open branches of the ALC at his university to conduct workshops and exchange experiences:

> *In terms of interest in this subject, as there is a centre of academic leadership at the Ministry level, I attended two sessions with them and our university has become interested in this subject and encourages Deans, deputies and heads of departments to participate. … It is planned to have a unit related to the Academic Leadership Centre at our university, to train, hold workshops and exchange experiences. (D-9)*

D-14 agreed with the above assessment on the importance of the ALC for leadership development in the academic life of SAHE. However, his reflection on the strong need for

able leaders supports the argument of the modest influence of the ALC at the time of interview.

> *The ALC was established to solve this problem; to create new academic leaders with good scientific knowledge of leadership concepts, priorities and skills. There is still a high demand for new and effective academic leaders trained by the ALC to improve the process of leadership at our universities. (D-14)*

To summarise, as a sub-theme within the theme of leadership preparation, the Deans' training programmes were perceived by the respondents as having major deficiencies, with several aspects highlighted in relation to these defects. Three participants referred to the absence of criteria to select Deans for training, while one Dean pointed to the absence of long-term training (D-6) and need for strategic plans to do this (D-9, D-12 and D-14), and another the disparity between what is trained for and what is actually practised (D-4). Minor reference was made to the experience of the ALC, which involved perceived hopes for the future (D-14, D-9), and limited impact (D-3). Meanwhile, organisational factors in the context of SAHE, these issues of training limitations reflect cultural implications where absence of planning for training reflect short-term values and the dilemma of actual and ideal in Deans' training represent other reputational factors (discussed later in Section 5.4.7).

To conclude this section of Deans' leadership preparation, whilst a level of hope was expressed by three of the Deans on the experience of ALC, major dissatisfaction was reported by Deans regarding the lack of both prior preparation of Deans and the training given to them. Further, Deans' realisation of the influence of the theme of leadership preparation on their practice was also apparent in responses of D-2, D-3 and D-6 in the above Section 5.4.2.1. However, this apparent criticism to the level of leadership preparation designed for Deans implies a cultural reflection were awareness of the importance of Deans' preparation represents the ongoing struggle between traditional and modern values to leadership development.

5.4.3 Centralisation

As an organisational cultural theme, centralisation was perceived by the majority of the respondents as having a negative impact on their work. As mentioned in the Literature Review, the majority of the studies that targeted Saudi society categorised it as being highly centralised. This is echoed in the responses of more than half of the research participants. For example:

> *An academic leader travels a long path to achieve something or take a decision. … We really lack flexibility. … There is strong centralisation. The first characteristic of our academic life is that it is centralised. (D-1)*

> *Part of this bureaucracy is subject to the centralisation in making decisions, which means that he is the head and should know everything without consultation. (D-2)*

> *Flexibility and independence is limited in many faculties. (D-3)*

Accordingly, the three contributions pointed to lack of flexibility, bureaucracy and lack of independence as the implications of the centralisation present in their workplace.

D-1, however, pointed to an interesting notion that entails the extent of the organisational culture's influence on a Dean's perceptions, and accordingly his practice. He criticised the academic environment as being centralised, and then urged the Deans to look beyond centralisation:

> *When dealing with academics that hold high degrees, the Dean should be flexible, listening rather than issuing orders. He needs to create working teams to support him rather than relying on centralisation. (D-1)*

To conclude, eight of the Deans perceived their academic culture as being centralised, with several implications of this category for academic life noted in terms of lack of flexibility, bureaucracy, and lack of independence. Another important category that could be linked to centralisation within the academic milieu will be discussed in the following section.

5.4.4 Regulations

Regulation is a component of the surrounding cultural factors of any organisation (Aseri, 2015). Politically, Saudi Arabia is considered as a conservative country within the region,

featuring a strict hierarchy supported by regulations. Nevertheless, some academics are now calling for the development and updating of these regulations to accommodate the nation's Vision 2030 (see Section 1.8.4). Saudi universities are located in close proximity to this changing environment. In spite of the considerable development occurring regarding the level of regulations inside universities, some still believe this does not meet the level of change expected.

The responses of the Deans to this issue comprised two dimensions: the first lies in their perception of regulations as either a supporting mechanism or as obstacles facing them; while the second is grounded in their focus on the issue of flexibility in terms of financial regulations.

Seven of the respondents reported that regulations were an obstacle, and that Deans were strongly linked to them, for example:

> *I think it [regulation] can be somewhat limited. Sometimes you plan for some changes and the regulations then contradict this. So, I believe the current regulations to some extent affect the development process. (D-5)*

> *Whenever they give a margin of power, Deans become more creative in their job, in addition to independence in budget … Honestly, independence is limited in many faculties; the Deans are restricted by systems and laws that obstruct them. If the Dean's personality is not pioneering, the problem becomes worse as they are afraid or hesitant to do something useful for the faculty. (D-3)*

> *We have many academic leaders, but most of them follow the regulations and are closely linked to them. So, there is no flexibility. (D-1)*

While it was found through the narratives that regulations are an obstacle, as noted in the responses of D-3 and D-1, the Deans' attitudes in terms of how to use or navigate the regulations also appear to be a factor. Three others Deans supported the claim that the regulations did not prevent them from achieving their goals per se, and that it was possible to engage with the "spirit" of these regulations. For example:

> *You can deal with regulations. You can paraphrase regulations. People are the obstacles, not regulations. (D-8)*

> *There are special regulations for higher education, they are usually fixed and give authority to the spirit of the system. … Generally, regulations are required, but the leader can achieve through the spirit of the system without regulations being strictly applied. (D-9)*

D-14 agreed with the above argument and considered regulation as an obstacle for Deans, although he clarified that it could be positively employed if the Dean had leadership abilities and exploited his communication techniques to achieve his goals:

> *First, some administrative regulations could be seen as an obstacle, but still I return to my statement that a good leader can deal with regulations and use them to move forward. … Regulation remains weak. So, the ability to communicate is one of the major characteristics of a good Dean. You can affect them through your personal impact. (D-14)*

This view of D-14 (who is trainer and fellow of the ALC, too) that Deans could overcome the defect in their regulatory environment by enhancing their communication skills, support one of the argument this research that leadership practice of Deans is highly linked to the organisational factors around them. However, a minor pattern was noticed in the responses of D-9 and D-14 related to the influence of training on their perception. D-9 is a trainer in strategic planning and leadership, and D-14 is familiar with ALC programmes. Both Deans argued that although regulation as a cultural factor seems to be obstacles, qualified Deans could cope with relying on their effective leadership skills.

A minor view in the theme of regulation was reported by one participant who drew the contrast between universities in terms of applying regulations, concentrating on the different interpretations of regulations within universities and the effect of higher management on this interpretation:

> *In universities, despite all of us being under one administration, which is the Ministry of Higher Education, some universities are more straightforward in dealing with the spirit of the system or with the system itself than others … it depends on the practice by the higher management at the university. While one university may apply a law positively, another one may interpret it negatively. (D-10)*

In spite of the different scope used to report the category of regulation, D-10 supported the argument that although regulations are strict and inflexible, leaders do still have a margin to achieve goals by focusing on the intention with which they were created. However, his response reflects the importance of another cultural category related to the authority of top management which is considered in details within the coming Section 5.4.5.

Under this regulation theme, three Deans reported on the regulatory flexibility given to Deans to spend finances within their faculties, with two of these considering that regulations did not afford them the required ability to allocate budgets on activities inside their remit:

> *There are budgets for construction and the infrastructure of the faculty. Along with this, the financial support should include the motivation of employees, organising events, conducting faculty activities and more financial issues. (D-11)*

> *I do pay from my own pocket to support my work, as no allowances are found for this in the regulations. (D-7)*

Meanwhile, one Dean disagreed with this view, and even with the perception that regulation is strict and inflexible:

> *We, as Deans, are affected positively by regulations. Deans have assistance systems that help to facilitate their work inside the faculty, which means that if I want to hold an event for the faculty members, frankly, I have the full authority. I have prizes, I have everything. (D-15)*

Thus, although reference to this issue was limited, the availability of regulatory items in the budget that supports the Deans' activities and provides them with greater flexibility for purchasing implies that regulations are centralised and require increased flexibility to support the Deans' managerial activities.

Consequently, the perception that the Deans in SAHE are strictly regulated reflects a cultural category influencing Deans' leadership due to a need for greater flexibility and modernisation, in spite of the Deans' ability to overcome these restrictions via certain strategies. However, this section raised some contradictory responses to the issue that although most Deans considers their culture with strict regulations, some responses were apparent arguing that by leadership skills, Deans could overcome the obstacle of regulations. This contradiction reflects two issues, the first is that due to the political formation of the country as discussed in this section's introduction, some Deans hesitate to give direct criticism to regulations, since they are made by the government. The other lies in the fact that this contradiction reflects the growing awareness merged due to the transformation occurred in the country; where some Deans are convinced that although cultural factors are strong but people can cope with, if they have good leadership skills.

5.4.5 Authority of Top Management

As noted in Chapter 1, the Presidents of all governmental universities enter into their position via a royal appointment from the King. They are given a title and administrative position that is similar to a minister. Inside universities, Presidents have full authority, aided by other vices. Meanwhile, the Deans are appointed as a result of a decision from the Minister of Education, based on the respective institutional President's recommendation.

Six of the interviewed Deans stated that their relationship with the top management was not healthy or supportive, with the following quotes illustrating this unfavourable state:

> Frustration with the top management is an issue, since Deans need to cooperate with the higher management to solve problems and participate to find solutions related to the educational institution. (D-10)

> I think that the high management always reject the decisions made by the faculty, which leads to limited decisions being implemented inside the faculty. (D-11)

These excerpts support the high authority given to SAHE Presidents and how this influences the Deans in their daily work, and in D-11's case he needed to wait for the approval of decisions from the President's team, which were invariably declined. In a community that is centralised and features a strict hierarchy, these aspects would seem to be a natural outcome as a person with authority is respected. However, reliance on the President's bureaucratic authority appears to negatively impact on the Deans' work, as noted above.

Another example of the Deans' perceptions of top management was reported by D-15:

> Our selection process makes the management hierarchical, in the sense that you don't manage to support those who are under you, but you try to manage in a way that satisfies the person above you. Consequently, the focus in the administrative process is not on the institutional success, but rather the gratification of the top management. (D-15)

This quote reflects an important meaning that is linked to the nature of such collective society, which conveys great value and respect to hierarchy and authority. However, D-15's final observation on the emphasis on satisfying superiors implies a reflection on another organisational category related to "reputation", which will be discussed in Section 5.4.7.

In contrast, one interviewee claimed that some level of authority and flexibility is given to Deans from the top management domain, which he considered as helping to facilitate the Dean in achieving his goals:

> *The authority from the Presidents or their deputies is significant. Furthermore, they listen to you, if you want to do anything or if there is any injustice or complaint. These factors are supportive and assistive to achievement. (D-12)*

Therefore, while the predominant view of almost half the respondents was that the high authority given to Presidents negatively affected their performance, one participant reported this relation to be satisfactory. More details on the influence of this organisational cultural category, the influence of top management, will be discussed in the following section when addressing the theme of selection and promotion.

5.4.6 Selection and Promotion

As an organisational cultural theme influencing the Deans' leadership, the selection and promotion of Deans received the greatest input and interest from the respondents. It is presented here as a cultural category where themes represent the strict and centralised nature of the SAHE.

The selection and promotion of Deans was perceived by the participants from five dimensions:

- Absence of criteria to select Deans

- Effect of academic rank on selection

- Influence of personal relations with top management

- Suggested criteria to be involved

- Measuring and recognising Deans' performance

These sub-themes will be presented in the following sections.

5.4.6.1 Absence of Criteria for Selections

Seven of the interviewed Deans reported the absence of sound and efficient criteria for selecting Deans. For example:

> *There are no such existent criteria while selecting and promoting Deans. (D-14)*

> *No clear criteria exist for selecting or retaining a Dean. (D-8)*

> *We should have clear criteria for choosing the leader. I don't think this exists. (D-9)*

D-9 developed this argument further in reference to the fact that appointments are made based on the seniority and experience, with an absence of leadership experience:

> *He [the academic leader] is appointed based on his seniority and work experience. Does he have any academic leading experience? I don't think this exists as a criterion. (D-9)*

This reflection from D-9 on the absence of leadership prior experience as a criterion to select Deans represents the level of criticism given to traditional reliance on seniority to select Deans.

Another very minor pattern was noticed that, in growing and newly established universities, the situation was slightly different since there were limited numbers of Saudi faculty members, with most of them holding other administrative positions:

> *We concentrate on the specialisation, then achievements. We are few in number, not like large and established universities, which include many faculty members. So, the selection will be between two or three, everyone has other missions like the head of a department or similar. (D-6)*

This pattern, although it was mentioned by one Dean, reflects that universities have some differences in relation to Deans' selection and promotion, where in small and remote universities, Saudi faculties are fewer, in contrast to other expatriate faculties, and all the Saudis have administrative positions due to their limited numbers.

Another traditional aspect of the defect in the selection criteria will be presented in the following section, which addresses the influence of academic rank on Deans' selection.

5.4.6.2 Influence of Academic Rank

Another important dimension in the theme of selection and promotion is the effect of academic rank. In the context of SAHE, the Deans believed that the higher the academic rank they held, the more effective they would be within the university; however, a problem occurred when their promotion from associate or full professor to Dean was highly linked to their research contributions, as opposed to their leadership capabilities. Consequently, the Deans voiced their struggle between their management duties and other research and teaching commitments. This problem will undoubtedly be exacerbated when academic rank is taken as a main criterion for selecting 'good' Deans. In the current research, eight of the respondent Deans stated that academic rank was not necessary as a criterion for selecting Deans, and considered the reliance on academic rank only as being unhelpful:

> *Deans should be selected based on efficiency and qualification. You may have a lecturer with good personality and effective skills appropriate for being a Dean. Academic rank alone is not sufficient to become a Dean. (D-7)*

> *They [Deans] were chosen based on their experience and rank in the field they researched within. This will achieve nothing. I wish they were chosen based on efficiency; with efficiency, training and achievement, they can have a positive impact. (D-14)*

Meanwhile, D-5 complained about the effect of academic rank on his work, reflecting that Deans suffer while their colleagues advance in their academic and research careers, since the former remains at the same rank due to their engagement in Deanship:

> *People do not know that. There are colleagues with less experience than me and they have advanced, but I am still at the same academic rank. (D-5)*

D-2 highlighted the case of the President of his university and the criticism by some of having a person at the associate professor rank holding such a position at a leading university. Although the reference here was the President, the case would be equally applicable to the Dean:

> *Actually, sometimes there are differences. The President of the university is not necessarily a professor. For example, the President of our university is an associate professor. Perhaps, for this, reason some people have*

criticised some professors at the university, asking "How this person becomes a President of the university while he holds a lower rank than yours?" (D-2)

In agreement with D-14, participant D-2 contributed to the notion of the negative impact of relying solely on academic rank, while ignoring other factors such as leadership skills and qualifications:

> *The scientific background means nothing. I think that open-mindedness, mastering the principles of quality and planning, the person himself, his personality, his culture and experience should be considered to be the most important issues, rather than obtaining certain scientific degrees. (D-2)*

D-3 referred to the same issue and called for the importance of having qualified leaders regardless of the academic rank they had achieved. He reported the negative implications of relying on academic rank and a research background as a key criterion:

> *Experience has proved that there is a heavy failure when depending only on the scientific rank and scientific research. You may find a Dean who is distinguished in the scientific field but ... their management capabilities do not suit their reputation in the field. There are some who spend little time on the administration, training and reading in the leadership field, so they do not develop what they need to from the required skills. (D-3)*

D-14 added some important points, clarifying the struggle between the Deans' experience and academic rank, and how relying on rank to promote Deans influences their performance:

> *My major and all my research is in science. I directed myself to leadership because I liked it, took my training in the field and I have found myself in it. But, does this affect my major? The answer is yes; it has negatively affected my major. It has negatively affected me personally. And, when I tried to find another major that I liked, I found in our universities that I could not be upgraded, only in my major. ... So, you need to struggle on both sides. (D-14)*

Thus, relying on academic rank for the Deans' selection was thus perceived by the majority of the respondents as having a negative impact on their leadership practice.

5.4.6.3 Influence of Top Management on Selection

The third major factor impacting on the Deans' selection is the effect of relationships with top management. Ten of the Deans reported strong criticisms in terms of the effect of

lobbying and personal connection with top management on the Deans' selection. The following excerpts are illustrative of the prevailing view:

> *There are no criteria to choose the Dean, promote him or even stop him from taking on Deanship responsibilities. As long as the Dean is helpful for the President by taking care of the appearance and reputation of the university, he will remain or be promoted. (D-8)*
>
> *Being known to the university President, one of his deputies, other Deans, or having a particular position, plays an effective role. I do not think this is management. (D-12)*
>
> *I am not satisfied with the system of selection. Problematic selection is based on, "I know X and Y, but I don't know C and D", so it is for the university Presidents to determine the Dean. It [selection] is based on his attitude, if he makes a good impression, but not necessarily if his selection is the best. (D-15)*

Similar to *Wasta* this issue reflects the societal and national cultural values, and particularly tribalistic ones, and high power distance attributes as per Hofstede (1980), since the candidates have to please the top management in order to be appointed as Deans.

Another Dean supported this argument of favouritism and personal relations:

> *The choice must be practical, scientific, clear and tangible, far from favouritism and compliments. Depending on favouritism means, "I like X and there is no danger from him so I prefer him", and so on. (D-4)*

The view from D-4 supports the claim of Deans' dissatisfaction with the influence of personal relations on their selection, while such discrimination also reflects the attributes of the collective society, as well as the high power distance, where people depend on their social relations and networks to be promoted.

The comments on the top management's involvement in the Deans' selection and promotion reflected similar notions to those noted earlier on the absence of clear criteria to select Deans and the influence of academic rank. All three of these dimensions shaping the organisational culture category of selection and promotion were perceived by the majority of the respondents as having a negative impact on their organisational culture. The other remaining sub-themes contributing to the major cultural themes of selection and promotion are participants' call for new criteria to select Deans and the need to professionally recognise and measure their performance, which will be discussed in the following sections.

5.4.6.4 New Criteria for Selection

Due to their criticism to the current situation of Deans' selection and promotion, D-9 and D-14 referred to an interesting issue and called for the development of selection criteria, with both claiming that it would be appropriate to include psychometric exams as one criterion to evaluate the candidate's leadership behaviour patterns. As part of the suggested steps to select effective Deans, these interviewed respondents encouraged the use of psychometric tests that examined the Deans' behavioural type (e.g. Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance [DISC]) or Herman's measurement of thinking abilities:

> *We implement an operational plan as we choose the leaders, put the criteria, give him a plan and determine which kind of leader he is. I give courses in leadership including the DISC model, on what criteria he is, and thinking patterns via the Herman model. A leader in information technology differs from a leader in planning. … Put the leader in his right position, then train and give him power. (D-9)*

> *Deanship is something important. This [selection] could be done based on certain exams. Universities should develop such a test to measure this kind of awareness. All these techniques are easily implemented. (D-14)*

Besides the use of examinations, this latter respondent pointed to another important factor related to the importance of having certificates or qualifications in management or leadership before being assigned or even promoted to an academic Deanship. As considered earlier in Section 5.4.2, this reflects the need for training and having qualification in leadership as perceived requirement to effective leadership in SAHE:

> *Nowadays, faculty members cannot be promoted to associate professor or professor without taking some course on teaching techniques and research. In some other universities, not ours, if you do not have a certification of teaching, they will not allow you to teach. All these potential leaders are required to be aware of leadership theories and practices. (D-14)*

An interesting view mentioned by three respondents on the category of developing a selection process was related to the need to apply the strategy of elections, voted by subordinates, to decide the best candidate for a Deanship. As discussed earlier, the Deans almost all agreed that the selection process in its current form had negative organisational impact; for example, the phenomenon of personal connections with top management and its influence on selection outcomes. In this section, when asked about their perceptions of

the steps to develop the selection procedures, three of the Deans referred to the importance of election by voting and called for a proposed plan, submitted by each candidate, to be evaluated as part of the criteria. The following are illustrative excerpts:

> *I really think that the process of determining department officials, and Deans, and universities Presidents, must be done by elections. It is the easiest way to highlight problems at the beginning of the first six years, especially problems related with culture. This will finally determine great results: if I really didn't teach in the faculty well, and didn't behave well with people, this would help to make the initial appointment. The selection is made by people under you, not on the top. They are different. (D-15)*

> *The last point is that I wish we had a system to elect the academic leader, whether a Dean, deputy or head of department, elected by the members of the faculty, students or staff, because people will accept one who is chosen by them better than one imposed on them. (D-9)*

> *Selection must rely on certain factors, some criteria need to be applied to the selection process … voting needs to be carried out by colleagues and the surrounding work environment, there must be a series of criteria, not only one factor. After that, we will have a group of candidates and each one submits his plan for the period he will work. All these plans will be evaluated by experienced consultants, then we can choose any one to be an academic leader. (D-1)*

These three Deans contributed to the notion of selection by voting through agreeing on the need to apply this strategy in order to engage the Deans' subordinates in participating in the selection process and not relying on the top management's recommendations. In addition to expressing the Deans' perceptions on an effective required step to develop the section process, this insight conveys an organisational reflection on the Deans' dissatisfaction with the current selection process, made by the Minister of Education, based on the recommendation from university's top management. This reflection does not go far from the factors discussed above on the tension between traditions and change as well as Deans' criticism to the influence of centralisations and strict environment on Deans' selections.

Qualifying young faculty members in terms of their leadership skills is the third perceived dimension to develop the Deans' selection process. Five respondents reported on the need to invest and prepare a new generation of Deans. This was to avoid any over-reliance on their established counterparts. For example:

> *Some levels of leaders need to be prepared, such as second, third and fourth grades, to choose from them. (D-11)*

> *We must take care of the future Deans and set a direction for them from the outset. (D-8)*

This view on the need to prepare young Deans for selection, and D-8's reflection on establishing a pathway for them, suggest that orientating young faculty members towards leadership, from early in their academic life, could be effective, while implying that waiting for young faculty members to be academically promoted to Deanships would negatively influence the selection procedure (see Section 5.4.6.2 for the earlier findings and discussion around the influence of academic rank on the Deans' selection).

D-14 supported the view on the need to nurture young leaders for selection:

> *In my opinion, if an academic with old age has not practised leadership before, then there is no justification for him to be a leader. If he has reached 55 and has not practised academic leadership, he should not be assigned as a Dean. So, we should invest in young leaders who are still fresh graduates and prepare them to be good Deans. Because after 55, the productivity in this field will be very weak. (D-14)*

These insights on the weak productivity of old leaders are curious, since this respondent was himself more than 55 years old, although to some extent his views were echoed by another Dean of a similar age:

> *The age is an important curve; it differs if he is young or older, he gets motivation at the beginning, but less motivation when he gets older. This is the nature of human beings. (D-12)*

In addition to these perspectives, D-14 highlighted the importance of the "potentiality" for being a leader to be established as a criteria linked to the investment in young leaders:

> *One of these is that such positions should be given to leaders who have the basic attributes of leadership, the potential to be a leader. I do not support any academic faculty member to be a department head, Vice-Dean or even a Dean. Deanship is something important that cannot be fulfilled without having the potential and the required training to be a leader. (D-14)*

This view of the notion of leadership potential supports the above argument of both the need for the orientation of young leaders, and the application of certain leadership examinations, that test for leadership awareness and leadership practice.

It was apparent in this section that Deans, and due to their dissatisfaction of the current criteria to select and promote Deans, suggested three new criteria to be adopted. Two participants called for the application of examinations to test the ability and potential of the leadership candidates, with three Deans suggesting an election process that engaged subordinates in the Dean's selection, and five participants arguing the importance of preparing and selecting young leaders as future Deans.

5.4.6.5. Recognition and Measurement for Deans' Achievements

Recognition, and a call for measurement to test Deans' leadership performance, was another influential factor regarding their selection and promotion. This sub-theme yielded three elements: broad evaluation to ensure recognition of the Deans' achievements; the need for establishing performance-related criteria; and a minor perception around incentives.

Three respondent Deans reported a low level of recognition in terms of their efforts and achievements, appearing to convey dissatisfaction with the current situation: D-4's quote is illustrative of this issue:

> *Whenever they have an achievement, it needs to be recognised. This is what makes leaders more productive and increases their loyalty. (D-4)*

Supporting the above comment about recognition of the Deans' performances, another three respondents referred to the importance of planning and setting goals to measure achievements. For example:

> *Measuring the effect of the Deans' performance is very important, and should not be rushed. (D-3)*

Another Dean echoed this need to assess the Deans' accomplishments, as well as their conduct, stating:

> *The second line is to have a process or a mechanism to evaluate the Dean's behaviour, as well as his achievements. We should build their continuity in the position based on this kind of evaluation. Is this available now? I believe it is not available. These three points are the most important: correct selection of leadership based on the assigned characteristics, continuous training, and evaluation of the achievements and practices of Deans. (D-14)*

Moreover, D-14 highlighted consideration of the Deans' suitability to continue with their mandate when carrying out such performance evaluation. D-5 contributed to this argument on assessment and further described the need for such measurement to motivate Deans:

> *Actually, there is no measurement for achievement. … The first change may need to be setting measurements of achievement, so leaders can sense this [recognition of their] achievements and improvements. (D-5)*

This view from these three participants (D-3, D-14, D-5) implies that the Deans were dissatisfied with how their achievements were being recognised, which may be manifesting itself as a result of a limitation in the organisational culture category of human recourses and work distribution policies (see Section 5.4.8), where their job descriptions are not clearly defined. However, exploring a strategy to measure their achievements would appear to be a step towards developing recognition of their performance.

A reference was made by one participant of the need to motivate Deans through incentives, whether moral or financial in nature. He linked this notion to both his social heritage and Western application:

> *Motivation, whether financial and moral, is a part of our heritage, and the West have theories regarding this matter … the leader feels their [subordinates] importance … They are humans and so affected by praise. Motivation is both financial and moral. (D-4)*

In an attempt to contribute to the sixth organisational factor (Selection and Promotion) influencing Deans' leadership practice, this section presented Deans' insights on the recognition of their performance, with three of the Deans (D-3, D-14, and D-5) expressing broad opinions on the need to better recognise their achievements. This view was supported by three additional respondents who insisted on the need to set measurements for the evaluation of the Deans, while one view was presented around the need for moral and financial incentives as a strategy to motivate Deans and recognise their work.

To conclude this major theme of the influence of selection and promotion on Deans' leadership, five subthemes were presented through the participants' responses. The first lies in participants' dissatisfaction of the absence of effective criteria for selection and promotion, while the second discussed the negative influence of solely relying on academic

rank as a promotion criterion. The third presented participants' negative responses regarding the influence of top management on their selection. The fourth and fifth discussed participants' contributions regarding proposed new criteria, and their call for recognizing and measuring their performance.

As considered within the discussion of the above subthemes, the influence of strict and centralised environment of SAHE was apparent in Deans' responses whether through criticising the traditional ways of selecting Deans (Academic Ranks and Influence of Top Management), or through proposing modern counter parts strategies like elections. Reputational factors, as an organisational theme influencing Deans' leadership practices, are presented in the next section.

5.4.7 Reputation

According to Cambridge Dictionary (2018), reputation is- the opinion that people in general have about someone or something, or how much respect or admiration someone or something receives, based on past behavior or character. As an organisational culture category, reputation refers to the Deans' perceptions regarding the honour and recognition that a university administrator is seeking from top management. This is sought by highlighting the positive elements of a particular task. In a collective society, respect is given to high authority and effort is made to create a positive reputation in terms of performance to satisfy the higher levels of management. Therefore, lower levels of management tend to attempt to gratify the top level by concentrating on certain positive elements of the work being done, while disregarding other outcomes.

This category was perceived by three of the respondents as a cultural factor influencing their leadership, where they viewed this as having a negative impact on their organisational culture. For example:

> *… While their [Deans'] performance is bad, those above them are satisfied, because there are interests. (D-15)*

This respondent referred to the concept of the "interests" of top management as being the focus of performance for the Dean, and applied the notion of "those above them" to refer to the top management of the university. This view considers pleasing top management as the rationale behind performance, which reflects that performance is applied to generate a positive reputation for the Dean from the perspectives of the top management.

D-8 concurred with D-15 and referred to the appearance of performance as a strategy to market the Dean's output and create a positive reputation in the eyes of the university's President:

> *The university President tends to concentrate on the outside shape of the Dean's performance. Provided that you market the outside shape of achievement well, you will stay as a Dean. (D-8)*

D-2 viewed the situation of reputation as responding to the print media's view, which implies focus not only on appearance, but also on the quantity rather than the quality of the output:

> *For example, when we talk about strategic planning, development and quality, we discuss accurate details and values that can be measured and distinguished. … Are there key performance indictors achieved in this part? … What is the percentage? I think this is non-existent completely. We are interested in what is written in newspapers and the number of conferences organised. (D-2)*

D-2's highlighting of "what is written in newspapers" and "the number of conferences organised" reflects the level of reputation demanded not only by the top management, but also by society, and thus performance may be embellished to inform society, and by default, the top management, of their achievements.

This view from the three Deans, although relatively limited among all the respondent Deans, appears to be consistent with the perceptions of the other categories discussed above, particularly, centralisation and the influence of higher management. Reputation as a cultural category exemplifies the nature of a collective society, where centralisation is dominant and high power is given to the superior in the administrative hierarchy, while other levels of management attempt to please the top management by exaggerating their performance and concentrating on its perceived appearance.

5.4.8 Human Resources Issues

The Deans reported various issues in relation to availability and efficient use resources that highlight limitations in general work practices. The three reported factors, which are linked to resources, are work distribution, efficient human resources, and issues with the supporting infrastructure.

Nine of the respondent Deans referred to certain personal cases that reflected their dissatisfaction with the distribution of the workload and administrative pressures, which lead to a negative impact on their performance. For example:

> The situation now is that all work is carried out by only one or two people. This is the situation we find ourselves as Deans. (D-1)

> The Dean goes into single details and marginal things, which are not related to his role. For example, he has to attend many meetings that consume his available time … He must follow up on every transaction, regardless of whether it is sent manually or systematically. Some will not arrive, so he is forced to investigate and follow up, which wastes his time. (D-9)

> I refused the [contract] renewal to become a Dean for a second time because I grew tired of the workload and interruptions. Every day, I work late and receive missed calls to catch up on. Sometimes, I have to follow-up on more than twenty calls after having a meeting with the President or his vices. (D-7)

The above contributions also refer to the weak level of delegation that the Deans are able to apply to distribute their work tasks, whilst also reflecting "centralisation", as discussed in Section 5.4.3. However, strategies or training regarding dealing with the workload and organisational pressures, as described in D-10's contribution below, would not solve the issue since other organisational factors, for example, centralisation, were found to be contributing to this policy problem of workload:

> We should organise workshops to question and touch on the leaders' needs, for they are humans affected by pressure, responsibilities and so on. We should consider these. (D-10)

One factor contributing to the poor distribution of workload that influences Deans' environment is the lack of efficient manpower. Deans, as the leaders of faculties inside governmental universities, do not have the right to hire personnel or even terminate their

employment, as they are civil officials that are hired by the government. The only available option for unproductive staff is to circulate them between administrative departments. Six of the respondent Deans argued that the administrative subordinates available to them were not effective. For example:

> There is weakness in the people around the leaders. … There is also a lack of job description for each leader in particular. (D-10)

> Lack of qualified staff also affects the academic leader's role as he has priorities. So, he is forced to address individual detail, which is not an effective use of his time. (D-9)

> Unqualified persons are assigned to perform significant tasks. (D-2)

This view regarding the weak level of qualified employees from leaders appears to explain why Deans engage themselves in minor details and do not appear to delegate.

Among the respondents, there was minor reflection on the efficiency of the surrounding infrastructure, including ready buildings and adequate materials and equipment, as in D-11 and D-7's responses:

> The university infrastructure is not at the required level to obtain academic accreditation. … We have new faculties that were established without having buildings ready to accommodate them. On the other hand, the administration of the faculty has shortcomings in maintaining quality. Therefore, the Deans are restricted to limited facilities. I have great expectations for the faculty, but the properties and infrastructure that I have are limited and therefore, so are my decisions. (D-11)

> Infrastructure is not sufficient or helpful in remote areas that are far from the cities. (D-7)

D-11 reported on the influence of the lack of infrastructure on quality, Deans' decision making, and academic accreditation, which would appear to be outcomes of an ineffective national policy. This complaint over the infrastructure's weaknesses, although at a minor level, is surprising given the large amount of funds spent over the last decade to support universities (see Section 1.8.3). Meanwhile, D-12 disagreed with D-11 and D-7, highlighting the inefficient usage of such infrastructure at large universities:

> If the Dean is provided with the requirements including devices, faculty members, manpower, and materials, he should be comfortable and productive. Actually, this does not happen here. The director of educational services at our university has provided us with millions of devices. When

> *the university exerts all of its efforts to support you, then it is your turn,*
> *with your team, to perform the required tasks. (D-12)*

D-12's view on the poor efficiency of using available infrastructure implies that such an issue can be found in the application of people and how they apply the resources available to them, which implies social, cultural assumptions on the reasons for such criticism regarding the availability infrastructure. This will be discussed in more details in Chapter 7 where the tensions between traditions and the need for change are considered.

To summarise, aspects of deficiency in resources, work distribution and lack of efficient administrative employees were perceived to have a negative impact by the Deans in SAHE. However, infrastructure in terms of availability or even its application was reported in only a limited manner in terms of both policy and the outcomes of the educational process.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has presented the perceptions of the respondent Deans regarding the aspects of societal and organisational cultures and their impact on the Deans' leadership environment. The involvement of societal factors as well as the overall evaluation of the Deans' perceptions on the culture surrounding them was first provided. Predominant dissatisfaction of the organisational culture was expressed by the Deans. Several participants reported societal culture reflections on their organisations in terms of social mediation—*Wasta*—and social conflict between the different social schools of thoughts.

The key findings of this chapter can be seen in the eight dominant categories found to be contributing to the major theme of the influence of organisational culture on Deans' Leadership experience. A tension was first noticed among Deans between modern and traditional approaches to effective leadership practice and development. Moreover, dissatisfaction of the participants was reported in terms of their prior leadership preparation and the resultant effect on their leadership practices. The third organisational culture theme was centralisation, which was perceived to be at an unsatisfactory level by most of the Deans in terms of a lack of flexibility and excessive bureaucracy. The regulatory environment as the fourth cultural category was perceived to be strict and negative by a

significant number of Deans; however, some revealed that the leaders can navigate to their gaols by engaging with the spirit of these regulations. As a fifth organisational category, the authority of top management was found to be imposing a negative effect on the Deans' performance, particularly in terms of the high authority given to this management tier. Meanwhile, the selection and promotion process was found to be the theme generating the most interest towards the organisational culture of Deans in SAHE. This theme was perceived with major dissatisfaction in terms of the absence of effective criteria, reliance on academic rank and the top management's influence on the Deans' selections. Moreover, it was found that reputation, as the seventh organisational culture theme, was perceived to some extent to have negative implications for the Deans' leadership performance. Finally, human resources issues were reported, where work distribution and inefficient manpower were found to be major weaknesses. A minor issue regarding infrastructure was reported, particularly in terms of its efficient utilisation.

It is worthy to note that, through analysing the themes and although they were not obvious, some patterns were partially noticed. The first lies in two Dean's perceptions (D-7 and D-12) that young Deans are more open minded and flexible to change. The second lies in the fact that two of the Deans (D-9 and D-14), who were exposed to training, reported that Deans could cope with cultural factors if they are adequately qualified. The third concerns with issue that the selection process, as a cultural factor, does not influence Deans' practice in small and remote universities as perceived by one Dean (D-6). These patterns, as partially seen within the themes, support the research argument presented through the themes regarding the influence of cultural factors on Dean's leadership experience. The patterns, with the assigned themes above, will be discussed in depth within Chapter 7. However, the next chapter considers features of the Deans' leadership practices as influenced by these cultural factors.

Chapter 6 Findings around Leadership Practice

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents research findings around the major theme of leadership practice, and how such practice is influenced by the cultural issues presented in the previous chapter. The discussion considers Research Question 2, which aimed to explore the Deans' leadership beliefs and practices.

The overriding theme of leadership practice features six underpinning themes:

- Deans' Broad Evaluation of Leadership Practice in Their Context,

- Reliance on Authority

- Lack of Motivation Applied by Deans

- Limitations in the Deans–Subordinates' Relations

- Autocratic Decision Making

- Limitations in Planning

These leadership themes are discussed in turn within this chapter, highlighting the issues that comprise leadership practices with illustrative quotations from the interview data.

6.2 A Broad Evaluation of Leadership Practice in SAHE

This section concerns the manner in which the Deans evaluate and perceive the situation of leadership in SAHE, presenting an overall evaluation of their perceptions of leadership in the context in which they are located.

When the Deans were asked how they view the leadership situation in SAHE, their responses included statements that expressed a certain degree of criticism in terms of the current state of academic. Five of the participants reported that academic leadership in SAHE featured weaknesses. For example:

> *There is high weakness and lack of efficiency, as well as a lack of effective academic leaders in Saudi Arabia. (D-1)*

D-10 supported the above claim, but referred to the fact that *academic leaders are not on the right track"*. The contribution from these respondents suggest some uncertainty regarding the future, enabling a range of reflections discussed below in this chapter (within the planning theme in Section 6.3.5) and the following chapter 7.

Three other Deans evaluated the situation as being fair. For example:

> *I think it is average, neither so high nor so low; some new leaders have thoughts, visions and strategic plans, but others lack plans and vision. If we are talking about all 27 or 28 Saudi universities, I think they are in the middle. (D-9)*

Meanwhile, in an early general overview of the situation, D-11 presented a very clear criticism and negative evaluation of the actual leadership practice of Deans, stating:

> *The definition of leadership for some people [Deans] is to sit in an office and make decisions without taking advice from anyone. Therefore, the consequences of these decisions affect the faculty itself. This negatively influences the outcome, which is the students. (D-11)*

Although this view of D-11 appears to be highly critical, it relatively reflects a level of awareness of the importance of leadership in the SAHE context, particularly when contrasted with actual practice. His reference to the unfavourable outcome indicates that there is a theoretical awareness of the importance of leadership in his case. The following sections will clarify more clearly whether leadership practices among the participant Deans is satisfactory and concurs with D-11's appraisal of awareness of the importance of effective leadership practice in contrast to the level of actual practice in the field. However, D-11' criticism to the way Deans perceive and practice leadership reflects the level of influence from the centralised and strict hierarchical environment around their leadership.

To conclude, participants contributed to this theme of broad evaluation of their leadership practices by reflecting a level of dissatisfaction regarding their leadership behaviour. The following section discusses features of this dissatisfaction.

6.3 The Main Features of Deans' Practiced Leadership

This main section provides Deans' perceptions of five apparent leadership practices found to be influenced by the contextual and cultural factors discussed earlier in Chapter 5.

6.3.1 Reliance on Authority

As a component of the GLOBE's styles of outstanding leadership in cross-cultural studies, charisma was perceived with a very low level of practice among the participants. When the interviewees were asked about their perceptions regarding the concept of authority in relation to the notion of personal charisma, the researcher found that ten participants considered that Deans tend to state that reliance on authority is more evident than reliance on their charismatic personality in practice. The following excerpts offer examples of how the Deans perceived the practice of charisma in relation to their reliance on authority:

> *Sure, by the power of authority. Most Deans use authority and neglect their personal thoughts. (D-2)*

> *Unfortunately, most of them don't have this charisma, but it is required. (D-10)*

> *… Charisma is rare. Few academic leaders have true charisma. So, I do not want to rely on charisma as it is inherited and I will not find it in all Deans and in all fields. (D-14)*

In terms of D-1, he extended his discussion by pointing out that reliance on authority among Deans will negatively influence the loyalty of their subordinates:

> *Charisma is very weak and authority is dominant in the situation. So, when a person has authority and lacks charisma, management stops. It dies, and this will negatively affect loyalty to the organisation; there will be no loyalty or feelings of belonging to the university. (D-1)*

Two of the Deans referred to an unexpected issue when discussing charisma in contrast to authority. They argued that Deans rely on agency and neglect charisma as a result of the robust authority they wield due to the governing regulations. Although "regulation" as an organisational culture category was discussed in chapter 5, this response appears to be distinctive as it reflects a certain contradiction with the Deans' responses presented in section 5.4.4, namely that they are dominated by regulations.

> *Deans' influence by authority more than charisma … Regulations give high authority to Deans. Actually, the Deans can do whatever they want. (D-8)*

> *Most Deans lead by their authority and based on the regulations they follow. (D-14)*

However, both responses above state clearly the influence of regulation regarding Deans' practices of authoritative leadership.

One respondent was convinced that the Dean's position has greater importance and influence, stating that the *"position is the most important and most influential* [factor]*"* (D-6)*.* This view regarding the greater value of the position's influence over any charismatic influence might reconcile with the dominant thought among participants that charisma practice is believed to be weak as opposed to authoritarian practices, which rely on their position in the administrative hierarchy. However, it also reflects the realistic view bound within the context that, in practice, the position and the authority it brings, is more effective than charisma. This supports the main finding in this section that charisma is stated as not being widely practised.

Only one interviewee reported charisma in terms of personality. He agreed with the above argument about the dominance of authority over charisma in practice; however, he urged for greater recognition of the importance of having both in practice:

> *Leading by authority is more dominant. Personality is behind it. I wish that it [authority] would engage with personality (D-3)*

In summary, it was argued by the majority of the respondents that charisma is not well practiced in the field. This kind of practice is a result of other cultural factors that shape the organisational context of SAHE, particularly issues around centralisation and regulation discussed in the previous chapter Sections 5.4.3 and 5.4.4. When the context emphasises centralisation and regulation, leadership practice will definitely be influenced and yield much greater extent of reliance on authority, rather than charisma.

6.3.2 Lack of Motivation Applied by Deans

Motivations is a component of Participative and Humane leadership styles identified by the GLOBE study in Section 2.4 (House et.al, 2004). This section reflects the participants' perceptions of the manner and the extent to which the Deans attempted to motivate their

subordinates. The participants reported a level of weakness in the strategies applied by Deans to motivate their subordinates. Their responses varied in terms of the cultural reasons behind this. Some pointed to organisational factors, such as lack of financial motives, while others referred to the personality of the Deans themselves as well as their attitudes towards motivating subordinates, and appropriate leadership preparation was reported by Deans as a reasons for limitation of motivational strategies applied by them. Meanwhile, nine participants referred to the absence or insufficiency of motivational techniques applied by Deans. The following excerpts are illustrative examples:

> *I do not think that all Deans motivate employees. (D-1)*

> *There is no motivation. There is not any kind of motivation. (D-11)*

> *There is nothing unfortunately; there is not even any way to reward them [subordinates]. (D-4)*

> *No strategy for the motivation of people is applied among Deans. … We do not have ways to reward and appreciate people. Most Deans prefer to make threats. (D-8)*

The comment from D-8 here on the use of coercion to motivate subordinates reflects an implication of strict hierarchy and reliance on authority. Meanwhile, these latter contributions from D-4 and D-8 reflect that financial rewards, as a component of incentives, are a reason behind the lack of motivation. (Incentives, as an organisational culture factor, were discussed in Chapter 5, within the theme both of theme of regulation, Section 5.4.4, and recognition of Deans' performance, Section 5.4.6.5). In contrast, D-1 criticised the Deans' reliance on incentives to motivate, commenting on the common notion of belonging and loyalty to the University's environment, and referring indirectly, and with negative perception, to the Deans' reliance on financial incentives that is commonly discussed in academic life within SAHE:

> *Loyalty is very important to the organisation. ... [Deans] received scholarships and studied outside the university, but return as if they do not know it ... If there is no loyalty among leaders, you will not find success and professional development. ... As a concept, loyalty is not available in the Arab world ... What are the incentives? Financial allowance is available for all, and that is the issue. (D-1)*

The above contribution reflects a sensitive topic, where the low level of loyalty and individualistic attitudes of Deans were cited as reasons for the lack of motivation. This

appears to be a reflection of organisational factors (centralisation and reputation), which were discussed in Chapter 5 along with the major theme of culture. This reflection is underpinned in his criticism to the reliance on incentives to create loyalty and motivate subordinates since, in a centralized environment, Deans wait for organisational (mainly financial) incentives to motivate their subordinates, which all of them reflect that this limitation of motivation strategies practiced by Deans is conditioned to cultural factors such as centralisation and reputational factors.

To some extent D-4 supported D-1 and added some valid observations regarding the reasons behind this issue of applied motivational strategies, highlighting the role of the Dean's personality to cope with cultural obstacles that influence his practice of motivation:

> *I think this is related to the Dean's personality. If you are good with them [subordinates], you appreciate them, and you respond well when they ask for something, they will not reject your order. (D-4)*

Moreover, with reference to Dean's practice of motivational strategies with his subordinates, one of the Deans referred to the notion of equality between subordinates as a strategy applied by the Dean to motivate them, illustrating that it is common to find people who participate in a variety of tasks and others who do not. D-6 claimed that if Deans are fair in terms of rewarding those who work well, as opposed to unproductive staff, this would create such motivation among staff:

> *There is no bad motivation, but the motivated side is not available. This is called equality. It can be summarised as when the Dean uses the same approach to reward lazy people as busy ones. The best strategy is to reward someone who has done his job. If we rewarded all in the same way, this would be unfair for those who are productive. (D-6)*

However, and linking back to the cultural factors, this reflection from D-6 implies a problem in allocating tasks among subordinates. However, it also highlights another important cultural factor that is related to the human resources limitations (see Section 5.4.8), where a Dean does not have a strategy to reward people due to the limited authority he has to hire, and select, or even reward, subordinates, since, excluding expatriate faculty members, all other subordinates are permanent governmental officials who are promoted and selected based on seniority and years of experience rather than their performance.

D-1 acknowledged that motivation is not adequately applied among Deans; however, he referred to the need to understand the principles of motivation, which reflects contextual factors related to the need to familiarise Deans with motivation strategies, while also implying a lack of training on motivation skills:

> *Motivation is not an easy concept; it is based on rules. … In our case, motivation is lost. (D-1)*

On the other hand, a counterpart view was mentioned by other Deans (D-13 and D-14) arguing that it is their responsibility to motivate their subordinates using the available incentives and with reliance on their personal attributes to engage them. In terms of D-13, he pointed to the growing awareness of motivation among Deans, confirming the availability of plans to develop this, but referring to the weakness of their application by Deans:

> *Actually, during the last few years and by a university plan, there were motivation programmes and projects. But, still, their application is weak and the academic leadership at the university doesn't have the ability for this motivation. Verbal motivation actually exists and is marked, and paper motivation and traditional habits for expressing appreciation exist, but materialist motivation is, unfortunately, still too weak. (D-13)*

Another interviewee referred to the issue of the availability of motivation and the role of academic leaders to magnify its effect in the environment:

> *I believe motivation is more [evident] than the obstacles, but our current leaders still see and enlarge the effect of obstacles, and this creates some kind of feeling that obstacles are more prevalent than motivation. This is a special case in our country. (D-14)*

D-14 highlighted an interesting issue related to the nature of the Saudi community where people tend to complain about surrounding factors when there is evaluation of their practice or performance. This kind of reference that motivation is not applied effectively as result of shortage in the contextual resources is a nature of collective societies where people believe that resources are not equally distributed (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001), and they refer to cultural issues as reason behind limitation of motivational strategies. This kind of criticism to behaviour of Deans in regard to relying on contextual obstacles as a reason behind limitation of motivation reflects the extent how perception of Deans is influenced by the collective nature of the society.

Both D-9 and D-12 agreed with D-4 and D-8's views mentioned above on the importance of incentives to motivate subordinates, however, they asserted the importance of the leaders' practice in motivating their subordinates themselves. D-9 stated:

> *There are financial and moral rewards: financial rewards are overtime after the daily working hours, or nominating them for training courses. Moral appreciation is also important if he has completed a simple task, you thank and appreciate him. All are important. (D-9)*

D-12 asserted the importance of Dean's attributes in motivating subordinates and confirmed the importance of creating motivation through convincing and discussion, creating personal contacts with others, without overlooking the importance of financial rewards:

> *One way of motivation is by persuading and talking. Therefore, a person will be comfortable and happy whether he is an administrative employee or a faculty member. This point is very important and influential. Another way to motivate is by material motivation as much as possible. Actually, this has a great impact practically, administratively and behaviourally. (D-12)*

These empirical findings emerging from the respondents' narratives raise various issues in relation to the motivational strategies applied by Deans. The first and the key finding is most of the Deans are not satisfied in terms of the level of motivation they apply with their subordinates. Secondly, it was noticed that their answers were divided between whether lack of motivation is the responsibility of the Dean himself, or resulting from the influence of organisational and cultural factors, or resulting from the influence of these cultural factors on Deans' attitudes towards motivation.

6.3.3 Limitations in Deans–Subordinates' Relations

This section considers the nature of the personal relationships prevailing between the Deans and their subordinates. Some of its aspects are related to participative, Autonomous and Self-protective leadership styles outlined by the GLOBE as global leadership styles, which implies the level in which leaders take care of their subordinate needs, opinions and feelings. In the case of the current study, these individuals comprise those who fall under the Dean's responsibility, for example, the faculty members and administrative employees who are considered as important to the success of faculty outcomes. Data presented through the narratives suggest that the academic Deans rarely applied effective

communication with their subordinates, with nine of the participants reporting dissatisfaction in terms of how they treat their subordinates. For example:

> *Consultation exists, but is weak. Very few people share their opinion and thinking. A lot ask for commands, see success in the speed of implementation of the Dean's requests. So, the most important is the speed of implementing the Dean's requests. (D-4)*

> *Unfortunately, consultation may exist but is very weak and confined to a few individuals. (D-13)*

> *The opinion of subordinates is always taken on things that are not related. (D-6)*

As seen above, D-4 commented on the issue whereby Deans prefer to use requests and commands, and do not share their opinions with subordinates, since the most important outcome for them is the implementation of the task. This implies that the Dean considers completion of the task and fulfilling his role as leader to be best achieved by relying on authority. D-6 agreed to some extent, but he reported an important phenomenon relating to Deans consulting their subordinates on minor issues only. This suggests that Deans seek to create positive self-image among subordinates, but may not seriously engage and empower them. Both issues of "authoritarian" style with subordinates and "personal reputation" are reflections of the influence of societal and organisational culture, which was discussed in Chapter 5.

 In response to this category, D-12 narrated a personal experience on the barriers existing between Deans and their subordinates, referring to the lack of effective communication applied by a Dean and how this created a negative perception of their position as effective academic leaders:

> *Once, I met a student at a faculty of business at X University. He said that the Dean of his faculty did not listen to them and did not give them the opportunity to express themselves. Therefore, this student believed that no Deans listened to students. Some Deans will listen and smile at you whether you are an employee, a faculty member, a clerk or even a driver. On the other hand, others avoid meeting people. (D-12)*

This narrative could be illustrative of Dean's relations with individuals in his milieu, as the respondent ends by noting that some Deans view all stakeholders as representing their' subordinates.

Due to the nature of an administrative culture that places greater emphasis on authority than personal charisma, one participant reported the discredited view that some Deans believed subordinates would obey them as a person having authority, rather than as a leader who influenced them using his personal traits:

> *Some think that leadership is dominating people to make them complete a certain task or attend at certain times. Any specialised study will reveal that this is not real leadership. (D-6)*

This contribution from D-6 reflects a level of contradiction about the deep values of Deans and how they establish their position. While it can be said to be a reflection of societal culture that is expressed through the value of autocratic leadership, Deans nevertheless share a responsibility to reduce the effect of this style by developing their behaviour. The comments from D-3 support this argument:

> *Some faculty members, staff and others suffer from their managers because of the Dean's approach and their administrative practice. This may negatively affect the university administration, because the Dean didn't make his way practically to leadership and had not completed enough preparation courses. This was common in the past. (D-3)*

The above contribution finds that the nature of the Dean–subordinates' relationship influences the work, implying that leadership is what is practised in the field, rather than what is perceived.

It is common in the context of such conservative administrative cultures, which emphasise centralisation and regulation, to find academic Deans who follow instructions more closely than nurturing their subordinates. More than half of the participants criticised this approach, although their statements were in the form of recommendations or with a use of the second or third person to avoid reference directly to themselves. Deans referred to others when, in fact, they are aware of their own deficiencies. They preferred to describe how tasks should

be conducted, which is taken as an indicator that this was not being applied to a satisfactory level. For example, one Dean stated:

> *The good thing is that they have the position, to be close to people, their interests and needs. You are a leader, so what is my interest with you? Leaders should make them [subordinates] feel that the interest is mutual and that we are a working as a team, our interests are one, distinguished with each other and developing with each other, our success as one group and so on. I think that the features of humility, generosity and feeling for others make them have more solidarity, and increase loyalty to the institution, and this has a positive effect on the leader in their mission. (D-3)*

D-3 targeted sensitive issues in relation to the humility and generosity of Deans in terms of their subordinates. This reflects that these practices may not be applied, but they would be preferred.

One respondent reflected the tension between change and traditions discussed in Section 5.4.1, and argued that young Deans are closer to their subordinates:

> *Only young Deans take care of their employees, they fight for the goal of their colleges, they have good behaviour that engages followers in their faculties. (D-7)*

This quote implies that young Deans are more exposed to modern theories of leadership and are not as deeply linked to the societal culture when compared to their counterpart older leaders. This could be due to the effects of technology, their Western education, or their potential exposure to Western styles of management. As a consequence, this research aimed to include Deans from different age groups to capture a broader spectrum of views and practices. However, more about the tension occurring between traditional and modern cultural values are presented in Chapter 7.

D-4 and D-8 raised an important notion regarding Deans' relationships with subordinates: the relation with expatriate faculty members. As mentioned earlier in Section 1.9, Saudi universities have a number of non-Saudi faculty members, almost all of whom are engaged in direct teaching inside scientific departments, as they are not permitted to become the head of department or Dean. Both respondents stated that non-Saudi faculty members followed the instructions of their Deans without criticism or presenting alternative ideas:

> *Non-Saudis seek the Dean's satisfaction as he is an official and they are expatriates, so whatever the Dean says, they will do. They look at his position. (D-4)*

> *Non-Saudi faculty members seek to please the Deans, not to criticise them or any aspect of the work. (D-8)*

This issue highlights tensions with other societal and organisational aspects. The notion of "us" and "them" indicates the extent to which these Deans are linked to the regulatory environment that distinguishes between Saudis and non-Saudis, and explains why the latter are engaged solely in teaching as opposed to management. Another facet of this phenomenon is that the employment contracts of expatriates are temporary and renewed annually, and thus the Dean's decision is an important factor for this renewal.

In spite of the various aspects and implications of the Deans–subordinates' relation, the general view from the above extracts was that this relationship, in the context of SAHE, was not particularly effective. This can be taken as an indicator that Deans tend be more autocratic leaders rather than democratic in their relation with their subordinates. In other words, and according to the GLOBE scales, Deans tend to be Autonomous rather than Human oriented in their leadership practices.

6.3.4 Autocratic Decision Making

The responses from the participants in theme of Deans' decision making encompassed a range of aspects, while almost half (seven) expressing decision making as being at an unsatisfactory level within their universities. Autocracy, and the low participation of subordinates, were important in respondents' answers. Deans' hesitation in making decisions, as well a lack of authority given to them, were seen as very minor aspects of the decision making process.

D-11 alluded to an autocratic style of decision making, where no justification was given for the decisions being made:

> *There are some decisions that are applied just because these decisions have to be made. You as a leader merely make the decision and the subordinates have to implement it. (D-11)*

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Meanwhile, D-6 supported this argument regarding an autocratic style of decision making and referred to the strong authority given to Deans in order to make decisions independently, without consulting others:

> *If the Dean wants something, they make it happen. Mostly, they dominate the board and make the decisions. (D-6)*

D-10 agreed with the above argument, but pointed to the negative implications of this autocratic style of decision making on both his subordinates and the organisation:

> *[It's] not fair to have this [absolute authority] because some of the faculty members are negatively influenced by the Dean's decision and their evaluation for them. … It will reflect the success of the institution. (D-10)*

On the issue of consultation during decision making, D-8 preferred to be considerate, reporting that some Deans engage with their subordinates, while others do not:

> *Some Deans engage people in decisions, others do not follow this procedure. (D-8)*

Contrary to this, one of the respondents referred to his decision-making process, presenting his democratic approach through consulting others:

> *My decision is always collective. There is always consultation. I rarely feel that I have to take a decision by myself or under certain circumstances. I have to be the master of the decision but should consult others. (D-10)*

The use of the first-person "I" in the above excerpt in contrast to the third-person "they" employed in some other contributions reflects an important aspect of societal culture, as the individualistic attitude of the Deans is shown: using "they" when criticising the situation in general, while preferring to use "I" to express positive behaviour in terms of their own individual performance. Various Deans elected to refer to the context using the third-person as opposed to the first-person, revealing certain traditional societal values where, in Saudi society, people tend take care of their personal reputation by focusing on positive features of their performance.

Linking back to the cultural factors influencing Deans' decision making, One Dean pointed to the notion of hesitation in Dean's decision making, stating:

> *Some leaders hesitate to make decisions, claiming that responsibility and some obstacles are there, but this is one of his personal disadvantages. There is some kind of risk and the leaders should accept it when taking decisions. If you are a leader and you do not take on such risk, this could be taken as a personal weakness. I mean here calculated risk of course. He must have the ability to make decisions after he takes all the surrounding factors into consideration, although there is some kind of risk. (D-14)*

Although D-14 criticized the behaviour of Deans in decision making, his inputs on this kind of hesitation in decision reflects the limited margins given to Deans in taking decisions

In reference to a potentially relevant contextual factor, another participant stated the importance of the "empowerment" given to Deans in order to make decisions which implies that this empowerment is not available:

> *From the personal domain, giving him the mandate and empowerment is very important so that he feels that he can make a decision, in this way you enable him well. (D-9)*

In doing this, D-9 reported the low level of power given Deans to take decision. This is an indicator to the influence of top management, as an organisational factor, on Deans' day-to-day leadership performance.

Thus, with only one exception, participants who contributed to the theme of decision making expressed negative perceptions regarding the practice of adopting an autocratic style, and the lack of subordinates' participation in the Deans' decision making processes. This practice aligns with the GLOBE's leadership style of Autonomous Leadership and contradicts Participative and Team oriented leadership styles. Moreover, the autocratic style of decision making reported by most of the Deans here reflects the nature of leadership practice, which is influenced by centralisation and a strict hierarchy, where engaging participants in the process of decision making is commonly avoided. Another issue in this section is related to lack of empowerment given to Deans to take decision (D-9) and a hesitation to take decisions (D-14), both stressed the level of top management dominance on Deans' leadership practice.

6.3.5 Limitations in Planning

As a category in the major theme of leadership practices, planning was perceived variously by the respondents as fluctuating between:

- A reference to strategic planning as a model and important to apply in practice.

- Availability of plans, but with a lack of application by the Deans

D-10 pointed to the importance of planning to academic leadership, considering it as a key aspect of it. He stated:

> *Actually, planning is of great importance to the academic leadership. Planning is the most important aspect of it. If the academic leader has planning, he will be excellent and successful in academic leadership. (D-10)*

D-1 contributed to argument by showing the importance of planning with the view that it was weak among Deans; however, his reflection regarding the *West*, as a model to draw comparison with, implies some further evidence of the ongoing transformation among Deans in the context of benchmarking against Western managerial styles and addressing tension, which was discussed earlier in Section 5.4.1.2

> *Deans practice management and do not see the future ahead. As you know, in the West, when they achieve something, they already know what the next step will be. (D-1)*

In general, the most distinctive comments concerning planning made by the Deans centred on the weakness in executing plans. Six of the respondents presented their dissatisfaction with the implementation of strategic planning inside their universities, with the following quotes illustrative:

> *Theoretically, there is strategic planning, but its application is not evident because the plans were prepared from the top down. (D-8)*

> *Strategic planning is available, but we still have weakness in application. (D-7)*

In terms of D-8, he referred to the societal organisational impact whereby the implementation of the plans was impeded due to the strict hierarchy and relation with higher management.

In terms of the undertaking and application of planning, D-9 supported the above argument, but alludes to the distinction between the managerial attitudes of young ("new") and older ("other") Deans. He stated that an ongoing process of transformation is occurring, with young academic leaders appearing to be more open-minded to new trends in management (Pavan, 2016) where vision and planning are major components:

> *Some new Deans have thought, vision and strategic plans, but others lack plans and vision. (D-9)*

In this underpinning theme of planning, the most common feeling was that planning is not commonly applied by the Deans, although some reflections were described in relation to its importance as a model to follow within their academic institutions.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the results of the interviews regarding the major theme of leadership practice. Deans' leadership practices were explored, including their broad conceptualisation of the manner in which they perceive the context. The leadership practice theme yielded five underpinning themes: reliance on authority, a lack of motivation, limitations of Deans–subordinates' relations, autocratic decision making, and limitations of planning. As main or implied components of the GLOBE study these practices were generally found consistent with the Autonomous leadership style, while contradicting the styles of Humane, Charismatic and Participative styles as reported by the GLOBE in Section 2.4. The findings from each section provided an indication of the culturally conditioned practices of leadership with in SAHE.   The findings from this chapter, and the proceeding one discussing cultural factors, are now discussed in the following chapter in relation to the research's theoretical framework and other relevant literature.

Chapter 7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings in relation to the assigned theoretical framework (See Chapter 2) and related existing literature. The researcher has applied the most famous organisational and societal frameworks used for measuring cultural-behaviours, particularly Hofstede's (1980), Trompenaars's (1993) as well as the GLOBE study of House et. al (2004). This latter study has been given a special attention since it investigated leadership in the contexts of both organisational and societal cultures.

The chapter is constructed into six sections, the first section gives a brief summary of research findings in the two major themes as reported in Chapters 5 and 6. The three remaining sections present a discussion for each these major themes with their underpinning themes in turn. The last two sections propose the contributions of this research to our existing understanding of leadership in the context of culture, and summarises the discussion.

7.2 Summary of Research Findings

In the major theme of Culture, the research found the following cultural factors as influencing to Deans' leadership Practice:

- Influence of Societal Culture
- Tension between Traditions and Change
- Deans' Leadership Preparation
- Centralisation
- Regulations
- Authority of Top Management
- Selection and Promotion
- Reputation

- Human Resources Issues

Within the second major theme of Leadership Practice, the research found that, due to the influence of the identified cultural factors, following leadership practices were reported by research participants:

- Reliance on Authority

- Lack of Motivation Applied by Deans

- Limitations of Deans–Subordinates' Relation

- Autocratic Decision Making

- Limitations in Planning

The following sections consider discussions of these themes in relation to the assigned theoretical framework and other relevant studies.

7.3 Discussion of the Cultural Findings

In the context of the Literature Review, the findings of this study reveal some similarities with previous published works regarding the influence of culture on leadership practices in different contexts, including Saudi Arabia in general, and SAHE in particular. Traditional organisational cultural factors are reflected in the appearance of themes including the influence of societal culture, centralisation, strict regulations, authority of top management, reputation, and human resources issues, which received strong criticism from the Deans, who, generally, expressed the need for modernisation. The following sub-sections develop detailed discussions of these themes in relation to the theoretical framework and other cross-cultural studies.

7.3.1 Influence Societal Culture

 It has been argued in the theoretical framework in Chapter 2 that societal culture influences organisational culture, since societal culture is deep rooted in organisational behaviour (Schein, 2010). This research found that the societal culture was not reported

directly as a major issue, which was in contrast to other organisational factors. This could be because the Deans do not have direct contact with the external society outside their universities as part of their roles. However, in Section 5.3, D-6's and D-1's references to the issue of *Wasta* as a societal factor influencing their context, particularly regarding their relations with top management, express a level of influence of some external society's factors on their organisational environment. This notion of *Wasta* was previously discussed by Mohammad & Mohammad (2011) and Kilani & Sakijha, (2002), who pointed to it as a negative, traditional influence within the Arab society. Findings of this notion mirror both Hofstede's (1980) Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance dimensions, where a society, an organisation or a group relies on social norms and connections. Further, it aligns with the GLOBE's dimension of Power Distance, where power is not expected to be distributed equally since it depends on social connections more than performance.

Moreover, as an organisational factor, Deans' relation with top management and their influence on selection and promotion (Section 5.4.6.3) could be taken as reflection of *Wasta* within the university community, which implies the influence of societal culture on Deans' practice. This indicates the extent of societal influence on the organisational performance of Deans.

Another interesting issue related to the influence of societal culture was described by both D-7 and D-5 (see Section 5.3) regarding the role of Islamic values on Deans' performance. D-7 called to take care of these values, which included loyalty and transparency. In contrast, D-5 referred to this notion highlighted the flawed social interpretation of authentic Islamic values and criticised the influence of Islamic schools of thought, which created new interpretations to the authentic values of Islam and competed with each other within the academic environment. Excluding the influence of Islamic school of thought on Deans' practices as mentioned by D-5, although Islam is central to the Saudi life, the minor and positive responses by D-7 in section 5.3, reflect that Islam as a religion, does not have a major impact on Deans' leadership practice in contrast to other societal and organisational factors raised in this research. This is consistent with Tayeb's (1997) claim that, despite the

strengths of Islam as a cultural force, much Saudi behaviour owes more to other deep-rooted cultural factors, including centralisation and the autocratic nature of the community. Furthermore, and following D-7's argument on the need to work with authentic Islamic values, Aabed (2006) asserted that according to Islamic views, effective leadership should be established by embedding Islamic principles in leadership practices and behaviours arguing that presenting religious values in practice is not necessarily an indication of the spirituality of the individual.

The third important issue related to the influence of societal culture on Deans' leadership was found in the analysis of D-13's and D-8's discussions in Section 5.2 regarding the high level of influence of their society's culture on their organisational performance. Although both participants did not mention societal features of this influence, their contributions about other organisational cultural factors (such as selections process and centralisation) reflect this level of influence. The two participants recognised that these organisational categories reflect the nature of Saudi society and will continue to play an influencing role, inclusive of the leadership within organisations. This is consistent with Gonaim and Peters (2017), who found that Saudi societal culture helps to shape the characteristics and behaviours of effective Department Chairs in higher education and the identity of a conservative social hierarchy, underscored by a strong belief in the importance of respecting tradition.

Although the issue of the direct influence of societal culture on the organisational behaviour was not widely considered among the Deans, some of their responses regarding the notion of *Wasta,* consideration of the role of Islam in their life*,* and the criticisms of influence of societal culture on their academic environment reflect a relative direct role of their societal culture in their leadership practices. However, and since societal culture influences organisational one, the following sections consider an in depth discussion of the identified organisational cultural factors, which includes reference to their societal roots.

7.3.2 Tension between Traditions and Change

The participants' responses to the theme of culture reveal the challenge for contemporary cultural values to be accommodated within traditional Saudi social and organisational frameworks. Tensions were apparent among the Deans regarding the ideal values and actual practices, the need for a new generation of Deans, and the issues of benchmarking and customisation. This conflict underpins the contemporary struggle within SAHE between the need to change and cope with international trends in educational development (as seen the country Vision 2030's themes, Section 1.8.4) and the need to consider the unique case of the Saudi society as having certain cultural factors (Saudisation).

The data that emerged regarding the effect of the cultural factors on leadership reveal interesting implications and tensions that reflect the nature of the ongoing social and cultural transition in Saudi Arabia, which involves major sectors including higher education. This phenomenon was noted through the distinction between two clusters of values: traditional reflecting *"practised"* and modern reflecting *"ideal"* or "imagined". The notion was noticed through some of Deans' criticisms regarding the actual situations and their call to change, which were mostly apparent within the selection and training issues in Section 5.4.6 and 5.4.2. These tensions reflect the extent how Deans are influenced by their culture. Their criticism to the actual practices represents that tension between the need for change as *ideal,* and consideration to the actual situation as culturally conditioned.

Similar tensions between traditions and change were reflected in the repetition of certain patterns being expressed within the organisational factors, such as the "new thought" By D-1 in Section 5.4.1.1, "new generation" by D-7 and D-14 in Section 5.4.1.1, "young leaders" by D-9 in Section 6.3.3., and "cultural change" by D-13 in Section 5.2. This issue reflects Deans' realisation regarding the need for change and their dissatisfaction of the current situations. It also implies the level they are influenced by the ongoing transition occurring in the country.

More convincing evidence of the changing trends in social values was found in the reference of benchmarking to other successful models inside the country (e.g. the national oil company ARAMCO) and further afield (e.g. Western universities). Consistent with these trends, the responses from three of the Deans (D-7, D-9 and D-14) referred to the emergence of a new generation of leaders who are influenced by external values, resulting in a decreased reliance on the constraining social norms and tribal values. This could also be seen in their reference to an ideal leadership style and their frequent criticism of cultural factors, as well as their developing tolerance for alternative ideas and a more goal-oriented approach to developing the leadership situation in SAHE. (For example, see Sections 5.4.1.1 and 5.4.6.4 regarding the required changes in training and development, and in the Dean's selection process). This similar trend was noticed by At-Tawaijri et al. (1994) who found that Saudi managers who had been exposed to Western education and Western culture, are less likely to prefer to work with the traditional cultural patterns. Thus, although all of participants who responded to this research received their education in Western countries and some expressed their tolerance of traditional values, in practice, findings on organisational culture implied that traditional cultural factors will continue to play a vital role in the academic life. This notion was also found by Gonaim and Peters (2017) and Aseri (2015), who argued that the societal cultural factors of Saudi Arabia are deep and take time to change. This dilemma of Saudisation and modernisation's influences will remain among Deans, where the country's Vision 2030 opens the venue for greater modernisation and collaboration with international economies while Deans realised the importance of their unique Saudi case as a community who has its own societal and economical requirements that need to be considered.

In a similar point to the one in the above paragraph was the participants' views that the leadership practices and the preparation of leaders in SAHE should be benchmarked with successful models from Western universities, or even with successful national models, and primarily, the well-reputed Saudi oil company ARAMCO (see the comments from D1, D-8, D-7 and D-14 in Section 5.4.1.2). This reflects an ongoing process within Saudi HEIs

towards Westernising and modernising the higher education environment. (For more details about the country's Vision 2030, see Section 1.8.4). What was also revealed was the influence of the Deans' Western education on their perspectives where they urged for the need to follow western models in leadership development. Although this issue reflects the tension among Deans about their struggle to change within their cultural constrains (will be discussed later in this section), the study's findings in this particular section have several links with Amanchukwu et al. (2015), who claimed that effective educational leadership should be able to offer benchmarking opportunities with others both within and outside the school system.

The Deans' reported patterns of best practice, professionalism, benchmarking and academic accreditation to imply a need to transform the culture surrounding them. It should be recognised that while the interviews were being conducted, the participants were being influenced by the continued focus on preparations for the country's Vision 2030, which directly calls for cultural and societal changes among citizens to adapt to the newly emergent trends, together with the challenges of the national economics. Moreover, through analysis of findings about the themes of benchmarking and customisation, Deans were seen torn between the need to cope up with the components of the country vision 2030 that calls for greater interactions with societal and economical international trends and their realisations of their unique case of Saudisation (relying solely on their national and societal factors) to develop the situations of academic leadership inside universities.

Thus, repeated notions were noticed amongst three of the participants in terms of the demand to reduce and change the dominance of the cultural and societal values within higher education (for example, D-13 in Section 5.2). The responsibility for creating such change was mentioned to be on the shoulders of policy makers, as mention by D-13. Abdalla and Al-Homoud (2001) pointed out that leaders who are trying to change can only do so slowly, because in a society structured around webs of social relationships and strong hierarchy, they cannot afford to alienate sources of support. However, new ideas are very gradually taking hold, and it appears that change will accelerate somewhat, as the current

generation of Western-educated academic leaders are moving into senior decision and policy-making positions. This will occur at a time when there is a climate of change unfolding due to the country's Vision 2030. Moreover, in this theme, two of the participants' (D-3 and D-10) described a need for academic Deans to be aware of how to cope with culture and lead transition in their respective contexts. This highlights the importance of taking into consideration cultural elements when designing leadership preparation programmes.

An interesting element in above discussions regarding the tensions between modern and traditional values in relation to the themes of benchmarking and customisation (see Sections 5.4.1.2 and 5.4.1.3.) could be noticed in the participants' contradictions in their references to Western schools as the *de facto* model. Further, some had concerns regarding development programmes to be customised based on their cultural factors and the actual needs of their working environment. This argument reveals consistency with Pavan (2016: 95) who referred to the fact that *"the outcomes of the Saudi experiment as this struggle to balance traditions and globalisation will impact not only on the country itself, but also on the Gulf region".* This highlights the ongoing debate within Saudi academia regarding how to address the conflicts between successful international models and national societal needs, with the participants' views on the ALC raising similar issues. It is true that Saudi Deans view the Western styles of leadership development as preferred models to follow, which can be taken as being indicative of their admiration for Western culture in contrast to their own. However, the tension found between Western styles of leadership and consideration of the societal and organisational contexts in designing leadership programmes is supported by other scholars who considered cultural issues in relation to leadership development. Al-Dabbagh and Assaad (2010) addressed the existent tensions between dominant Western perspectives on leadership development and local needs and realities:

> *Challenges are available in relation to reconciling "Western" perspectives on leadership and the "local" realities of people and programs in the Arab world. In some cases, attempts at reconciling "East" and "West" meant taking ready-made frameworks and tweaking them to make them "culturally suitable." By presuming that dominant theories of leadership*

provided by international organisations are superior, these programs inadvertently promote one-sided partnerships between "local" consumers and "international" providers. Moreover, such approaches underestimate the value of developing meaningful collaborations between leadership experts locally and internationally that can go beyond importing knowledge to local contexts, to producing it collaboratively. Alternative approaches to addressing the tension between Western theories and local realities have their own set of problematic long-term implications.

(Al-Dabbagh & Assaad, 2010, p. 12)

Leadership development offers a voice to indigenous theories of leadership, which, while vital, may result in the promotion of such theories or their components only because they are more familiar or preferable to the community, regardless of the implications of the theory itself. Indeed, the application of an indigenous perspective or theory should not necessitate a reductionist dichotomy such as *Local* versus *Western*. However, considering cultural differences and electing for a binary approach to understanding the self and the context may not be empowering for individuals who have to deal with globalised realities (Al-Dabbagh, 2009). Findings of the current research supports this argument on the need to consider contextual factors while practicing and developing leadership, an example of this is D-3 in section 5.4.1.3 who argues:

The programme designer should be well linked to the environment and its requirements, King Saud University and King Abdul-Aziz University's needs are different from Harvard University's. (D-3)

Consequently, and based on this argument regarding the influence of contextual factors on Deans' leadership experience, and with support of the data emerged from Deans' responses, the research will propose a contextualised framework of cultural influences on leadership (see Section 7.5), where the research findings and the literature cited support the assertion that a leadership practice and leadership development programs that are divorced from institutional contexts allows for a more critical assessment of their impact. These linkages are crucial, since the macro perspective for leadership experience in the region can only be understood, and therefore effectively implemented, within its context. This discussion supports the research's argument on the demand for conceptualising a contextual framework for cultural factors influencing Saudi Deans' leadership practices.

7.3.3 Deans' Prior Preparation

Deans' preparation is another key theme related to the major theme addressing the influence of organisational factors on Deans' leadership practice. This section considers a discussion of findings explaining the influence of Deans' leadership preparation on their leadership practice.

As discussed in the Literature Review (Section 3.4.1), leadership development should extend beyond exposing academic leaders to short-term training. Rather, it should be a complete system that takes into consideration preparing Deans to cope with the contextual factors influencing their leadership performance. Leadership is therefore an emergent property of effective systems' design. Leadership preparation, from this perspective, "consists of using social (i.e. relational) systems to help build commitments among members of a community of practice" (Day, 2001, p. 583).

With regard to the Deans' leadership preparation, the participants expressed a positive aspiration for customising the current training and preparations to address the actual needs of academic leadership in SAHE. There was widespread agreement in Sections 5.4.2.1 and 5.4.2.2 that training is necessary and it should be designed based around cultural and organisational factors. The impact of formal training programmes in terms of actual leadership development has been challenged in the literature (e.g. Alnaser, 2016; Gonaim & Peters, 2017; McCall, 2004; Raelin, 2004). New leadership development dimensions have emerged, due to the notion that leadership is deeply rooted and embedded in the context, and thus more effective leadership can be developed within the organisation and be linked to the organisational and societal cultures (Al-Dabbagh & Assaad, 2010). This claim is also supported by Moxley and O'Connor's (1998) study, which found that the nature of development is a continuous process rather than a series of separate incidents, and, thus, emphasis should be placed on improving the opportunities to learn from real-life employment experiences in order to facilitate individuals learning from their work, rather than removing them from their workplace to learn. Burgoyne et al. (2004) supported this

finding, arguing that leadership preparation should be aligned with the organisational culture, context and objectives, amongst a wide array of other factors. To this extent, it could well be argued that much current leadership development is being squandered, and that effort would be better directed towards enhancing the quality and precision, rather than the quantity of provision. Examples of this are D-11's views in Section 5.4.2.1, and D-12's and D-14's in Section 5.4.2.2 regarding the need for long and specific courses, not only short general workshops (Abbott and Bush, 2013), and their suggestions about the need to prepare a new generation of Deans (Gmelch and Buller, 2015). Thus, as an organisational factor influencing Deans' leadership practices, the argument above outlined the need for Deans' preparation programmes to be considering the contextual factors as influencing their leadership practice and development.

The design of training programmes, as part of Deans' preparation in a university context received high concentration among Deans on the need to professionally plan for them and go beyond designing short workshops considering leadership changes in terms of the prerequisite skills and potential abilities for leading (for example, see comments from D-9 and D-14 in Section 5.4.6.4). The participants' contributions reflected a strong demand for the development of the training process and the need for training itself, as well as encouragement to engage trainees to participate in the process of training design (for example, D-3 in Section 5.4.2.2). These outcomes have considerable congruence with published studies, such as Alnaser's (2016) investigation of training needs in a newly established university in Saudi Arabia, which pointed to the need to implement intensive training programmes to meet the training requirements of academic leaders, as well as involving leaders in identifying and prioritising their training needs.

Regarding effective leadership development programmes in Saudi Arabia, the findings in this section concur with Fitzmaurice (1992), who indicated that organisations would face a challenge in creating a sufficient number of competent leaders. Fitzmaurice claimed that the issue could be resolved through training process development, leading to the improvement of leaders' skills and competencies, while Inman (2007) found imbalances in the

development programmes of academic leaders in higher education and highlighted the challenge of adapting the skills required by academic leaders through practical experience, suggesting that universities build effective leadership and development training programmes. This argument yielded from this study's research findings, and supported by literature, implies that training, as a category of leadership preparation, influences Deans' leadership practice and needs to be designed considering contextual factors.

The experience of participating in ALC-led development programmes (see Section 1.9.2 about the ALC) resulted in moderate concern among some the Deans, whose responses fluctuated between aspirations for the expansion of its activities to include all universities, and indirect criticism due to its sole focus on training. This is despite the centre being familiar to the majority of the Deans due to its reputation for conducting training courses, commonly presented by international experts. This impression of a limited scope appears to ring true when considering that, since its establishment in 2009, the centre has been located in and managed by only one university (i.e. King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals). Moreover, despite its promotional literature indicating that it is a centralised entity under the Ministry of Education, its correspondence address and managerial processes are located in the provincial city of Dhahran, where King Fahad University is situated. In reviewing the web page of the centre's activities and appraising its development, one critical point lies in that despite the pertinent emphasis on the need to guide national leadership development through cultural studies, research on the national leadership challenges in SAHE, and continuous coaching programmes to discover potential leaders, the centre's main focus remains on designing workshops and conducting training courses presented by international speakers, without any in-depth analysis of the academic leaders in terms of their context, as reported by this study's participants.

The findings on the ALC are consistent with Gonaim and Peters (2017), who assumed that the centre is located in Riyadh:

> *[S]ince the Ministry of Higher Education initiated the Academic Leadership Centre (ALC) in Riyadh in 2009, expanding the focus of this centre to involve development opportunities for department chairs is recommended.*

> *Also it is recommend opening new branches, or similar centres, in every region—not only just in the capital city—to make it easier for women to attend such courses, especially with the restrictions on women's travel in Saudi culture.*

> (Gonaim & Peters, 2017, p. 16)

This study's findings also agree with Smith and Abouammoh (2013), who pointed to the marginal influence of the centre and its emphasis on conducting training courses while neglecting to address the leadership demands of Saudi universities.

In spite of the limited influence reported by this research and supported by related literary works, hope remains for a better future for the ALC by contributing to the leadership development in SAHE:

> *The development of academic leaders should prepare them to meet demanding challenges, both globally and nationally, and to build on the effective leadership, management and governance of higher education. Projecting this view on the Saudi Arabian model of academic leadership development, and taking into consideration the progress achieved thus far, it is reasonable to be optimistic about the impact that the ALC will have in shaping Saudi higher education.*

> (Al-Swailem & Elliot, 2013, p. 46)

Thus, the findings of this theme supported by previous published studies contribute to the importance of Deans' preparation as a contextual factor influencing their leadership practice. Moreover, findings from both organisational factors regarding tensions between traditions and change, and Deans' prior preparations for leadership practice were not addressed by any of these cross-cultural studies. Consequently, they represent unique findings within SAHE and accordingly lead to conceptualisation of a framework regarding the influence of cultural factors on leadership practice within such an underexplored context (see Section 5.7).

7.3.4 Centralisation

Due to the tribal nature of Saudi community (Bjerke & Al-Meer, 1993) and the collectivist nature of its society (Hofstede, 1980 and 2001), strict centralised hierarchy was noticed in the context of SAHE, and was presented in this research through the organisational theme of centralisation. Previous literary works categorised the Saudi environment as centralised

(Aseri, 2015; Gonain and Peters, 2017). In this section, discussion of findings on features of centralisation as perceived by Deans will be considered.

Hofstede's dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance reveals the extent to which a society will accept ambiguity and uncertainty. As a rule-oriented society, Hofstede asserts that Saudi Arabia generally tends towards Uncertainty Avoidance and working under centralised control, with extensive rules and regulations, which is supported by the findings of this study. The Deans strongly emphasised the dominance of rules and centralisation in their organisational lives, which was presented through their criticism regarding a lack of flexibility (see Section 5.4.3). The issue of bureaucracy and lengthy decision making reported by D-1 and D-2 in Section 5.4.3 are supported by findings of Ali and Swiercz (1993) who pointed that the fact that bureaucracy is an aspect of strict hierarchy in Saudi Arabia. Further, these findings are consistent with Gonaim and Peters (2017), who found that department Chairs in Saudi Arabia complain of the low level of flexibility in their context. Moreover, they reveal consistency with Basahel (2016), who applied the Competing Values Framework introduced by Cameron and Quinn (2006) to three Saudi organisations in the field of business, and found the hierarchy culture to be dominant.

In this respect, the impact of High Power Distance (as reported by Hofstede to refer to a centralised environment and inequality in authority distribution) and a centralised hierarchy can be observed in two aspects. Firstly, by virtue of their position, the university Deans have power over their subordinates. This was discussed in the actual practice of authority as opposed to a reliance on charismatic influence and the participation of subordinates in decision-making processes (see Section 7.4. and Chapter 6 on the major theme of leadership practice, Sections 6.3.3 and 6.3.4). Secondly, some the Deans expressed their dissatisfaction in terms of the strong authority given to university top management, as well as their realisation that the promotion and selection of Deans is governed by the university President, which was presented in Section 5.4.6.3 regarding the influence of university top management on Deans' selection. These issues reflected the overlap between centralisation, as theme, and other organisational themes yielded from the research findings, where

centralisation was believed to be as a major factor influencing other organisational factors. The next section considers some of this influence.

7.3.5 Regulation

As a theme, regulations was the one of most influencing factors within the traditional dimensions of organisational culture, which was perceived in relatively negative terms by the participants, who argued that these led to a negative influence on leadership practice. This reveals some consistency with previous cultural studies on Saudi Arabia and Arab culture in general; for example, Aseri (2015) found that Saudi managers showed an expected relatively strong reliance on both formal and written rules, as did their co-workers and subordinates.

A clearer criticism to the notion of regulation, and its direct negative effect in Deans' organisational performance, was reported by D-5 and D-3 in the same section. Findings in this theme agree with both Hofstede's and GLOBE's dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance where reliance on rules and procedures to alleviate the unpredictability of future events is clear. Both the Studies labelled the Saudi (with Hofstede) and Gulf countries (with the GLOBE) as with high Uncertainty Avoidance (see Section 2.4), where people rely on written regulations to organise their working environment.

Within the regulations theme, a partial reference to the collective nature of the society (Hofstede, 1980) where two Deans avoided to express strong criticism to regulations assuming they are put by the higher management or the government. Instead, they argued that it is the responsibility of Deans to cope with these regulations, although they were reported as strict and considered as an obstacle by them (see D-14's and D-8's comments in Section 5.4.4). However, the research found that, although these two Deans considered Deans' ability to cope with strict regulations, regulations was reported as an obstacle by the majority of participants. Deans' reference to the negative influence of their strict regulations on their leadership practice seems consistent with major themes introduced by the country

vision 2030, which urges for the adaptation of many aspects of Saudi life to be more liberal and modern. This implies the need to develop this organisational regulatory environment.

7.3.6 Authority of Top Management

The influence of university top management on Deans' leadership practice is an organisational factor, which was also cited in the participants' complaints about the high authority given to university presidents (as reported by D-15 and D-10 in Section 5.4.5) and the need to please them through taking care of pleasing university top management by concentrating on the reputation of work. This latter issue will be discussed later in Section 7.3.8.

Trompenaars (1993) found that the social status of Arabian communities, including Saudi ones, are conferred on the basis of personal background as opposed to individual achievement and, in Arab society, the prioritisation of individual circumstances and personal relations dominates the rules and procedures in intra-organisational relationships. This impact can also be seen in Hofstede's (1980, 2001) Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, where the Saudi score is particularly high (Bjerke & Al-Meer, 1993; Hofstede et al., 2010). In addition, findings from this section correspond with Hofstede's and GLOBE's dimensions of Power Distance and Collectivism, where reliance on the personal connections and family relations with people in authority play a more effective role than professionalism and individual performance.

The outcomes of this study's investigation echoes previous researchers' criticism of the domination of personal connections, particularly with Presidents, inside an organisation as a cause of unsatisfactory job performance and organisational deficiency (Kilani & Sakijha, 2002; Loewe et al., 2008). Further, there is resonance with Abdalla and Al-Homoud's (2001) investigation of Arab managers, which highlighted "people from Arab nations concern with their interpersonal relationships, which translates into being one of Arab people's leadership characteristics" (p. 522). This implies the importance of personal connections as a leadership attribute where, Deans as reported by this research, rely on

their personal connections to be promoted and achieve their goals. Findings on this issue is consistent with the GLOBE results, which labelled the two Gulf States (Kuwait and Qatar) with a strong preference for personalised relationships characterised by deep and extensive group influence.

In addition, the level of trust and appreciation between high levels of authority and some of Deans appears to be weak (see responses of D-10 and D-11 in Section 5.4.5). The positive influence of cooperation was not found to be widespread due to a practice of individualism, which discourages people from working together, learning from each other and self-developing. Smith et al. (2007) argued: "since concern for interpersonal relations is strong in Arab nations, we can expect reliance on one's own experience and training to be less strong than is found in more individualistic nations" (p. 281). This consistency between the research findings and literary contributions on the notion of the influence of top management on Deans' leadership practice reflects the importance of such a cultural factor influencing leadership. Moreover, although findings in this theme resonate with the dimensional frameworks of Hofstede's and the GLOBE, the uniqueness of this findings in relation to the influence top management on Deans' leadership practice, which was not addressed directly by any of these dimensions, reflects the need for such a framework considering unique HE cultural issues in this context.

7.3.7 Selection and Promotion

This section presents analysis and discussion of findings of the cultural theme of selection and promotion considering its unique case as an organisational factor influencing Deans' leadership practice. Within this research, some features of participants' responses in relation to reliance on seniority, academic rank and the influence of top management in the selection process (see Section 5.4.6 for information on these factors), reflects the nature of a collective society where there are no effective criteria to select Deans (see responses of D-14, D-8 and D-9 in Section 5.4.6.1). These elements from the findings of this section represent a unique case related to cross- cultural leadership in the context of higher

education and definitely, with the other factors, will contribute to conceptualisation of a framework related to leadership in the context of the research (see Section 7.5).

An important category discussed by a number of participants in the theme of selection process development (Section 5.4.6.2) related to their perceptions of their leadership roles as Deans and their realisation of the importance of their academic rank. The dominant view here being that their leadership role within the university should provide credits towards their academic promotion from the ranks of assistant, to associate and full professor. In Saudi academic culture, academics usually place greater focus on their academic rank, which is considered to be the reason for the societal cultural factors that give extensive support for hierarchy and social reputation. Another justification for this leadership role to support academic promotions lies in the fact that, in the Saudi academic system, academics realise that being a Dean is a temporary position, while being an associate or full professor is permanent, and one that brings financial reward and social reputation. The participants were challenged by the need to fulfil their leadership duties while simultaneously conducting scientific research in order to further their academic rank. This could justify some of the Deans' concerns over adopting additional leadership responsibilities, as well as their limited focus on effective leadership practice (see D-14's complaint in Section 5.4.6.2). The academic leadership position is often considered as a temporary role; a revolving door position for faculty members (Strathe & Wilson, 2006). Moreover, in some cases, the aspects of leadership roles appear to conflict, such as the balance between developing one's own research credibility and the ability to manage faculties (Bryman, 2007). Aside from the potential goal displacement, time constraints alone may lead to benefits for one priority, while eroding prospects for addressing the other. This tension between academic duties and managerial duties appears influences their leadership experience.

Through extensive searching of the literature on leadership in HEIs, including those embedded in Arab culture, the researcher found no empirical references to the need for adjustment in academic promotions to include recognition of leadership performance alongside scientific research contributions. In section, 5.4.6.2, both D-9 and D-14 reported

that Deans' selections, based on academic ranking, negatively contribute to the theme of selections of Deans. Further, D14, in the same section, suggested that leadership performance should be taken as a criterion contributing to academic rank development. This would provide Deans the opportunity of concentrating on leadership in the way they do on research, which is what helps them in gaining academic rank promotion. Consequently, this research study's finding on the influence of academic rank as part of Deans' selections and promotion with their influence on their leadership experience represents a unique empirical contribution to the scientific knowledge on leadership development in higher education. This argument is supported by Alfayez's (2014) quantitative investigation on Department Chairs at King Saud University, which found that the higher academic rank a faculty member possesses does not necessarily mean they provide more effective leadership.

An interesting finding on the proposed notion of developing the Deans' selection procedure lies in D-9 and D-14's suggestion (see Section 5.4.6.4) of applying psychometric exams to select superior leaders with managerial qualities, as well as to identify their leadership training needs. To some extent this finding agrees with Arvey et al. (2007), where in their contribution to the developmental and genetic determinants of leadership, the authors underscored that the remaining variation is attributed to differences in environmental factors, such as individuals having different leadership roles in their early ages. Similarly, they suggest that predicting the emergence of leadership qualities across one's career is influenced to a greater extent by one's formative life context(s) and later employment environment, than through heritability. Due to the absence of applying psychometric exams in the Deans' selection process, in contrast to its widespread use in determining the career paths of business leaders, this phenomenon could be viewed as an indicator of the current era of transformation and globalisation, where the traditional Deans' selection process is no longer applicable to effectively recruit competent candidates with the necessary leadership qualities. It could also strengthen the argument for the application of business values within universities to cope with the national changes that are unfolding in the Saudi context.

The continuity of the Deans' perceived suggestions on the influence of selection and promotions on their leadership practice is reflected in their responses in respect to the need for their university to recognise and measure their performance. This recognition embraced two dimensions. The first is exemplified in their encouragement regarding the introduction of performance indicators and certain criteria to measure their output, while the second lies in their call for cognitive rewards to recognise their achievement. These two measures were perceived by five of the participants (D-3, D-14, D-5, D-12 and D-4) as being absent or weakly implemented, which reflects the Deans' challenges in terms of the cultural barriers, and particularly the issue of efficiency of human resources within universities, as well as their dissatisfaction with the incentives currently afforded to them. Although Deans' call for recognising their performance has not been mentioned in any of the previous literature, Deans' responses to this underpinning theme reflects the influence of Cameron & Quinn's (2006) Adhoc and Hierarchy dimensions as reported by Basahel (2016). Less organised working environment (adhoc) as well as reliance on the authority and power of hierarchy reflect such kind of lack of recognition of Deans' roles and absence of incentives as well as lack of measurement for Deans' performance.

Selection and promotions of Deans, as an organisational factor influencing their leadership practices, received a lot of attention, although this is an issue receiving little consideration in other cross-cultural studies. With their organisational culture reflections (for example, reliance on academic rank reflects the hierarchical nature of society, and the influence of top management reflects the Power Distance and the influence of personal connections) selection and promotions of Deans was examined a HE's unique cultural factor influencing Deans' leadership practice.

7.3.8 Reputation

A further important theme that emerged from the participants' contributions was that, in SAHE, reputation is more important than any practical ability on the ground. This comprised two dimensions: completing tasks to ingratiate with senior management as reported by D-8

and D-15 (see Section 5.4.7), and announcing future events through print media was reported by D-2. Both of these dimensions reflect the level of overlap between the cultural factors to the extent they influence each other in terms of cause and effect. For example, although the issue of reputation was reported by three Deans, it was considered as an important theme, since reputational factors were seen as results of the influences of other organisational cultural factors, such as centralisation and authority of top management.

A reference to these reputational factor was given when D-2 expressed his concerns regarding the practical influence of some universities' achievements in terms of, for example, strategic planning. Hofstede's dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance reflects the degree to which the Saudi society is rule-oriented, working under centralised control. This indicates that academic leaders, as part of such a society, aim to please their superiors by taking care of their external profile, broadcasting and embellishing their results to enhance their reward and perception of achievement in the field, as reported by D-8 and D-15 in the theme of reputation. This also reveals some consistencies with Hofstede (1980)'s reference to the Saudi culture as being generally oriented towards Short-termism, which reflects the tendency towards near-future reward, since these Deans stated that some concentrate on pleasing their superiors more than their engagement of actual long term results of their works.

None of the empirical studies, even those which investigated the Saudi community, referred to this theme as an organisational factor influencing leadership practice. However, it is believed that such an issue of reputation could be an effect of centralised culture where people tend to please their superiors by taking care of their external profile, which supports the argument regarding the relative availability of overlap between these organisational factors. As discussed above within the section, an apparent example of this, lies in the influence of the high authority of top management on the Deans' behaviours towards taking care of their external profile, rather than actual performance.

7.3.9 Human Resources Issues

A similar broadening of the cultural dimension was found in the influence of human resources challenges on the Deans' leadership practice. Human resources issues (limitations of work distributions and lack of effective man power around the Deans) appeared to be as a result of other cultural factors. They were mentioned as a theme to express the overlap of these cultural factors and how each of them influences the others and contributing to the overall picture of the influence of organisational factors on leadership practice. It is also mentioned as an indicator of how cultural factors can influence the Deans' day-to-day leadership practices.

In some of Deans' responses there were descriptions of a lack of effective job descriptions as mentioned by D-10, weak subordinates and inefficient work distribution between people who work with Deans (as reported by D-1 and D-9 in Section 5.4.8). These categories contributed to the theme of human resources issues and reflect other organisational factors. Lack of job descriptions is reflection of inequality of power and roles, which is consistent with the Saudis' tendency on reliance on personal and social connections more than their working performance (see Sections 5.3 and 5.4.5 for more about this personal connections). Moreover, issues related to work load and limitation of work distributions are indicators that reflect the centralised nature where power and responsibility are in the hands of few people, while other subordinates are not empowered and engaged in the process.

The findings in this theme concur with Gonaim and Peters (2017), who found that female faculty chairs at one Saudi university faced several challenges including ill-defined rules and regulations, technological issues, and increased pressures due to the workload distributions. Such challenges also confronted the academic leaders in SAHE interviewed in this research study, influencing their work and leadership perceptions, and thus, justifying the strong criticism of these cultural factors and their negative impact on the participants' attitudes.

As an organisational factor, and in addition to their direct influence on Deans' leadership practices, human resources issues, as discussed above, were appeared to be indicators of other cultural factors, such as centralisation and influence of relation with top management. Findings of this underpinning theme seem to be unique in relation to cultural dimensions applied for this research, since none of these previous studies has referred to human resources issues as features of the cultural factors influencing leaders' practices. Although human resources issues were not discussed previously as direct cultural factors influencing societies or leadership in societies, unique reference to these issues raised by Deans supports the need to conceptualise a framework for cultural factors with their influences on Deans' leadership practice within the context of SAHE.

7.3.10 Concluding Thoughts about the Cultural Influence on Deans' Leadership Practices.

The previous sections have identified and discussed factors influencing leadership practice of university Deans in the context of Saudi Arabia. The factors were discussed in relation to the organisational and societal culture dimensions presented by Hofstede's, Trompenaars's and the GLOBE, and in terms of the previous empirical studies that investigated the context. To some extent, the findings meet with the dimensions of Hofstede's, Trompenaars's and the GLOBE, particularly regarding the influence of societal culture, centralisation and regulations, with their deep societal implications. However, in themes such as tensions between modern and traditional approaches, prior preparations, selection and promotion, reputation, the influence of top management, and human resources issues, the research has raised new issues, which were not directly addressed by these previous frameworks and, further, appear to be unique to the HEIs in the context of this study. These factors were not addressed by the GLOBE, which did investigate business organisations and not educational institutions (Miller, 2017) – the focus of this research.

These themes not addressed by the GLOBE and others, imply the extent how leadership is influenced by other contextual factors, suggesting that implementing a new contextual framework to consider the cultural influences on leadership practices of Deans within SAHE.

Many leadership scholars (e.g. Astin and Astin, 2000; Hamel, 2009; Gonaim and Peters, 2017) asserted that the primary test of good leadership is the focus on organisational purpose. This implies that leaders are located within the context and research on leadership effectiveness should not only investigate what is needed by leaders, but also explore what is required for leaders to perform what could be considered as good leadership skills. For example, Astin and Astin (2000) highlighted that if collaboration is required, then the institution must be seen to value that activity, since only then will leaders be inclined to engage in collaborative practices. Consequently, if the general system (e.g. the rules, measures of performance, promotion criteria, policy and procedures) shifts to a different set of priorities, then a different leadership practice will emerge (Seddon, 2003). Further, if a good performer is placed in an ineffective system, then the system will dominate on every occasion (Rummler & Bache, 1995). This shares similarity with Alnaser's (2016) study, which found that creating a motivating work environment should be the first objective for academic leadership development, alongside the financial and moral support to enhance the desire to acquire relevant skills. This argument supported by the research findings considering the cultural influence on leadership reflects the demand of conceptualising a framework considering the contextual cultural issues of leadership in SAHE.

Basahel (2016) categorised three Saudi organisations as being in *Hierarchy* dimension of Cameron & Quinn's (2006), (see Section 2.3.2.2), which seems to be consistent with this research's organisational findings regarding regulations and centralisation. However, when considering the cultural findings of reputation and human resources issues, particularly the inequalities in work distribution, also fit the dimension of *Adhocracy* (which suggests something as being unarranged and not systematic) in the same Cameron and Quinn's framework. Moreover, findings of this research on the organisational themes of authority of top management and their influences on selection and promotion of Deans have consistency with the other dimension of *Clan* culture in this framework, where a sense of pride in terms of sharing values, goals, inclusion, and individuality is apparent. This reveals the inadequacy of such ready frameworks to deeply explore and comprehensively cover the cultural factors

of different organisations, in different socialites, where some important societal and individual interpretations could be ignored by solely relying on labelling a society with one dimension.

Schwartz (1999) argued that individual values are a mixture of shared culture and of unique personal experiences. Culture does not only reflect societal values, but goes beyond to consider organisational and individual experiences. One of the major limitations found with GLOBE lies in the fact that although it studies people in organisations, GLOBE's respondents were asked to give society ratings only, potentially missing valuable information at the individual and organisational level. McSweeney (2013) asserted that societal cultures are made and remade through exchange, tensions between values, intersection, education, travel and trade, to name but a few, making societal culture difficult to measure. This justifies the reason why the current research has presented conclusions related to SAHE (for example, tensions between modern and change, selection and promotion issues, authority of top management, concerns of academic ranks) as being important to academic leaders, but not addressed by the GLOBE and others.

These factors, with the other discussed in the following section related to the theme of leadership practice, provide basis for conceptualisation a framework on the cultural influence on leadership in Saudi Arabian HEIs, which is developed from the data that emerged from this research. More about this contribution is discussed in Section 7.5.

7.4 Discussion of the Finding about Leadership Practices

This section discusses findings of the major theme of Leadership Practice as presented in Chapter 6. Within this major theme of Leadership Practice, the research found that, due to the influence of the cultural factors, following leadership practices were reported by the research participants:

- Reliance on Authority
- Lack of Motivation Applied by Deans

- Limitations of Deans –Subordinates' Relation

- Autocratic Decision Making

- Limitations of Strategies Applied by Deans in Planning

The section will do two things: first discuss themes found by this research in relation to the GLOBE's outcomes on leadership practices in the Middle East cluster (see Section 2.4). Second, it considers consistencies and inconsistencies between the research findings and other studies, particularly those targeted transformational and transactional leadership theories in relevant contexts (see Section 3.2.1). The main research argument within this section lies in the fact that investigation of leadership practices using dimensional frameworks or qualitative research methods may result with problems relating to ideal leadership styles rather actual ones. Moreover, leadership explored in isolation of its cultural context reveals a lack of justification regarding why a particular leadership style is apparent in a certain society or organisation.

7.4.1 Discussion of Leadership Practices in Relation to the GLOBE

After collecting data from the four Arab countries of Egypt, Morocco, Kuwait, and Qatar, the 62-nation GLOBE survey conducted by House et al. (2004) (see Section 2.4) arrived at some similar conclusions to the findings of this research. In the GLOBE, managers from the Arab cluster were found to score significantly lower compared to those from elsewhere in terms of charismatic, team-oriented, or participative qualities, although these managers scored significantly higher on self-protective styles, namely self-centredness, status-consciousness, face-saving, conflict induction, and reliance on procedure. Face-saving and status-consciousness are often claimed to be important values in traditional Arab culture, particularly within tribal cultures (Gregg, 2005). In spite of not including Saudi Arabia in the series of countries, the high scores for self-centred and face-saving qualities from the Arab cluster compared to other global societies (House et al., 2004) suggest partial consistency with the result of this research, particularity regarding the findings around autocratic decision making and the limitations of Deans-subordinates' relations. However, these

findings are much more consistent with the GLOBE's Autonomous dimension (classified by House et al., (2004) as individual and independent styles of leadership) which received a medium score in the Middle Eastern cluster compared to Self-Protective leadership style, which scored the highest in the same cluster. This indicates the inadequacy of creating certain styles and labelling societies based on them, particularly while these styles have a lot of overlaps between them (McSweeney, 2013).

The findings of this research completely contradict the Teams-Oriented leadership style in the GLOBE, which scored (5.47) as above the middle in the same cluster of Middle Eastern countries, too. In this research findings regarding the practices of autocratic decision making, limitations on Deans- subordinates' relations, and the lack of motivation applied by the Deans reveal that a Team-Oriented style is not apparent as a leadership style in SAHE. Although it was labelled as relatively apparent in the GLOBE with a score of (5.47) out of (7) in the Middle East cluster.

Although some of findings of this research may come under the leadership scales presented by the GLOBE, the 62 country leadership study that investigated leadership styles as people of the study want their leaders to be, for example the findings of the study contradict both GLOBE's Team Oriented or Participative styles. Although there is considerable overlap between them, they were labelled as separate leadership styles and scored different scales in Middle East cluster. This is an indicator to the difficulty of labelling a leadership practice as identified in a society or an organisation to be under a certain style identified by the GLOBE.

Notwithstanding this point, perception of these styles may differ from society to society based on local societal cultural factors. Furthermore, wanted or preferred leadership traits or styles certainly appear to differ from practiced ones. The GLOBE labelled societies based on both societal cultural values and leadership styles, but the study did not match the leadership preferred styles with the cultural scales of a county or a cluster of countries. For example, in the GLOBE study, Self or Group Protective leadership was the highest in the Middle Eastern cluster, with no reason cited why this was the case, in contrast to the

Autonomous style. Moreover, the current leadership findings regarding Deans' autocratic decision making may align with both of the scales of Autonomous and Self-Protective Styles and contradict both the Team-oriented and Participative styles, which makes the process of labelling findings under each of them practically impossible. This inconsistency regarding the influence of organisational culture on leadership practice brings to the surface the applicability of ready, cross-cultural frameworks that label leadership practices based on scales that were prepared in isolation of the context from where the leadership was practiced. Although the GLOBE has a strength over other cross-cultural studies regarding its coverage of cultural and leadership dimensions, it neglects the linkage between leadership scales and the cultural reasons behind the practice of these styles. In other words, the GLOBE did not consider why certain leadership practices in a certain society are low or high.

Taras *et al.* (2010) noted a disconnect in the GLOBE study's findings; they reported significant negative correlations between values and practices. This implies that the use of these scales as international scales for best leadership practices in other societies should be taken with caution, since the needs, the resources and other cultural factors in the context differ from a society to another. As Miller, (2017:7) argues:

> *Notwithstanding, as countries and regions collaborate and cooperate, our understanding of national and regional cultures, cultural spaces and cultural practices is arguably not as developed as one might expect, and our attitudes are sometimes premised on differences and not on similarities. Some studies, although providing 'authority' through their 'global' and 'international' labels, have only included countries from the developed world in their analysis, and in many others, where developing countries have been included, these countries are often typecast as problematic and in need of assistance to raise them up to standard. Research conducted in this way sustains negative tension between the intellectual needs of developing countries and Western intellectual hegemony, where developing countries are treated as intellectual dumping grounds for international ideas.*

Consequently, and based on the discussion above, and in reference to the concluding thoughts in the influence of cultural categories in Section 7.3.10, the applicability of ready dimensional frameworks to measure cross-cultural leadership needs to be taken with caution. Labelling societies or organisations based on questions related to preferred

leadership styles isolated from their contextual backgrounds may result with certain problems related to the fact that data emerged does not fit with ready scales, particularly in a context that has not previously been under investigated, like SAHE. Thus, leadership is better to be studied within a particular cultural context. This reflects the demand of having a contextual framework considering the influence of cultural factors on Deans' leadership practices within the context of SAHE.

7.4.2 Discussion of Leadership Practices in Relation to Other Studies

In terms of these leadership practice themes outlined at the beginning of Section 7.4, the findings of this research echo those from Ali and Al-Shakhis (1985), who found that due to the influence of their culture, Saudi managers tend to be more individualistic, less egalitarian, and less humanistic compared to their Iraqi counterparts. The authors' findings about Saudi managers reveal consistency with this research study's finding within the themes of autocratic decision making and lack of motivation. This consistency implies that, although people from the same Arab culture have similar attributes, some variations tend to be apparent due to their societies and their organisations, which supports the need for such a framework to understand the unique case of leadership in the context of SAHE.

The themes that emerged from this research study regarding leadership practice contradict those from Wirbaa and Shmailan's (2015) quantitative study exploring the leadership styles of managers in a HEI in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, where they reported that the majority of managers in academic institutions were practising transformational leadership, and, secondly, that transactional leadership was less prevalent than laissez-faire leadership. Section 3.2.1.4 in the literature review presents the four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. The study applied qualitative surveys with ready questionnaire considering the leadership styles as preferred, not as practiced, since they neglect the context where leadership is practiced. Contrary to this, the current research, and by applying qualitative methodology and considering the cultural factors found that themes like

autocratic decision making, lack of motivation and limitations of planning and Deans' relation with subordinates are actual features that transformational leadership components are not adequately practiced among Deans.

Considering another leadership theory, transactional leadership, Hassan (2013), quantitatively studied the Deans of business schools in eight different countries. She found transactional leadership elements (Cognitive Reward and Leading by Exceptions) to be the most dominant among the participants. Her study offers insights into the manner in which the Deans of business schools might develop their leadership attributes, either through enhancing their transactional leadership style, by changing their style, or by combining a range of styles to suit the situation. Hassan (2013) applied her instruments to measure these elements focusing on preferred practices, not the actual practices. Although findings of the current study do not have similarities with Hassan's (2013) study in relation leading by exception, which was not apparent through Saudi Deans' practices, her conclusion regarding the need to modify leadership practice based in the contextual factors reveals the importance this research's argument that the context is a mediator influencing leadership practice.

Developing the above point regarding espoused preferences of certain leadership practices, and with the paucity of contributions to the literature in the context of leadership in SAHE, the above argument on preferred leadership styles resonates with several of the outcomes of Alharbi's (2012) study that focused on public hospitals in Saudi Arabia and revealed that a transformational leadership style has a significantly positive relationship with quality management practices. However, the transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles were found to significantly and negatively relate to quality management practices. Furthermore, Alharbi's (2012) results show that organisational culture has a moderating effect on the relationship between leadership styles and quality management practices which support the argument raised by this research regarding the need to study leadership within its cultural context. The majority of participants in Section 6.3.1 described their actual practised styles as more authoritarian and less charismatic. These perceptions can be explained in

accordance with the elevated need for affiliation within a collectivist society, taking into consideration that Saudi Arabia's score on Hofstede's (1980) Individualism dimension places it at the collectivist end of the spectrum (Bjerke & Al-Meer, 1993).

The participants of the current investigation, to a certain extent, accepted that in practice, very few of the Deans actually involved or consulted their subordinates in the decision-making process. Moreover, the participants highlighted that they were not being consulted by their superiors, that is, the Presidents of the universities. As a leadership practice, it reflects the nature of Saudi society, as reported by both D-8 and D-14 in Section 6.3.1, who link the authoritative practices of Deans to the strict regulatory environment in their context. This was previously observed by Aseri (2015), who noticed that Saudi managers are linked to written rules. Furthermore, this indicates a degree of consistency with Al-Swailem and Elliott's (2013) study on leadership in SAHE, which found:

> *The Middle East profile of leadership was reported to be based on status and the value of family and society within the group or organisation. The role and power of leadership appeared to be more independent, stronger and possibly less based on independent charisma and assertiveness, which came more from status and position.*

(Al-Swailem & Elliot, 2013, p. 41)

In terms of this theme of leadership practice, the current study's findings also concur with Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993), who found that Saudi managers have a high score on Hofstede's Power Distance dimension, which reflects a degree of inequality in power and status, and is commonly found with hierarchical organisational structures. Iles et al. (2012) found that in such a culture, joint decision making, or any perceived reluctance of mangers to take firm control of decision making, even in an authoritarian manner, can be a sign of leadership weakness. Through linking this issue to the Deans' actual reliance on authority, in contrast to any dependence on influencing and engaging people, there appears to be an assumption that decision making does not concern subordinates since centralisation and strict hierarchy (as organisational factors) are dominating the context. A very clear example of this notion was presented by D-8 and D-14 (see Section 6.3.1), who referred to the regulatory environment as a reason behind Deans' general high reliance on authority.

The above analysis of the study's findings in relation to previous research contributions reflects that participant Deans perceive traditional factors as having a negative impact on their performance. This was evident in their narratives regarding the trends of criticism towards cultural and organisational factors, and calls for certain cultural adaptations. This apparent existence of dual values is consistent with Abdalla and Al-Homoud (2001), who found that managers from Arab cultures express different espoused and practiced values. Notwithstanding the call for modernisation and change, the traditional organisational and cultural Saudi values remain deeply inherited, with a strong impact on the "actual" as opposed to the "ideal" leadership behaviour.

This dilemma between "rhetoric" and "reality", or the contrast between "ideal" and "actual", is not only expressed within Saudi culture. Argyris (1993) discusses the contradiction of "espoused" and "practised" leadership as a challenge to global organisational performance. In SAHE's institutions, despite the rhetorical preference for charisma, politeness, respect, and engaging subordinates in the decision-making process, the actual leadership practice of Deans was depicted as being relatively autocratic; for example, the Deans' assertion of the importance of motivating subordinates and engaging them in decision making, and their noticeable criticism in terms of the lack of application of said attributes (for example, D 12 in Section 6.3.3 and D-13 in Section 6.3.4).

Another issue related to this argument was that described leadership practices, when negatively practiced, was generally expressed in the third person to highlight others' behaviour. Only one Dean (D-10 in Section 6.3.4) used the first person to refer to his democratic decision making practice. Under this argument, it could be clarified why this study's findings contradict those of Wirbaa and Shmailan (2015), which focus on academic managers' perceptions as being transformational leaders. The influence of the cultural factors reported by this research, where Deans take care about their reputations and external profile and do not refer directly to themselves when criticising their leadership practices, justifies why transformational leadership style was apparent in Wirbaa and

Shmailan's (2015), study where leadership was seen among mangers as preferable to them, not as practiced by them.

One of the major challenges encountered within leadership studies in cross-cultural societies lies in the balance between the *actual* practice of leadership and the *ideal* practice of leadership. This context becomes more complex when we consider the contradictions and inconsistencies that emerged throughout the findings of the leadership theme between the espoused preference of certain leadership practices and the actual reality described by the majority of the participants.

Several examples support this argument from the study's findings. D-3 (see Section 6.3.1) expressed his admiration of a charismatic personality and suggested it could be used with authority. Further, D-1 (see section 6.3.2) reported positively regarding loyalty as a technique for motivating people, however, in practice, he stated that it is commonly absent. A clearer example was D-10 (see section 6.3.5), who expressed his support for Deans to apply planning techniques, but, in practice, he stated that it is not well practiced. These inconsistencies highlight a certain degree of contradiction in terms of the Dean's cultural values, which may result from uncertainty in the phenomenon of Saudi society's ongoing transition and gradual national development.

The inconsistency raised above in terms of a preference for certain leadership styles and, yet, weak practice of them raises questions regarding the applicability of the Western theories of leadership within societies manifesting different social and organisational cultures from those of the theories' origins. This issue echoes those raised by Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993), who concluded that Western-originating theories of leadership may not be compatible with Saudi society. Moreover, it supports Shahin and Wright's (2004) concerns regarding the applicability of Western views of leadership in other cultural contexts.

When considering espoused and practiced leadership, it is the opinion of the researcher that a key challenge for leadership researchers is to bridge the gap between the academic and practitioner worlds. Academics tend to view the practitioner literature on effective

leadership with little substance or rigour to support the propositions made, while many practitioners view academic research as impractical and idealistic (Zaccaro & Horn, 2003). A vast body of literature has been published that investigates what qualities and skills academic leaders need to be effective. Meanwhile, there is a paucity of literature exploring what actually needs to be developed to produce effective academic leaders.

To sum up, discussions in this section regarding Deans' leadership practices, influenced by the cultural factors, has unearthed with two mains issues. Firstly, investigating leadership practice using dimensional frameworks or quantitative research methods may result with problems relating to ideal leadership styles rather actual ones. Second, leadership explored in isolation of its cultural context reveals a lack of justification regarding why a particular leadership style is apparent in a certain society or organisation. This supports the research's argument regarding the need for a framework that conceptualises the influence of culture on leadership practice within the particular context of research.

7.5 Intersections between Cultural Factors and Leadership Practices

Findings from this research study have shown various overlaps and intersections between the following levels:

- the identified cultural factors themselves;

- these cultural factors and their influenced features of Deans' leadership practices;

- the leadership practices themselves;

Several identified themes are evident and overlapping. The following three sections will present examples of the three levels of overlap and intersections.

7.5.1 Intersections among The Cultural Factors

In terms of intersections between the cultural factors themselves, and as reported by D-8 and D-15 in the theme of reputation (Section 5.4.7), they argued that they take care of their external profiles and tend to please their management inside their universities due to

the centralised environment. This indicated that academic leaders, as part of such a centralised society, aim to please their superiors (who have high authority given to them by regulations and due to the university centralised hierarchy) by taking care of their external profile, broadcasting and embellishing their results to enhance their reward and perception of achievement in the field. This illustrates how several identified themes (reputation, centralisation, and influence of top management) are evident and overlapping within this example.

Another apparent example to illustrate intersection between the cultural factors is in the influence of personal connections on human resources issues. In some of Deans' responses, there were references to the lack of effective job descriptions as mentioned by D-10, weak subordinates and inefficient work distribution between people who work with Deans (as reported by D-1 and D-9 in Section 5.4.8). These categories contributed to the theme of human resources issues and reflect other organisational factors. Lack of job descriptions, for example, could be a reflection of the inequality of power and roles, which would be consistent with the Saudis' tendency regarding reliance on personal and social connections more than their working performance (see Sections 5.3 and 5.4.5 for more about these personal connections). Moreover, findings and discussions of the major theme of selection and promotion in Sections 5.4.6 and 7.3.7 have shown how the influence of top management affects Deans' selection and promotion processes, which implies intersections between both of these cultural factors.

7.5.2 Intersections between the Cultural Factors and Leadership Practices

The influences of the cultural factors on Deans' leadership practices were reported as holistic without direct reference to certain leadership practices as being influenced by certain cultural factors. However, minor intersections were reported press the influence of an identified cultural factor on a certain leadership practice. For example, a number of Deans described that being unmotivated because they were not engaged in the process of planning and plans were prepared by top management. Reference to this issue highlights

the authority built within Saudi Higher Education leadership practices. D-14 and D-13 (see Section 6.4.2) reported that a lack of motivation experienced by Deans was caused by obstacles in their context. Moreover, this research study reports that there are weaknesses among Deans in executing plans. D-8 (see Section 6.3.5) referred to an organisational factor where Deans are not engaged in planning, and plans are enforced from above, which, again, suggests the organisational factor of centralisation.

A very clear example of this notion was presented by D-8 and D-14 (see Section 6.3.1), who referred to the regulatory environment as a reason behind Deans' general high reliance on authority. Other examples of this are D-11's views in Section 5.4.2.1, and D-12's and D-14's in Section 5.4.2.2 regarding the need for long and specific courses, not only short general workshops and their suggestions about the need to prepare a new generation of Deans. Thus, as an organisational factor influencing Deans' leadership practices, the argument above outlined the need for Deans' preparation programmes to be considering the contextual factors as influencing their leadership practice and development. This indicates that academic leaders' practiced leadership is influenced by these cultural factors.

7.5.3 Intersections between Identified Leadership Practices

The third area of intersection lies in the fact that leadership practices were shown with relative overlap between each other. Some Deans reported defects in their relations with subordinates and their autocratic decision making occurred because of their reliance on authority, as reported by D-4 and D-12 in Section 6.3.3, and D-6 in Section 6.3.4. Another apparent example of the intersection between features of Deans' leadership practice is shown through their reference to the limitations in the motivational techniques as being a result of reliance on authority (reported by D-3 and D-14 in Section 6.3.1) or as being a result of a lack of Deans' application of planning techniques and not having a vision to motivate subordinates (reported by D-1 and D-13 in section 6.3.2). These examples underpin how Deans' reliance on authority (as being an identified practice of Deans) influences other features of their leadership practices.

To sum up, findings of this research shed the light on some overlaps and intersections between the cultural factors themselves, the cultural factors and their influenced features of leadership practices, and the leadership practices themselves. These intersections illustrate the relativity of both the phenomena of culture and leadership and the way they interact as two realities in social sciences. The following section, in addition to its purpose to introduce the contribution of this research, will summarise how this overlap is designed with Figure 7.1 illustrating these levels of intersections.

7.6 Proposed Framework for the Influence of Culture on Leadership in SAHE

Most of this research study's cultural factors influencing Deans' leadership practices are related to the unique nature of Saudi Arabia and the organisational culture of SAHE in particular. Studies, such as GLOBE, appear to offer more than other contributions, such as Hofstede's and Trompenaars's, since they consider both leadership practice and culture. However, leadership in cross-cultural studies is not only ideal leadership practice, but also a process that include contextual cultural factors influencing this practice (Day, 2001).

Discussion of this research study's findings reveal that both the contextual, cultural factors, along with leadership practices, are different in the context of SAHE from the cross-cultural frames designed in Western-based research (Hofstede's and the GLOBE, for example), particularly regarding their limitations in covering HE's issues and their concentrations on ideal leadership practices rather than actual ones.

This research suggests that future studies of cross-cultural leadership in Saudi HEIs should include different dimensions.
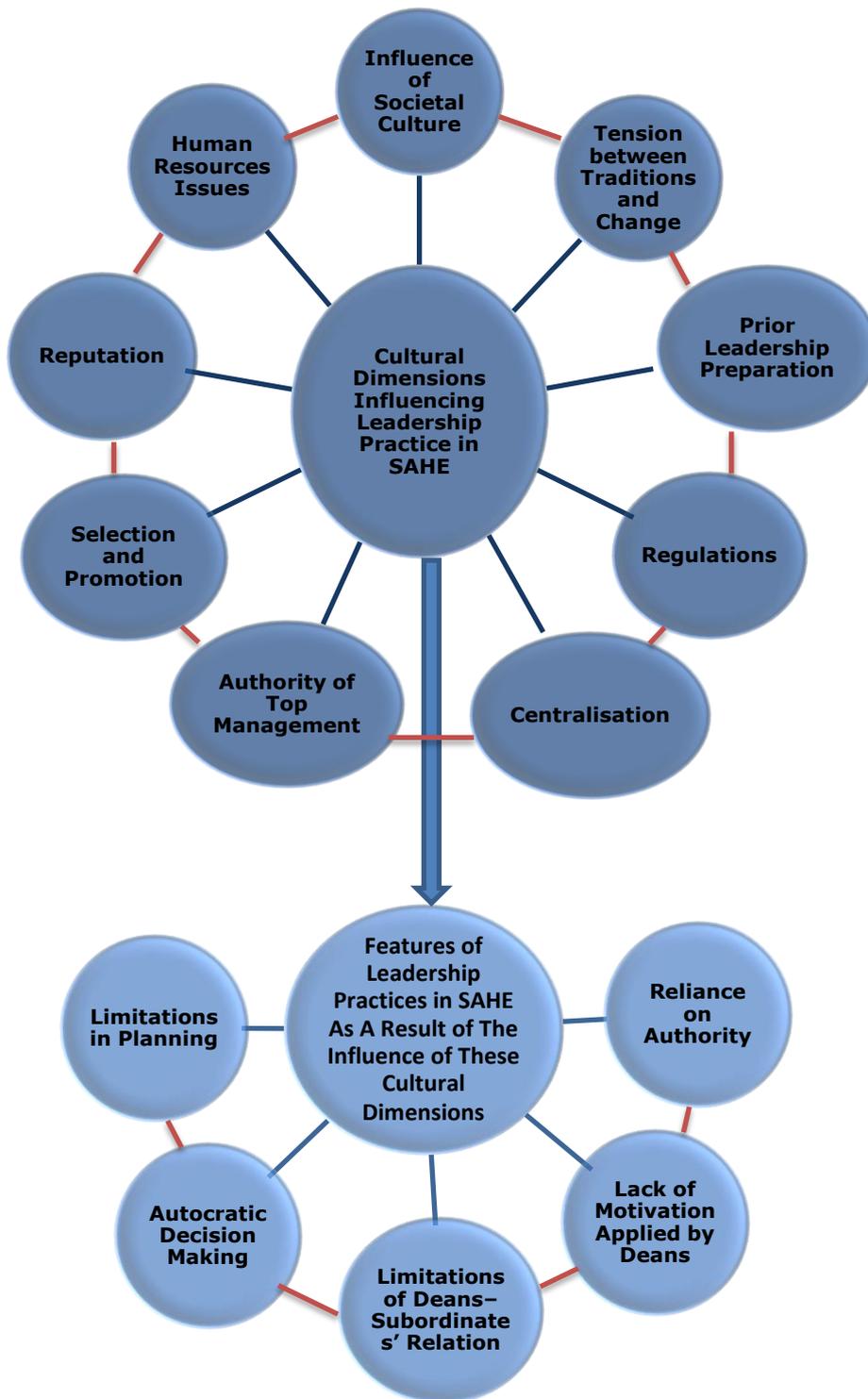
Figure 7.1: Dimensions of the Cultural Influence on Leadership Practice in SAHE

Figure 7.1 illustrates the different cultural factors influencing leadership practices in SAHEls as identified by this research. Dimensions of the upper part of the figure illustrate the cultural influences on leadership practices in the context of the research. The first dimension includes how societal culture shapes the practice of leaders. The other eight dimensions represent the organisational factors influencing leadership practices in the context of SAHE. The second dimension considers the tension between traditional perceptions of leadership practices and the need for change and modernisation. The third represents the influence of contextual prior preparation on Leaders' practice, while the fourth presents the impact of the regulatory environment where academic leaders work. The fifth dimension represents the nature of centralised environment that influences Deans' practices, the sixth addresses the influence of the authority given to university's top management regarding academic leaders' experience, the seventh represents the influence of leaders' selection and promotion on their leadership practice, the eighth concerns with the notion of reputational factors where broadcasting of performance is considered more important than actual outcomes, and finally, the influence of human resource issues on practice represents the last dimension. The red line that links these dimensions together represents the overlaps and intersections between these cultural factors to show how they influence each other, as well as being influenced by each other.

Within the same figure, the blue arrow going down to the lower part of the figure refers to the holistic influence of these cultural factors on the identified leadership practices and how leadership practices were evident as result of the cultural factors combined together. See above Section 7.5 for examples of the detailed intersections of this influence. In the lower part of the figure, identified features of leadership practice are shown with the red line representing the intersections between these practices as discussed in Section 7.5. Consequently, by considering all the above dimensions, a comprehensive study of leadership practice in the cultural context of Saudi Arabian Higher Education is presented

7.7 Summary

This chapter has discussed the research's findings and introduced their importance to the assigned theoretical frameworks. In addition, the research findings were discussed alongside relevant literature in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the findings in a broader research context and add a significant value to the research's contribution. The findings from the current study depict analysis and understanding of two major themes: the influence of societal and organisational cultural factors on leadership, and features of Deans' leadership practice as influenced by these cultural factors.

Discussion of the findings revealed several issues. First, culture remains highly influential on leadership, and thus, leaders, as well policy makers, need to consider tensions, constraints, and transformations in their culture and their significant influence on leadership development. Second, cross-cultural leadership frameworks designed to investigate and label societal and organisational cultures are inadequate to cover the contextual cultural values of SAHE, and, therefore, it is necessary to consider cultural issues influencing academic leadership in this context with a different framework. Third, an increased focus is needed regarding the fact that a number of previous studies have been conducted through a lens of *what is needed from leaders*, while a paucity of research has addressed the notion of *what is needed for leaders* to improve the current status of leadership.

The final Conclusion chapter, which follows, draws together the main themes of this thesis, with the practical and theoretical implications stated, before presenting the limitations and forwarding recommendations for future work.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This research has explored organisational and societal cultural factors and their influences on Saudi Arabian University Deans' leadership perceptions and practices. Literature on the issue of Deans' leadership is scarce, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia, with few studies focusing their attention on the leadership styles or the cultural impact on Deans' perceptions. This gap in the literature and a lack of understanding regarding the concept of leadership called for an investigation of the factors associated with leadership practices in SAHE. There is a growing demand for improvement of our understanding of the prevailing academic leadership in Saudi Arabia, and how it influences the effectiveness of HEIs and the ongoing process of development in the country (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Thus, the following sections discuss how the findings of this research contribute to the leadership literature in the dimensions of leadership theories, leadership and culture, and leadership development.

This chapter concludes and draws together the main themes of the thesis, to present its practical as well as theoretical implications, to acknowledge the limitations, and to present recommendations for future work. It begins with a summary of the main findings in relation to the three posed research questions.

8.2 Revisiting the Research Questions and their Outcomes

This section contains a brief overview of the main findings from the analysis of the participants' interviews found in Chapters 5 and 6. This summarised review is presented in accordance with the research questions in order to demonstrate that the thesis has fulfilled the research aims and responded to the questions stated in the introductory chapter.

8.2.1 Research Question 1

What are the contextual, cultural factors influencing Deans' leadership experience in SAHE?

In addition to the Deans' perceptions of the unsatisfactory levels of organisational culture and their partial reference to other societal cultural categories in terms of *Wasta* and wider society interference, eight important organisational cultural factors were found to influence the academic Deans' leadership practices: tension between traditions and change, Deans' prior leadership preparation, centralisation, strict regulations, the authority of top management, the Deans' selection and promotion process, reputational factors, and finally human resources issues. All these themes, with their underpinning subthemes, were analysed in Chapter 5, and were perceived by a significant proportion of the participants as being influential to the practice of Deans. It was noticed that several of these factors intersect with others in terms of cause and effect; for example, centralisation influences the relations with top management, while simultaneously being influenced by strict regulation. Moreover, most the above-mentioned cultural factors were perceived to have a tangible, negative effect on leaders' day-to-day leadership behaviour and practices. While the potential of a modernisation of cultural values was seen in the participants' general calls for organisational and culture change, as well as their observations that change is occurring. However, in progress, these values were deemed to be quite subtle and takes time to change.

8.2.2 Research Question 2

What are the features of Deans' practiced leadership in SAHE?

In the scope of the research, it was tentatively agreed by some academic Deans that leadership practices, such as charismatic influence, participative and democratic leadership, motivation and engaging subordinates in decisions making are preferable, but not sufficiently practiced by them. The Deans generally understand the importance of change in

leadership practice, with leadership perceived as being an important component of higher education. Deans' reliance on authority in contrast to personal charisma, as well as their lack of motivational techniques, received the highest criticism. Consequently, the academic leader's relations with their subordinates was considered weak, particularly in terms of engagement in the decision-making processes, which was found to be autocratic rather than consultative. The study found that, in spite of the Deans' realisation of the importance of planning, this was not satisfactorily applied. Furthermore, the aspiration was expressed by the participants for increased development of their communication skills as well as training to cope with the negative cultural barriers existent in their institutional milieu. Finally, the notion of *ideal* behaviour versus *actual* practice was reported as an indication to the need to study leadership as actually practiced, rather than ideally preferred.

8.2.3 Research Question 3

How do identified cultural factors influence Saudi Deans' leadership practices?

It was noticed through Deans' responses that cultural factors influenced their university environment and, accordingly, their leadership practices. Deans' call for cultural adaptations and their descriptions of tensions regarding the need of change were clear through their responses, as well as, their complaints regarding the influence of cultural factors. In terms of this influence of cultural factors on Deans' every day leadership practice, this was clearly noticed through their arguments regarding, for example, the reasons behind the high reliance on authority and its relation to the organisational factors of regulation and centralisation, as well their repeated descriptions regarding the limitations in preparedness, as a reason behind defects in leadership practices. Section 7.4 and Findings Chapters 5 and 6 considered more examples of direct influences reported by the participants. Moreover, the five features of Deans' leadership practices, found by the research in Chapter 6, are consistent with the themes yielded from cultural influence in the fact that several leadership practices were referred as being caused due to cultural factors.

8.3 Contributions and Implications of the Research

The current research has presented a variety of contributions in the domains of academic leadership, as well as leadership and culture, while also offering a framework for studying cross- cultural leadership in SAHE. Moreover, the study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding research in a Saudi Arabian context. These contributions and implications are now presented in greater detail.

8.3.1 Contributions and Implications to Theory

The concept of leadership has received extensive discussion in the literature; however, distinctive cultural understanding of leadership has received less attention. Further, leadership in HEIs has also received less focus compared to leadership in business sectors. In Saudi Arabia, and in higher education in particular, there is a scarcity of literary works regarding leadership and culture. This study contributes to the understanding of leadership by investigating how it is perceived and practiced, the influencing cultural factors, and the direction leadership research should adopt. In doing so, the study challenges the notion that Western based leadership theories, with dimensional formworks could easily measure the influence of culture on leadership, or even leadership practices in different societies, revealing that leadership is contextually and culturally constructed (Shahin & Wright, 2004).

The research findings demonstrate limitations of the applicability of these theories and dimensional frameworks, and how context-based factors may adjust and modify the interpretation, as well as the practical application, of these theories. For example, although Saudi Deans favour the components of GLOBE's Participative and Team-oriented leadership styles and have positive espoused beliefs toward these practices, the extent to which they implement these components on in practice reveals a moderation by societal and cultural factors. Therefore, whilst the academic Deans' practices fit components of the GLOBE's Autonomous scale, this scale was seen with a lower value in the Middle Eastern cluster compared to the Self or Group-Protective Styles. Moreover, the organisational research

theme, authority of top management, mirrors both the components of the GLOBE's and Hofstede's cultural scales of Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance, which registered different scores in the GLOBE's Middle Eastern cluster and Hofstede's findings on the Saudi Arabia. Through considering and exploring this contradiction between the leadership's preferred and actual practices, along with contextual factors that clarify the cultural reasons behind such practiced leadership, the research contributes to developing the notion of contextual cultural leadership dimensions that embraces the significant demand of conceptualising leadership within its contextual factors.

Another interesting dimension of the Saudi view of leadership in higher education has been shown to be with a complex interrelation between tradition and modernisation. This occurs as a result of the contested relationship between the espoused and practised leadership values. The Deans generally described a need for change and to modernise the system in order to weaken the traditional factors such as centralisation, top management's influence and the limited selection processes. The academic leaders expressed their preference as a sense of ideal leadership that reflects modern—or what some might read as Western— thinking, revealing their exposure to Western professional education, with an example of this being those participants who called for the benchmarking of Saudi leadership development programmes against those conducted in Harvard, Cambridge, Sorbonne and other renowned Western universities. Along with this idea, the participants recognised the power of traditional cultural factors that heavily restrict the leaders' ability to practice effective leadership. Some Deans' call for the need to customise their leadership development and performance to match the contextual needs and facilitate in the transformation of the culture was relatively apparent through their responses. This implies that in SAHE, academic leaders have espoused values of Westernisation and modernisation, while recognising the challenges and calling for consideration of the organisational, societal and cultural factors in any future proposed change.

An important contributing dimension of this study lies in understanding the Arab, and specifically Saudi university, leadership regarding the intertwining of political and social

influences. Saudi universities are administratively and financially controlled by the government, which is the major stakeholder and dominates the decision making of leaders inside. The strict hierarchy that affects the Deans' leadership performance is an outcome of the control that government wields over universities. Consistent with Saudi Arabia's governmental sector, leadership at these universities has been associated with the use of power to influence individual performance. Thus, the Deans' narratives reporting the lack of motivational techniques in contrast to their dominant reliance on their power and authority reflects the nature of the strict hierarchy of the governmental system. Consequently, it is recommended here that in the Saudi context, not only should the applicability of Western leadership models be challenged, but also the distinction between the public and private sectors has implications for leadership performance. In this situation, the pressure for effective leadership practice in private higher education will vary depending on the rationale of economic motivation, while the lack of market competition in the governmental sector will certainly influence the behaviour of leaders. Therefore, in the Saudi context, the applicability of Western notions of leadership and cross- cultural approaches are called into question if they fail to consider the context in which they operate. This gives reasonable justification for the contribution from this research regarding the presented Dimensions of the Cultural Influence on Leadership Practice (see Section 7.5) that outlines cross-cultural leadership in a key sector of SAHE. This is considered further in the following section.

8.3.2 Contributions to Practice

Based on the above discussion, the research not only implies the need for the cultural adaptation of Western theories in the Saudi context, but also the importance of developing a framework for understanding the leadership experience SAHE. As the research findings have demonstrated, leadership is not a universal construct, and even within Saudi universities, there are tensions and debate around the meaning and practice of leadership. The study, therefore, does not offer a manual of best practice for leadership styles. Rather, its practical contribution lies in bringing these tensions to the surface, shedding light on the ongoing dynamics in SAHE, and developing a framework to understand the situation of

academic leadership in SAHE, as seen and practised by those who are engaged in the process on a daily basis. Examples of these lie in the Deans' preference for certain leadership components (for example, motivation, planning and charisma) and their criticism of the low level of their implementation on the ground, their strong criticism of the influence of cultural factors on their role, and the extent of accepting these factors as a component of culture that leaders should consider. By highlighting these issues, the research draws attention to the need to consider these cultural factors when planning and implementing leadership activities, and the priorities required to be implemented by policy makers and top management to develop the leaders' preparation and selection process. Such measures can benefit the higher and mid-level leaders at universities, as well as those at the Ministry of Education, to better understand the complexity of the dimensions of leadership perspectives in their organisational and national contexts.

As stated throughout the thesis, it is not its intention of this research to offer a certain universal leadership theory or international best practice leadership solution; nevertheless, there is value in commenting on the impact of existing initiatives and suggesting dimensions to develop the future of leadership in a non-western country. Consequently, the research has not only answered the question of what is needed *by* Deans to be effective, but also offered practical solutions for what is needed *for* Deans to be effective.

In recent years, the Saudi government has allocated significant financial resources to the expansion of governmental HEIs. Now, all cities and most mid-sized towns have universities or branches of universities, while the acquisition of Western styles of learning and the transformation of the national economy continues to develop. Moreover, the effect of national scholarship programmes should be acknowledged, where significant numbers of young Saudi students have now returned after receiving Western postgraduate studies and have commenced employment within universities. All these factors were described by the majority of the participants to play a role in creating effective academic leadership. These factors, alongside the Deans' generally negative perceptions regarding the impact of traditional culture and traditional organisational behaviour of leadership, as well as the

above-mentioned factors suggested to develop leadership programmes, contribute directly to improving the Deans' knowledge and skills, and facilitating the occurring change. They were also seen as contributing indirectly to encouraging a certain open-mindedness, and in turn, weakening the impact of the negatively perceived cultural factors and customs. These attitudes expressed by this research's participants, accompanied with the ongoing transformation in terms of education and technology, will play important roles in developing perceptions on leadership as a concept and as a practice in the context of SAHE.

8.3.3 Contributions to Methodology

Besides the research focus on a contribution to the theory and practice of leadership, it also worth highlighting three methodological contributions. The first point here concerns the decision to conduct a qualitative study in the context of Saudi Arabia, where a quantitative approach has been dominant and traditionally preferred. The pervious quantitative research enhanced privacy for the participants and overcame the social norms and constraints imposed by gender segregation, the nature of a strict cultural system, and the lack of freedom for and discomfort with ideas on ontological relativism underpinning interpretive approaches. This was expressed when considering the challenges of participating in an interview without feeling concerns that the interviewee's contribution (see Section 4.6.2) could result in negative repercussions, and may reflect Hofstede's (1980, 2010) dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance. An example of this latter issue lies in the Deans' fluctuation between criticism of the current situation and then ending their discourse with confirmation that things are changing and, thus, there is optimism for the future. In spite of these challenges, in recent years a number of researchers have conducted qualitative studies that provide deeper insights into the social context of the country. Consequently, this research demonstrates the high value and adequate feasibility of conducting qualitative research and applying the position interpretively to better understand the sophisticated nature of the Saudi society.

The second methodological contribution lies in the distinction between the treatment of the insider and outsider. It can be difficult to meet an insider and interview him to collect sensitive data about delicate issues related to their work development. In the current research, the researcher is an 'insider' at one of the researched universities with a long period of service in Saudi Arabia. There is a considerable familiarity with the social system manifested within the universities through the training courses he has conducted on leadership and strategic planning. However, gaining access to the organisations for research purposes, as well as creating a rapport with the interviewees to encourage frankness and minimise concerns over disclosures, would not be possible without the benefits of social networks and building mutual trust. This is practised as part of the social customs, with the researcher finding that academic Deans are unwilling to speak freely on such issues unless they acquire a sense of social authentication of the researcher in terms of academic background and organisational support. The experience of this study and the impact of tribal and social, as well as academic affiliation, leads to the recommendation that other interested researchers wishing to study the Saudi context should cultivate relationships in advance and establish connections in order to facilitate access to both the interviewees and their valuable data.

The third point concerns citizenship. Due to the strict political hierarchy of higher education and governmental dominance of social life, Saudis are reluctant to discuss their customs and traditions in negative terms, preferring not to express their direct views on topics related to their higher management or government, particularly to those from their own citizenry. (See for example their preference to use the third person when criticising their leadership practice). With the researcher being an insider at one of these universities, but not of Saudi citizenship, this aided the interviewees to speak with a sense of frankness, perhaps liberated by the awareness that the interviewer did not have any social, tribal or national agenda. Furthermore, being an Arab with a Jordanian citizenship encouraged the leaders to offer valuable information, stimulated by non-Saudis also expressing interest in their context.

8.4 Research Limitations

Although the limitations of this research were partially discussed in the Methodology chapter (Section 4.10), it is pertinent to revisit these issues. Despite the value of the theoretical, practical and methodological contributions and implications, the research is subject to certain limitations.

The first limitation concerns the researcher's selection of the sample, since the research has focused on academic Deans at eight universities; therefore, the findings are context-and segment-specific. The researcher has not presented any claims that the findings will apply to all universities in the Kingdom or to all middle and senior leaders inside these institutions. A further limitation in relation to this is the number of participants, as it was limited in terms of both size and institution; for example, not all the universities in the country were included, while the sample was restricted to Deans, with no Presidents, Vice-Presidents or Department Chairs included, who might have expressed different views on leadership. The suggestions made were obviously from the Dean's perspectives and, therefore, may not be considered appropriate by other Saudi University stakeholders. For example, the Deans described that leadership should be included when considering academic rank and promotion. It is not surprising that they felt this, however, other University staff and managers may not agree with this suggestion.

Studying social phenomena in the Saudi context must confront sensitivity to gender, with gender segregation unique to the Saudi context and, thus, influencing the empirical studies of the context. Consequently, it is common in Saudi society for women to restrict their studies to females only due to this gender segregation (see, for example, Gonaim & Peters, 2017), while the converse is also applicable to male researchers. Therefore, one limitation of this study is that the participating segment did not include females due to this gender segregation and the case that Deans are usually male, while females are typically appointed as Vice-Dean for female branches.

Finally, being an insider could be an advantage to facilitate the data collection process, but at the same time can also be a limitation as the researcher in the study is employed at one of the Saudi universities, with a long period of service in the country, embracing the same religion and with similar customs and social norms of Arab traditions. Therefore, the possibility cannot be discounted whereby his values and social norms may have coloured the researcher's experience and interpretation of the research context.

8.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The insights of this research project present different opportunities for future research in a number of dimensions:

- The understanding of the Saudi context requires further examination into its social, cultural, economic and political factors, and the manner in which these elements construct the foundation of the country and the future of its people, particularly in one of the most important sectors, namely education. Since, leadership studies are particularly limited in the context of education and higher education, the researcher recommends conducting studies on both top and lower level managers under the Ministry of Education.

- The influence of governmental policies and strategies on the development of leadership in higher education in Saudi Arabia is significantly noticed, and thus the researcher suggests investigation of the challenges, needs and opportunities, as well as, future action plans and strategies for implementing change.

- The effect of Westernised systems on Saudi policies needs to be explored in greater depth in order to illuminate why a company such as the oil giant ARAMCO was cited as being a successful model, since it has involved significant foreign and notably Western influence, which may moderate the influence of Saudi national culture.

- The current research has investigated leadership and culture from the perspectives of Deans and studied their views based on their leadership performance. However, it would be of interest for researchers to explore the perspectives of the recipients of

this performance, such as their subordinates, faculty members and other administrative assistants in the university.

- As per other studies conducted in the Saudi context, this research was affected by gender issues, with women having their own section and departments, which raises the question of whether leadership is perceived and practised differently by women. The ongoing process of social and economic changes could possibly open future avenues to conduct studies that included both male and female participants.

8.6 Final Thought

This research explored the influence of societal and organisational cultures on Saudi University Deans' leadership perceptions and practices. Due to the scarcity of scholarly studies that have investigated the context, and the unique nature of the country, a variety of challenges faced the researcher at different stages. For example, one of the main difficulties was obtaining access to data, since it is challenging to arrange an appointment to interview a very busy Dean in such a society where centralisation and hierarchy are dominant. However, the research was a continuous journey of learning. This was exemplified through engagement with peer-reviewed journals, and then a critically exploration of related literature, designing the relevant theoretical frameworks, devising the methodology, design and analysis, and then reaching the research findings.

This research makes a call that higher education institutions need to consider their own cultural factors when designing leadership development programmes. By investigating the identified cultural factors with their influences on Deans' Leadership perceptions and practices, the research attempted to fill the gap regarding the role of societal and organisational cultures, not only in field of higher education, but also within a very underexplored context, Saudi Arabian higher education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The state universities of Saudi Arabia-(Source: Ministry of Education, 2017)

State University	Y of Establishment	City
Al-Baha University	2006	Al-Baha
Al-Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University	1974	Riyadh
Al-Jouf University	2005	Skaka
Hael University	2006	Hael
Jazan University	2005	Jazan
King AbdulAziz University	1967	Jeddah
King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals	1963	Dhahran
King Faisal University	1975	Alehsa
King Khalid University	1998	Abha
King Saud Bin AbdulAziz University for Health Sciences	2005	Riyadh
King Saud University	1957	Riyadh
Majmaah University	2010	Majmaah
Najran University	2006	Najran
Northern Border University	2007	Hafr Albatin
Prince Sattam Bin AbdulAziz University	2008	Alkahrj
Princess Nourah Bint AbdulRahman University	2010	Riyadh
Qassim University	2004	Qassim
Saudi Electronic University	2011	Riyadh
Shaqra University	2010	Shagra
Tabuk University	2006	Tabuk
Taibah University	2003	Medina
Taif University	2005	Taif
The Islamic University	1961	Medina
Umm Al-Qura University	1979	Makkah
University of Dammam (formerly King Faisal University)	1975	Dammam
University of Jeddah	2014	Jeddah

Appendix 2   Interview Schedule

After taking appointment to meet each interviewee and during the time of meeting, I will follow these steps:

1) Introduction

Make the following points clearly:

- Introduce myself

- Explain that Dean can withdraw from the interview at any time

- Explain the format and estimated time the interview will take

- Outline the purpose and importance of the research being undertaken

- All data will only be used a PhD thesis at a UK university

- Explain Dean's name is not required, all ethical and anonymity procedures of the study

-Familiarise the Dean with the consent form by either giving them the opportunity to read and have his approval either face to face or by telephone to check if they have read it, as it was sent previously by email. (See Appendix 3 for the consent form used in the research)

-Ask the Dean to complete the background questionnaire

Background Questionnaire.

Please tick the relevant box.

1- How long have you worked as an academic leader?
☐ less than 1 year
☐ From 1year to less than 3 years
☐ From 3 years to less than 5 years
☐ From 5 years to less than10 years
☐ From 10 years to 20 years
☐ longer than 20 years
2- What is your age group?
☐ 26-35
☐ 36-45
☐ 46-55
☐ Over 55
3- What is your academic rank?
☐ Lecturer
☐ Assistant professor
☐ Associate professor
☐ Professor.
☐Other.
4- What is your study and research background?
☐ Humanities.
☐ Science
☐ Engineering
☐ Medical and health sciences
☐ Religion and law
☐ IT
☐ Other …………………

- Check if a voice recorder can be used.

- Explain that the Dean can switch off the voice recorder at any time.

- If a voice recorder is not appropriate, check if notes can be taken?

- Ask the Dean if there are any questions before the interview begins.

 2) Interview Questions in in Arabic with their English translation:

كيف ترى واقع القيادة الاكاديمية في الجامعات السعودية؟ How do you see the situation of academic leadership in Saudi Universities?
"كعميد" الى اي مدى ترى العمداء يمارسون القيادة بالاعتماد على اساليب قيادة او نظريات قيادة تعملوها في السابق As A Dean, to how extend do you see academic Deans practicing leadership in the field based on awareness and knowledge of the schools and theories of leadership?
كيف تقيّم ممارسات القيادة بيننكم كعمداء اكاديميين ؟ How do you evaluate the practice of leadership among Saudi Deans? ما هي اوجه هذه الممارسات وكيف تقيّمها What are the features of this practice, and how do you evaluate them?
ما هي اوجه القصور- ان وجدت What are aspects of this defect- if available? كيف تقيّم كل ممارسة يتم ذكرها؟ Ask about each their evaluation of each practice ? كيف تقيّم ممارستكم كعمداء للتحفيز؟ How do you evaluate the practice of motivation among Deans?
كيف ترى علاقتك بالعاملين معك كعميد، وكيف تراهم يتأثرون بك من حيث الاعتماد على السلطة والمنصب ام التأثير الشخصي والكاريزما؟ To how extend do you see your subordinates dealing with you: in what way do you influence them, based on your personality or based on your position and authority?
كيف تقيم تقيم البيئة المحيطة بالعمداء وكيف تؤثر على ممارساتهم القيادية ؟ سؤال عن تقييمه لكل محور يتم ذكره How do you evaluate the surrounding environment around Deans, and how does it influence Deans' leadership practices in Saudi Arabia? Ask about their evaluation of each factor?
كيف تقيم اثر هذه البيئة المحيطة سلبا او ايجابا على سلوك العمداء القيادي؟ How do you see them in the way that affect positively or negatively the Deans' practices?
كيف تقيم عمليات اختيار العمداء وتطورهم؟ How do you evaluate the selection and development of Deans in your context?
هل يمكنك وضع خارطة طريق لتطوير القيادة لدى العمداء الاكاديمين- ما الذي يتوجب فعله؟ Can we draw a road map to develop academic Deans at universities – what are the steps to follow?
ما الذي على العمداء القيام به ليكونوا اكثر فعالية للعملية التعليمية ؟ What do these Deans need be to more and more effective to the educational process?

-Ask about viewing the all the questions confirm it is still OK

- Ask the Dean if anything to add

- Thank the Dean

- Ask the Dean if he has any further question.

Appendix 3 Consent Form

Dear Dean,

Kind Greetings

One of the requirements for the PhD Degree in Education in the University of Huddersfield-UK, is to carry out a research in '*An Exploration Leadership in the Cultural Context of Saudi Arabian Higher Education'*. The research includes interviews to be conducted for a selected number Deans. You have been chosen, amongst others, based on a scientific preference adopted in the research methodology. The purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of organisational and social culture on Deans' Leadership practice within Saudi governmental universities. Also, is aims to explore challenges, needs & opportunities for academic leadership development in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, your participation, is highly appreciated. Data given in this interview will be treated with the required confidentiality, recorded only for research purposes and will be used for scientific research only. The interview will take no more 30 minutes and your input will be a valuable contribution towards this research.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any clarification.

Yousef Abu Alsuood

yousef abu Al-suood@hud.edu.uk

+966 506815118

Thank you very much in advance

Name: .... Signature: ………………….

Appendix 4   Initial Letter from University

February 2015

To Whom It May Concern

Yousef Abu Al-Suood is a PhD student at the University of Huddersfield. He is conducting his research under my supervision - this requires him to interview colleagues at universities. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Regards

Dr Rod Robertson FHEA
University of Huddersfield
School of Education and Professional Development
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Appendix: 5   A Summary of Data Analysis Process

This appendix introduces a summary the data analysis process applied in this research as considered in the Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis.

1. Familiarisation with Data

In this step transcription of the data occurs, which was followed with an in depth reading.(the next table shows an example of a piece extracted from an interview).

Researcher	To how extend do you see Saudi Deans practice leadership based on personal charisma or the power of authority? Which one do you see more?
Interviewee	If the charisma is available, this will give high power to the academic leader. But the power by authority is the most used style nowadays. Charisma is very weak and authority is dominant on the situation. So when a person has authority and lacks charisma, management finishes, it dies and this will negatively affect loyalty to the organisation; there will be no loyalty and feeling belongings to the university.
Researcher	To how extend do you see Deans practicing leadership in the field based on awareness and knowledge of the school and theories of leadership?
Interviewee	Actually, practicing is based on personal effort and experience. I am about to be sure: there is neither reading nor awareness, no transfer of experience. You speak with academic leaders about different managerial topic and find them do not know many of them. So, it depends on practicing and experience: You find him with different beliefs when he starts his job and changes after two or three years of experience. He changes and transfer as a result of practice. There is no prior preparation and training for the leader before he takes his position.
Researcher	How do you evaluate the practice of motivation among Deans?
Interviewee	There is no motivation. There is no any king of motivation. By the way, motivation is not an easy concept; it is based on rules. There are some rules for motivation. In our case motivation is very lost. Person's practice of management and does not see the future a head. As you know in the west when the achieve something, they know what the next future step is.

2. Generating Initial Codes

The next table provides an example that shows how the initial codes were produced from an example paragraph extracted from an interview:

	Dealing with infrastructure and	Regulation as an obstacle	Dealing with regulations
Researcher	Going back to academic leadership practices-what are the surrounding contextual factors that Influence Deans' leadership practices – to how extend do they help Deans?		
Interviewee	I do believe that aiding factor are available but some leaders concentrate on obstacles and forget these factors. So, you will see him justifying all things depending on these obstacles. It is true, there are obstacles, some administrative regulations are not supportive for the leader's freedom but a distinguished leader could understand these conditions and achieve his goals with these limitations. This needs some kind of Charisma as a good leader could exceed all these factors. A good leader is the leader with good charisma who has the ability to take decision and manage things around. Some leaders hesitate to make decisions, claiming that responsibility and some obstacles are there, but this is one of his personal disadvantages. There is some kind of risk and the leaders should accept it when taking decisions. If you are a leader and you do not take on such risk, this could be taken as a personal weakness. I mean here calculated risk of course. He must have the ability to make decisions after he takes all the surrounding factors into consideration, although there is some kind of risk.	Reliance on charisma / Deans' hesitation to take decisions	Lack of flexibility as an obstacle

3. Searching for Themes

In this step, the coded data were classified in relation to relevant codes and themes. The following table presents how a sample theme was developed:

Major Themes	Themes	Codes	Coded Data
Influence of Cultural Factors on Deans' Leadership Practices	**Authority of Top Management**	Relation with top management	*"Frustration with the top management is an issue, since Deans need to cooperate with the higher management to solve problems and participate to find solutions related to the educational institution."* (D-10) *"As long as the Dean is helpful for the President by taking care of the appearance and reputation of the university, he will remain or be promoted."* (D-8)
		Influence of top management on Deans' Practice	*"I think that the high management always reject the decisions made by the faculty, which leads to limited decisions being implemented inside the faculty."* (D-11)
		High Authority given to top management	*"Our selection process makes the management hierarchical, in the sense that you don't manage to support those who are under you, but you try to manage in a way that satisfies the person above you. Consequently, the focus in the administrative process is not on the institutional success, but rather the gratification of the top management."* (D-15) *"The authority from the Presidents or their deputies is significant. Furthermore, they listen to you, if you want to do anything or if there is any injustice or complaint. These factors are supportive and assistive to achievement."* (D-12)

4. Reviewing Themes

All the codes and initial themes were reviewed which resulted in two major themes, with other themes and their subthemes as listed below.

Major Themes	Themes and Their Underpinning Themes
Influence of Culture	**-Broad Conceptualisation and Evaluation of Culture** **-Influence of Societal Culture** **-Tension between Tradition and Change** • Need for change • Benchmarking • Customisation **-Deans' Leadership Preparation** • Deans Prior Qualification • Deans' Experience with Training **-Centralisation** **-Regulations** **-Authority of Top Management** **-Selection and Promotion** • Absence of Criteria for Selections • Influence of Academic Rank • Influence of Top Management on Selection • New Criteria for Selection • Recognition and Measurement for Deans' Achievements **-Reputation** **-Human Resources Issues**
Leadership Practice	**-Broad Evaluation of Leadership in SAHE** **-Reliance on Authority** **-Lack of Motivation Applied by Deans** **-Limitations in Dean–Subordinates' Relation** **-Autocratic Decision Making** **-Limitations of Planning**

5. Defining Themes

In this step each theme was defined and reviewed by analysing the data in relation to codes that produced initial themes and their underpinning themes. The following shows how a sample theme was reviewed in accordance to related codes.

Major Theme	Theme	Underpinning Themes	Codes
Influence of Culture	**Tension between Tradition and Change**	Need for change	Feeling of change
			Need for change
			New thoughts
			New generation
		Benchmarking	ARAMCO as a model
			Western/ international universities
		Customisation	Need to customize.
			Design based on organisational needs.

6. Producing the Report

This step considers a description of the important elements of the analysed data in terms the two major themes and their main themes, with their underpinning themes. The following table gives an overall picture of the themes development.

Major Themes	Themes	Contributing Underpinning themes		Codes emerged from Data
Influence of Culture	Broad Conceptualisation and Evaluation of Culture		1	Evaluation of culture
			2	Evaluation environment
			3	Culture as an umbrella
			4	Organisational culture
	Influence of Societal Culture		5	External society
			6	Personal connections
			7	Social connections
			8	Surrounding environment
			9	Mediations
			10	Islamic principles
			11	Islamic Schools of thoughts
	Tension between Tradition and Change	Need for change	12	Feeling of change
			13	Need for change
			14	New thoughts
			15	New generation
		Benchmarking	16	ARAMCO as a model
			17	Western/ international universities
		Customisation	18	Need to customize.
			19	Design based on organisational needs.
	Deans' Leadership Preparation	Deans Prior Qualification	20	Lack or defect of leadership awareness
			21	Limited preparation
			22	Familiarisation of leadership theories / schools
			23	Leadership prior experience/ qualification
		Deans' Experience with Training	24	ALC
			25	Training given to Deans
			26	Plans for training
	Centralisation		27	Lack of flexibility
			28	Bureaucracy
			29	Long path to achieve something
	Regulations		30	Restricted regulations
			31	Regulation as an obstacles
			32	Dealing with regulations
			33	Financial regulations

			34	Relation with top management
	Authority of Top Management		35	Influence of top management on deans' Practice
			36	High authority given to top management
	Selection and Promotion	Absence of Criteria for Selections	37.	Availability of criteria
			38	Selection based on seniority
		Influence of Academic Rank	39	Academic rank VS efficiency
			40	Implications of reliance on academic rank
		Influence of Top Management on Selection	41	Top management preference
			42	Internal personal connections
		New Criteria for Selection	43	Psychometric exams
			44	Importance of prior measurement
			45	Preparation of second line leaders
			46	Selection of leaders with potentiality
			47	Elections by subordinates
		Recognition and Measurement for Deans' Achievements	48	Need for measurement
			49	Need for recognition
			50	Incentives (finical and moral)
	Reputation		51	Pleasing top management
			52	Concentrate on outside shape
	Human Resources Issues		53	Work distribution
			54	Efficiency of subordinates
			55	Work load and pressures
			56	Dealing with infrastructure and resources
Leadership Practice	**Broad Evaluation of Leadership in SAHE**		57	Broad evaluation of leadership practice
			58	Deans' perceptions of leadership
	Reliance on Authority		59	Reliance on charisma
			60	Reliance on authority
			61	Reliance on position
	Lack of Motivation		62	Level of motivation applied
			63	Strategies of motivation
			64	Motivation influence on loyalty
			65	Financial motivation

	Limitations in Dean– Subordinates' Relation		66	Defect in consultation
			67	Deans' behavior with subordinates
			68	Non- Saudi subordinates
	Autocratic Decision Making		69	Engagement of subordinates in decision making
			70	Authority and decision making
			71	Deans' hesitation to take decision
	Limitations in Planning		72	Availability of plans
			73	Lack of executions of planning