
Chuo-Chun Hsieh

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

School of Management

March 2012

COPYRIGHT

Attention is drawn to the fact that copyright of this thesis rests with the author. A copy of this thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with the author and that they must not copy it or use material from it except as permitted by law or with the consent of the author.

This thesis may be made available for consultation within the University Library and may be photocopied or lent to other libraries for the purposes of consultation.
I would like to thank the Taiwan Ministry of Education for sponsoring my overseas PhD study. The fully funded scholarship gave me the initial opportunity to embark on this invaluable learning journey in England. The deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor Professor Jeroen Huisman. Without his guidance on this project, understanding of my culture background, encouragement and support throughout the PhD course, this journey would never be so fruitful and inspiring. I would also like to thank my friends and family in Taiwan for their continued support and in particular my beloved aunt, who encouraged me to start this journey but sadly is no longer with me. I dedicate this thesis to her memory. I extend sincere thanks to my friends in Bath, particularly Pam Neville, Gwen Hearnshaw, Sue Hourizi, John Rackley, and David Edwards. Their always support and constant encouragement have enabled me to complete this journey. I’m grateful to Dr Don Westerheijden and Dr Manuel Souto-Otero for their helpful comments. I would like to extend my gratitude to the participants in this research for supplying valuable information and their patience during the interviews. I am indebted to them.
**ABSTRACT**

Policy change has become a challenging issue due to the increasingly complicated and international context, particularly in the European higher education (HE) system involving domestic regulations and pressure to comply with European requirements as a consequence of the Bologna process. This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of policy change and establishes a theoretical framework for exploring explanations for the process.

To that end, the development of external quality assurance (QA) schemes for universities in two pioneering countries is compared. The development is analysed over the period 1985-2005, starting when the first national QA systems emerged. Drawing upon new institutionalism, a conceptual framework is built, combining a typology of John Campbell’s work for analysing policy ideas with rule configuration developed by Elinor Ostrom in the Institutional analysis and development (IAD) framework for examining regulations. Two salient institutional factors, viz. policy consistency and actor locations, are investigated by way of historical analysis and Q-methodology, whereby the influence of the European HE system on the pattern of policy change in the QA schemes is ascertained.

The study reveals that English episodes were mainly concerned with normative policy ideas, representing an intrinsic orientation along with relatively high frequency of and small levels of policy change. In contrast, in the Netherlands QA notable change in regulations and cognitive policy ideas emerged, adhering to an extrinsic orientation and a low frequency and higher level of change.

The differences in policy change between the two countries are accounted for by the difference in their institutional structures. The Dutch HE system is characterised by the feature of structural constraint, which leads to the mechanism of translation; whereas the English counterpart features institutional innovation, which explains the exhibiting of the bricolage mechanism in the process of policy change. Notwithstanding, either focal country exhibits the pattern of punctuated equilibrium as a result of collective policy-making process.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... 3
Abstract ............................................................................................................................ 4
  List of tables .................................................................................................................. 9
  List of figures ............................................................................................................... 10
  List of abbreviations .................................................................................................... 11

Ch1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 13
  1.1. Higher education policy change in the European context .................................. 13
  1.2. Quality assurance schemes in the European higher education system .......... 15
  1.3. The main research question and purposes ....................................................... 16
  1.4. Research design ................................................................................................. 18
  1.5. Structure of the thesis ...................................................................................... 18

Ch2. Changes in quality assurance in European higher education systems ............... 20
  2.1. Quality assurance schemes in HE ...................................................................... 20
    2.1.1. Diversity found in the forms of QA ......................................................... 20
    2.1.2. European experience of changes in QA ................................................. 23
  2.2. Explanations offered for the observed diversity and change .............................. 26
    2.2.1. Intrinsic dynamics .................................................................................. 26
    2.2.2. Extrinsic dynamics ................................................................................. 33
  2.3. Research gaps ..................................................................................................... 42

Ch3. Theoretical approaches to conceptualising policy change ................................ 47
  3.1. New institutionalism .......................................................................................... 48
    3.1.1. Institutional analysis ................................................................................... 48
    3.1.2. Criticisms of new institutionalism ............................................................ 49
    3.1.3. Second movement of new institutionalism ................................................ 50
  3.2. The theory of Campbell ...................................................................................... 55
    3.2.1. Institutional constellation and change ...................................................... 55
    3.2.2. Structural constraint ............................................................................... 59
    3.2.3. Creative institutional innovation .............................................................. 63
    3.2.4. Mechanisms of institutional change .......................................................... 65

Ch4. Research design ......................................................................................................... 69
  4.1. The analytical framework and research questions ............................................. 70
    4.1.1. The analytical framework ....................................................................... 70
    4.1.2. The theories and propositions .................................................................. 72
    4.1.3. Research questions .................................................................................. 78
  4.2. The operational level ........................................................................................... 79
7.3.2. Locations of policy actors in the Dutch HE system ....................... 219
7.3.3. The relation between the location of policy entrepreneurs and the emergence of policy change in the QA schemes ......................... 222
7.3.4. The relation between the location of policy entrepreneurs and the degree of policy change in the QA systems .................................. 225
7.3.5 Summary .................................................................................. 227

7.4. Explanations for policy change in QA in the European HE context........ 228
7.4.1. Difference in structural configurations ..................................... 228
7.4.2. Structural constraint .............................................................. 231
7.4.3. Institutional innovation ........................................................... 233
7.4.4. The process of bricolage and translation .................................... 237
7.4.5. Summary ................................................................................ 239

Ch8. Conclusion and reflections ................................................................ 244
8.1. Summary of main findings ............................................................. 244
8.1.1. The development of national QA in European HE ..................... 244
8.1.2. Explanations for the HE policy change in European QA .......... 245
8.2. Contributions ............................................................................. 249
8.2.1. Contribution to European HE policy ....................................... 249
8.2.2. Contribution to the theory of policy change ............................ 251
8.2.3. Contribution to the theory of Campbell ................................. 255
8.3. Research limitations and implication for further research .................. 259
8.3.1 Generalisation of the theoretical framework .............................. 259
8.3.2. Extension of the theoretical framework .................................. 260
8.3.3. Reflection on the Q-methodology ........................................ 261

References ....................................................................................... 263

Appendix A: Dutch Q-sort analysis ......................................................... 275
Appendix B: English Q-sort analysis ....................................................... 279
Appendix C: Dutch Q instructions ........................................................ 285
Appendix D: English Q instructions ....................................................... 289
Appendix E: List of interviewees ............................................................ 294
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1: Types of ideas ................................................................. 61

Table 4-1: Typology of QA ideas and schemes ................................ 89
Table 4-2: Dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic QA elements .... 90
Table 4-3: Tactics for research design tests ...................................... 111

Table 5-1: Summary of policy change in English QA systems .......... 159

Table 6-1: Policy change in Dutch QA systems .............................. 194

Table 7-1: Policy change in QA schemes ........................................ 199
Table 7-2: Degrees of policy change in QA elements ....................... 200
Table 7-3: Deviation from the intrinsic to the extrinsic orientation ....... 205
Table 7-4: Orientation of the four QA elements for the eight episodes .. 206
Table 7-5: Consistency of policy elements ...................................... 207
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4-1: The process of deductive reasoning in this thesis .................. 69
Figure 4-2: The conceptual framework ................................................. 71
Figure 4-3: The variables employed to analyse the influence of a constitution of European HE systems on policy change of QA in country A ................................................................. 76
Figure 4-4: The conduct of the investigation at the empirical level ........... 98
Figure 4-5: The methods of data collection and analysis adopted in an individual case study ................................................................. 99
Figure 4-6: The process of data collection .............................................. 103
Figure 4-7: The process of data analysis ................................................. 107

Figure 7-1: Patterns of policy change in the QA systems ...................... 204
Figure 7-2: Consistency of new QA schemes and the duration of their adoption ............................................................................... 208
Figure 7-3: Consistency in the QA systems and the duration of changes ............................................................................... 209
Figure 7-4: Consistency in the QA systems and the degree of policy change ............................................................................... 210
Figure 7-5: Configuration of the English HE policy subsystem ............. 213
Figure 7-6: Configuration of the Dutch HE policy subsystem ............... 220
Figure 7-7: English policy entrepreneurs and the duration of their policy innovations ............................................................................... 223
Figure 7-8: Dutch policy entrepreneurs and the duration of their policy innovations ............................................................................... 225
Figure 7-9: English policy entrepreneurs and the degrees of policy change ............................................................................... 226
Figure 7-10: Dutch policy entrepreneurs and the degrees of policy change ............................................................................... 227
Figure 7-11: Consistency in QA elements and the pattern of policy change in QA ............................................................................... 241

Figure 8-1: The influence of the HE system on the pattern of policy change in QA ................................................................. 247
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAU</td>
<td>Academic Audit Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Advocacy Coalition Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASG</td>
<td>Academic Standards Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDP</td>
<td>Committee of Directors of Polytechnics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF system</td>
<td>System of conditional funding for university research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNAA</td>
<td>Council for National Academic Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROHO</td>
<td>Central Register of Programmes in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVCP</td>
<td>Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfES</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>European Consortium for Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENQA</td>
<td>European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESG</td>
<td>the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEANI</td>
<td>European Federation of National Engineering Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHE Act</td>
<td>Further and Higher Education Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEFCE</td>
<td>Higher Education Funding Council for England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEQC</td>
<td>Higher Education Quality Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>Historical Institutionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMI</td>
<td>Her Majesty’s Inspectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOAK</td>
<td>White Paper, entitled Higher Education: Autonomy and Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOOP</td>
<td>Higher Education and Research Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IADF</td>
<td>Institutional Analysis and Development Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INQAAHE</td>
<td>International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPG</td>
<td>Joint Planning Group for Quality Assurance in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAO</td>
<td>Netherlands Accreditation Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVAO</td>
<td>Dutch-Flemish Accrediting Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCFC</td>
<td>Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QAA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QAC</td>
<td>Quality Assessment Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QANU</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QAS</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAE</td>
<td>Research Assessment Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCI</td>
<td>Rational choice Institutionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCOP</td>
<td>Standing Conference of Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Sociological Institutionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TQA</td>
<td>Teaching Quality Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFC</td>
<td>Universities Funding Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGC</td>
<td>University Grants Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UUK</td>
<td>Universities UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBI</td>
<td>Visiting and Assessing Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSNU</td>
<td>Association of Cooperating Universities in the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHW Act</td>
<td>Higher Education and Research Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CH1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY CHANGE IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Studies of public policy development are concerned with a complex cluster of elements involved in the process of policymaking over time. Sabatier (2007b) believed that, in any given policy domain, this issue encompasses the following fundamental sets: actors, having different policy values, perceptions and preferences; policy debates, referring to disputes over policy problems and solutions/instruments as well as policy alternatives and programmes; and time spans, the duration of which cover a series of stages, namely policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Similarly, John (2003) contended that policy science can be differentiated from other political sciences, in that the former covers greater complexity, tending to include various political institutions (e.g. local governments, international agencies or congress) and activities (e.g. voting behaviour, decision making or policy adoption), rather than focusing on specific ones, as is the case in the latter discipline. Therefore, some scholars have coined the term policy dynamics to demonstrate the phenomenon of change which may involve any of the aforementioned elements, such as policy actors, ideas and solution alternatives, within a policy domain (Baumgartner et al., 2006). This perspective on policy change studies emphasises the importance of taking fairly long time periods for analyses, particularly when research interests lie in examining the relationship of policy change to political institutions or that to policy subsystems (Howlett and Cashore, 2009).

With respect to higher education (HE) policy studies, there is an evident connection between theory development in this domain and that in the public policy discipline. For example, Huisman (2009) revealed that public policy and HE have, to some extent, shown a parallel trend of research interest towards governance. On the side of policy science, the studies on issues such as multi-level and multi-actor governance, new public management or network steering, have elicited insights into the influence of new governance models over policies, which are perceived as steering instruments of governments. On the other hand, the governance issue has also emerged in the HE sector, particularly in the HE systems of Western countries, with the discussion being focussed on the topic of the rise of the evaluative state, which is concerned with less direct governmental interference and more autonomy for HE organisations.
Generally speaking, in the field of policy science, HE policy is one of the valid subjects for applying policy concepts and theories, in that valuable contributions derived from HE-based research have been made to the establishment of coherent, generalisable policy theories. In contrast, other researchers have contended that it is necessary to have specially designed “tools” for analysing HE policy, owing to the specifics of HE policy (e.g. characteristics of actors and organisations that only belong to this sector). Despite the difference, proponents of either perspective admit the need for building bridges between HE policy studies and the policy science discipline.

The building of bridges between theories of public policy change and the HE policy domain seems even more fundamental in an international context, where complexity of policy or that of policy change is increasingly visible. In respect to steering approach, for example, with the trend towards internationalisation or globalisation, prevailing governance models appear to take the form of various mixtures of traditional and new coordination mechanisms. These syntheses seem to make the interaction between institutions and actors in this arena even more difficult to predict, make the reform trajectories experienced across HE systems more diverse, make sets of stakeholders who participate in policy-making regarding universities more extensive, and make the relation between national and supranational governance more interwoven (Altbach, 2006, Enders, 2004).

In particular, the European context brings about more complexity with the issue of policy change. It started with an increase in formal legislative power of the European Union (EU), which has gradually led to a cross-national and EU collective regime in some areas. Under these circumstances, domestic policymaking in some European countries has been influenced. That is, as well as recognition of cross-country variations, domestic policies have had to be advanced in relation to stimulation of cooperation and coordination between European countries. With respect to approaches to encouraging policy coordination, hard laws have been formulated to exert legally binding force and compliance. In contrast, soft policy instruments such as the open method of coordination adopted since the Lisbon Strategy (2000) have made significant contribution to stimulate interaction and coordination between the EU member states, particularly through the introduction of systematic cross-national policy comparisons, the establishment of benchmarking and the use of indicators.
In sum, as a consequence of this increasingly complicated environment, studies of HE policy development against a European backdrop, which traditionally tended to involve either the domestic or the international/supranational oriented analysis template, are challenging.

1.2. **Quality Assurance Schemes in the European Higher Education System**

Most developed countries were confronted with challenges in the late 1970s, when there was economic and political pressure for an expansion of this sector. Before the Second World War and the immediate decades thereafter, the HE systems were dominated by the expectations of elite groups who shared relatively homogenous social backgrounds. However, in the 1960s it became gradually accepted that people of lower social status should have equal opportunity to access HE. Within this context, an agenda calling for more social equity emerged and as a consequence, there was a phenomenal rise in demand for HE. The numbers of students and institutions dramatically grew (Neave, 1998, Westerheijden, 2005, Westerheijden et al., 2007a).

The unprecedented expansion of HE at the beginning of the 1980s meant that the public sector had to carry a large economic burden, particularly in those countries where governments used to be the only or the major source of financial support for HE. Moreover, economic recessions seriously worsened this situation, for a massive increase in resources to deliver HE was highly demanded (Neave, 1998, van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). The rapid expansion of the sector and the limited public resources available to fund it served to diminish confidence in the quality of HE provision. As a consequence of increasing staff-student ratios, for instance, stricter controls on its expenditure were imposed by many governments (Neave, 1994). In addition to these difficulties, further developments outside of national boundaries, such as internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation, also stimulated an atmosphere of distrust. That is, under the increasing pressure from competition with other economic powers, it was then and still is today, widely believed that domestic economic performance can be enhanced through high quality HE provision, which in turn leads to strong international performance, thus aiding the delivery of economic
stability or growth. Ironically, many governments failed to fulfil the need for sufficient funding to ensure their HE performing well (Neave, 1990, Olsen and Maassen, 2007).

In order to cope with this awkward situation, governments launched a variety of initiatives so as to reform the HE system. Quality has been one of the significant policy issues that has captured a great deal of attention (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). Subsequently, from these initiatives various strategies for improving quality have been devised. For instance, to be more appropriate, the approaches entailed in traditional quality control model were refined or new control procedures were ascertained. Among these strategies, quality assurance (QA) has been one of the most prevalent items on the agenda, associated with the policy solutions that were formulated for the problems outlined above (Huisman and Kaiser, 2002). Apart from that, under the impact of international competition or cooperation, QA initiatives and related policy ideas (e.g. benchmarks and performance indicators) have been increasingly travelling across national boundaries (van der Wende and Westerheijden, 2001). As well as the influence emanating from other domestic public policies, the national HE policy domain has been facing the impact of international or supranational regulations, which include those that were set out in the declarations of the general assembly of EU member governments in general and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area in particular when it comes to QA (Langfeldt et al., 2009). Against this background, a study on QA policy especially in the European HE system appears to be promising in terms of a contribution to the understanding of HE policy change in the international context.

1.3. THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION AND PURPOSES

The current study is concerned with the policy change of QA schemes (QASs) in Europe, in the expectation of not only contributing to knowledge about QA development in the European HE context, but also building a bridge between theories of policy change and the HE policy domain. With respect to the substantive respect, relevant literature on European QASs is analysed in chapter two and as the result of the literature review, specific research gaps are identified: the particular pattern of QA development in the European context and explanations for the policy change.
As regards the theoretical perspective, the multiple-lens approach recommended by Paul A. Sabatier is conceived of as being a starting point for the present study for understanding the specific policy phenomenon. More specifically, following Sabatier’s contention, the analyst is expected to benefit from commencing with particular theoretical lenses, which in the first instance assist with suggesting which explanatory factors are crucial. He believed that to scrutinise the complexity of the policy process, it is imperative for researchers to be aware of different theoretical perspectives, which are made up of sets of presuppositions and focus on particular aspects (Sabatier, 2007a, 2007b). For instance, proponents of the Advocacy Coalition Framework have viewed policy subsystems and policy beliefs as underlying explanations for policy change, with the emphasis on significant roles of actors (Sabatier and Weible, 2007). Amongst the explanatory factors involved in the policy process, either implicitly or explicitly, theoretical causal relations could be elicited. More specifically, he claimed that theoretical perspectives can be advanced through a mixture of deductive and inductive reasoning, whereby researchers develop alternative theory or falsifiable hypotheses to address the extant theory. In due course, other scholars may challenge the theory by providing further alternatives and subsequently, fully-developed theories could be eventually formulated through this process of progressive elaboration.

In the present study, the theoretical lens applied builds on new institutionalism. However, this theoretical perspective has some limitations. To compensate for these weaknesses, the work of John Campbell (2004) is adopted as the analytical approach, which belongs to the so-called second movement of new institutionalism, for overcoming the limitations of traditional new institutionalism. Relevant issues, such as the outset of institutional analysis, the difference between the institutional analysis and new institutionalism, limitations of new institutionalism, etc., are discussed in chapter three. Through the theoretical lens, the original research gaps are translated into an overarching research question: how does the national HE system influence the pattern of policy change regarding QASs in the European context? Adhering to this, the major purposes of the research endeavour are: firstly, to describe the phenomenon of QA development in the European HE context, through the theoretical lens of Campbell’s new institutionalism; and secondly, to explain the mechanism of policy change in QA, using empirical data collected from specific
settings. The details in terms of independent and dependent variables as well as research propositions will be identified and justified in section 4.1.

1.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

To achieve the above purposes associated with theory application and reflection, the research methods proposed rely on the comparative research approach and the enquiry paradigm of post-positivism. Operational and empirical considerations for the determination of research design are explicitly discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3, respectively. In sum, this study is concerned with detailed information and fine-grained analysis, which lead to the adoption of the approach of multiple embedded case studies. That is, as well as comparison between case countries in relation to a specific set of QA, this study also looks at several periods of policy change in each case. Moreover, the paradigm of post-positivism lead to the choice of a mixed-methods research design. That is, data collection and analysis are to rely on a combination of historical analysis and Q methodology, both of which are employed to collect multiple data (i.e. documentation and interviews) through the eyes of multiple observers (i.e. experts, practitioners, and the investigator/outsider), so as to have the best comprehensive understanding of the multiple embedded cases. The chosen cases are the Netherlands and the UK, and the analysis runs from 1985 to 2005.

1.5. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This chapter has provided the background to this study and the study’s objectives, and placed these within the context of HE policy change in Europe. Being consistent with deductive reasoning, the construction of the remainder of the thesis starts with two chapters of literature reviews.

Chapter two provides an empirical framework for the study by reviewing current literature on QA systems and explanations for the diversity and change in relation to the specific HE policy.

Chapter three reviews the literature pertaining to the theoretical perspective, new institutionalism, which has been applied for exploring the research gaps identified in section 2.4 in detail.
Chapter four explains the methodology for comparative case research and the application of Q-methods at the operational and empirical levels respectively. Chapters five and six report the English and the Dutch experiences respectively, including the findings of historical analysis and Q-sorts and the discussions of the selected policy elements and policy entrepreneurs that engaged in each period of QA development.

Chapter seven presents results of comparisons in relation to the themes of policy change pertaining to the emergence and the degree of QA change in particular and the change pattern in general, whereby the five research propositions and three questions are addressed.

Chapter eight draws conclusions and presents the implications of the findings and reflections on the theory applied. Finally, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research in this field are considered.
In the previous chapter, QA was introduced as one of the most prevalent policy issues that have emerged in the HE context over the past couple of decades. Moving to this chapter, firstly, the diversity and changes in relation to QA policies are illustrated in section 2.1. Following this, certain explanations that have been offered for the variations in QA are discussed. Finally, the research gaps in the literature are highlighted.

2.1. QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEMES IN HE

QA has been viewed as being an effective policy tool for addressing some rather similar HE issues that have been faced by numerous governments since the 1980s. This common policy solution, which has been widely adopted for the aims of maintaining and improving HE quality, exists alongside a set of methods and approaches. For example, Van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) provided a general QA model after comparing related experiences in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. It contained elements such as: a managerial agent; the processes of self-evaluation and peer review; reports on evaluation results; and a linkage between the outcomes of quality reviews and the governmental funding of HE. In practice, however, it can be seen that the emerging QASs have not been identical (Huisman and Kaiser, 2002, Westerheijden et al., 2007a, Westerheijden et al., 2007b). That is, QASs have experienced a considerable amount of variation in terms of approaches and methods, as well as appearing to have a tendency towards change. Before explaining certain reasons for these observations, the following two subsections focus on the variation in this HE policy and its development particularly in Europe.

2.1.1. DIVERSITY FOUND IN THE FORMS OF QA

Diversity can be observed in relation to both the approaches and methods that are entailed in QA systems. More specifically, QA approaches can be distinguished in terms of objectives and outputs, whereas the QA methods are considered in terms of who initiates and who participates in the process of implementing the schemes.

Diversity of approaches
Although QA appears to be an umbrella category encompassing various policy
strategies for dealing with quality issues in HE, this set of policy instruments generally denotes two kind of systems: evaluation and accreditation (Schwarz and Westerheijden, 2004). The former can be distinguished from the latter according to their aim-oriented arrangements. Firstly, evaluation tends to investigate the process through which individual HE units (e.g. institutions; programmes) are supposed to achieve their respective objectives and such approaches can fall into two categories: quality audit and quality assessment. Audit is usually evidenced as an indirect evaluation process that aims to ensure standards of HE provision through checking procedures and arrangements in terms of how HE units manage their own quality (Westerheijden, 2005, 2007a). On the other hand, assessment aims to judge how good the performance of HE units is by measuring the extent to which they fulfil certain objectives (Woodhouse, 1999). Secondly, an accreditation system offers guarantees of predicted outcomes and aims to assure stakeholders that HE units are good enough, rather than whether they fulfil their specific objectives. Therefore, under this approach the tendency is to investigate the outcomes of HE provision rather than the processes undertaken to deliver it. Within an accreditation route, HE units can receive a specific award, such as recognition or the official right to exist in the HE system, if certain predetermined quality thresholds are reached. For example, colleges in Sweden and Norway can be upgraded to university status through accreditation procedures (Westerheijden, 2007a, Woodhouse, 1999).

In addition to the diverse objectives given above, the types of output, i.e. the judgements about performance that are formed, are also grounds for separating out QA approaches. With respect to accreditation, because the main function is to issue warrants to HE units or students that have qualified, having fulfilled certain minimal criteria, the investigation results normally have to be published in forms that embody objective statements and lead to some sort of classification or permission, such as the right to operate a HE institution; and the eligibility of students to receive grants or certification that qualified graduates are ready for employment in the field of practice. In turn, the outputs of accreditation are usually in the form of a binary scale, such as a yes/no decision. By contrast, in an evaluation system, the outputs tend to be displayed as grading on a scale (e.g. A, B, C), through a short descriptor (e.g. excellent, satisfactory and unsatisfactory), as well as in terms of a binary divide (e.g. pass/fail). In other words, these types offer more descriptive information than those regarding accreditation, thereby being able to provide greater detail on the progress
that a HE unit has made in achieving its own objectives, particularly in relation to quality control. Moreover, this approach may involve both qualitative and/or quantitative forms and thus, varying levels of performance can be displayed in the judgements regarding QA, which may be too complex to be represented in the simple binaries offered in accreditation (Schwarz and Westerheijden, 2004, Westerheijden, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, Woodhouse, 1999). In other words, outcomes of accreditation vis-à-vis evaluation allow higher levels of comparability and standardisation.

**Diversity of methods**
Apart from the differences in approaches, QA can be differentiated with regards to the methods employed to maintain and/or advance quality of HE. In this regard, the first criterion for consideration is who initiates the investigation into quality. For instance, in the three pioneer countries in this field, QASs were introduced by a new state agency in France (1984), the British University Grants Council in the UK (1985) and by associations of HE institutions in the Netherlands (1985) (Westerheijden et al., 2007a). In general, two types of the schemes can be identified based on the initiator criterion. One is an external form, i.e. one that is set up by agencies external to the HE unit under investigation, whereas the other is internal to the HE unit itself. Although there appears to be a dichotomy between external and internal forms of QA, they are not mutually exclusive in that an internal QAS can be part of an external quality process (e.g. an internal review undertaken as a preparation for an external peer review). In view of this somewhat blurred differentiation between external and internal forms, an alternative is to draw a line between them on the basis of whether the investigation results in some consequence or change that is external or internal to the HE unit, or in terms of whose ends are served by such changes (Brennan, 2007).

The second criterion for distinguishing the diversity of methods regards the target of QA investigation or the participants in the process, such as specific HE institutions, programmes or departments. These lead to different foci in QASs, such as teaching, which encompasses how the curriculum is designed and the extent to which students are supported, research and/or the administrative support for this (Billing, 2004, Brennan and Shah, 2000, Harvey and Newton, 2004, 2007). In practice, QA methods tend to be, to some extent, overlapping in nature, in that a set of QASs can simultaneously involve several foci (e.g. teaching and research aspects) and adopt different methods (e.g. peer review and self-assessment)(Brennan, 2007,
To reduce complexity, a classification presented by Westerheijden (2007a) divides external quality assessment into two categories: standard-based and mission-based evaluations. In the former, quality is normally judged through “fitness of purpose” under which QA methods refer to standardised procedures and external peer reviews against quantitative, externally-given performance indicators (e.g. staff numbers; number of hours for course units). Regarding the latter, the criterion for quality in mission-based evaluation is more likely to be “fitness for self-defined purpose”, for which QA purposes and standards are internally formulated by respective HE units. In order to make internally subjective judgements, QA processes are conducted by means of peer reviews as well as performance indicators derived from qualitative data, such as information collected in the form of student feedback or citations of staff’s publications. Notwithstanding this beneficial simplification, there still are some cases that do not conform to this classification in that some mission-based evaluations have relied on objective data (Westerheijden, 2007b) and on occasion certain data contained in standard-based evaluations have been collected through site visits that have resulted in subjective recommendations (van Bruggen et al., 1999). In reality, the diversity in either the characteristics of HE systems or the preferences of governments can lead to the choice of instruments of QA being hybrid (Westerheijden, 2007b).

2.1.2. EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE OF CHANGES IN QA

It is not a surprise that QASs need to be changed and do in fact change during the application and the process of development. In this regard, firstly, QA as a policy instrument must adjust to changing circumstances and newly emerging expectations and purposes (Westerheijden, 2005). For instance, with increasing diversity of students, particularly in terms of there being more students of a mature age, more demand for distance and part-time education, and greater numbers of international candidates, it has become necessary for QA systems to be more culturally sensitive and flexible (Stensaker et al., 2007). Secondly, research has revealed that QA changes have been experienced at different policy levels. For example, a study of two business schools in England (Hoecht, 2006) demonstrates a switch in quality control models from a ‘light-touch’ system to an ‘audit-based’ system at the institutional level. In contrast, a study by Filippakou and Tapper (2008), explored the transition in QA functions at the national level from quality assurance to quality enhancement, following the introduction of the Further and Higher Education Act in
the UK. The following part of this subsection focuses on the Europe experience by way of further illustrating what kinds of approaches and methods QA changes may encompass.

Regarding QA approaches, among the changes in QA observed in the European context, the rising popularity of providing those forms encompassing accreditation has been one of the most noticeable features (Harvey and Newton, 2004). Originally, QASs across Europe were nation-based and lacked international dimensions, owing to limited cooperation and coordination between individual national QA agencies and those organisations tasked with working towards internationalisation. However, the fostering of international links and growing collaboration have contributed to some changes (van der Wende, 1999), particularly in relation to the development of an accreditation system, which has aimed to enhance harmonisation across HE systems in Europe (Westerheijden, 2002). Key challenges relate to cross-national issues, such as HE provision that crosses national boundaries and the operation of transnational programmes. In particular, the traditional QA systems in Europe were incapable of handling situations in which ‘foreign’ HE provision was able to evade or bypass domestic QA constraints in host countries, thus resulting in ‘foreign’ HE institutions having poor accountability in terms of QA in their host countries. Also, internationalisation has stimulated an increasing demand for transparency regarding the supply of sufficient information about HE provision, as this is considered to contribute to consumer protection. In this regard, QA systems that fulfil the purpose of accountability are believed to be instrumental in providing consumers with the necessary information for decision-making, so that they can protect themselves in the HE market that today increasingly transcends national boundaries (van der Wende, 1999, van der Wende and Westerheijden, 2001). In addition to the impact of internationalisation, the Bologna process also gave more weight to accreditation in European QASs, given its key objectives of harmonisation and the enhancement of international transparency between member states (Stensaker, 2007, Westerheijden, 2005, 2007a, Westerheijden et al., 2007b). In this vein, according to an investigation into accreditation in the European Higher Education Area, the number of countries conducting accreditation as a QA instrument was six out of 20 in 1998 and this had tripled by 2003 (Schwarz and Westerheijden, 2004), thus indicating the rising preference for accreditation in Europe.
Secondly, in the European context the issues around QA methods are complicated. Despite their limitations, some typologies have been advocated to facilitate a better understanding of the QA hybrid forms and the changes that have occurred in relation to these QA methods. In addition to Westerheijden’s (2007b) model that has been outlined above, i.e. standard-based evaluation and mission-based evaluation, Neave (1998) provided another typology that examines routine as opposed to strategic/exploratory evaluation, which can be identified particularly in modern HE systems. He points out that routine evaluation is often aimed at maintaining administrative responsibility, particularly at the highest and lowest levels in the HE system, namely the central government and department/school levels, respectively. In order to stimulate cooperation with the procedures of routine evaluation, one of the available governmental strategies has been to distribute HE resources based on the capacities that respective HE units demonstrate. As a result of the accountability purpose and the special interest in HE outcomes derived from this, it is necessary to collect qualitative data to provide objective information and make corresponding judgements before resource allocation (Maassen, 1997, Neave, 1988, 1994, 1998). In contrast to the ‘ex ante timing’ entailed in routine evaluation, exploratory evaluation is carried out if and when it is regarded as necessary for those occasions when routine and standardised verification appear insufficient to reach certain purposes of QA, particularly in times of crisis or when significant problems have emerged (Maassen, 1997). Owing to the importance of maintaining its flexibility, exploratory evaluation has an ‘ad hoc quality’ and is heavily reliant on practical details so as to be able to deal with the unexpected nature of the out of the ordinary conditions or the rapid changes being encountered. This post-evaluation entailing an ‘ad hoc quality’ is instrumental in generating adjustable, suitable strategies that fit with the contemporary situation, particularly at the HE system level (Maassen, 1997, Neave, 1998).

Using this typology, there are three changes in QA methods that have been observed in Europe by Maassen (1997) and Neave (1998). Firstly, the connection between routine evaluation and exploration evaluation has become more evident as QASs have had to combine both forms to cope with either rapid or incremental change in the HE sector. Secondly, it appears that the timing of conducting QASs has gradually come to emphasise ‘post-evaluation’ focusing on the process of HE delivery rather than ‘pre-evaluation’ which involves paying attention to the products or outputs in
the HE sector. Lastly, institutional autonomy has become more important than that of the system level which used to be a prominent feature in continental Europe and commensurate with this change, QA systems have moved towards paying more attention to the institutional and faculty/departmental level rather than to the system level. For instance, the systems in France and the Netherlands have shifted to covering the forms of assessment, particularly at institution and subject levels.

2.2. EXPLANATIONS OFFERED FOR THE OBSERVED DIVERSITY AND CHANGE

According to the results of Huisman and Kaiser’s research (2002), the explanation for the prominence of QA in Western Europe during the period 1999-2001, was a combination of endogenous factors, such as demands for more efficiency in HE systems and the search for new relationships between governments and universities, as well as some exogenous factors, including the move towards the knowledge society, and growing internationalisation and globalisation. Although these factors may not be sufficient to explain completely the diverse manifestations and changes regarding QA, nevertheless the authors do identify the importance of the need to distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Building on this notion, in the following subsections the salient issues around QA development are presented under two headings: intrinsic and extrinsic dynamics.

2.2.1. INTRINSIC DYNAMICS

The category of intrinsic dynamics refers to the fact that diversity and change are an inherent tendency in the QA development, as there is a learning effect occurring when they are put into practice. More specifically, the characteristics of certain elements entailed in QA systems, such as purposes and methods, play significant roles in the learning process and contribute to the explanations for QA change.

The phase model

Jeliazkova and Westerheijden (2002) provided a model that constitutes an analytical framework for understanding the processes of QA development, which is composed of several phases and each of these involves a set of diverse elements, namely (1) the key perceived problems that the HE system faces; (2) the main purposes of QA which has been set up to solve the problem; (3) the forms of internal evaluation that
are providing the required information and (4) the nature of external review. Furthermore, at each stage in the phase model there is a different constellation of these four elements and this allows for the identification of the stage under examination (Brennan, 2007, Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2002, Westerheijden et al., 2007a).

The model is based on the premise that certain mechanisms cause a QASs to move from one phase to the next. The learning effect is one of these, whereby people involved in the process of QA development master the arts of QA through their experience of putting it into action and thus, subsequent rounds of its implementation are likely to gradually decrease in terms of the benefits. In other words, QA have an inherent tendency to diminish the degree of achievement with regard to their predetermined purposes (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2002, Westerheijden et al., 2007a). However, it should be noted that the learning effect can be positive, which facilitates movement to the next phase, or negative whereby the QA fails to move in the right direction and is regarded as mere window dressing. Moreover, the existence of a positive learning effect implies an evolving process in which QA change entails a sequential quality process, i.e. QA development follows the phases in a sequence (Westerheijden, 2007a, Westerheijden et al., 2007a). The phase model of QA development has been to some extent corroborated by experiences in Europe, such as those in Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland (Stensaker et al., 2007).

Theoretically, the sequential feature involving a learning curve carries some implications of diversity and change in relation to QA (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2002, Westerheijden et al., 2007a). Firstly, it implies that the development of a QAS is potentially affected by each of its phases, in which certain elements, namely the quality problems, the policy purposes and the methods deployed, have come into play and thus the current phase could be affected by the outcomes of such elements during the preceding phase. For example, the types of QA introduced by Central and Eastern European countries after the 1990s were different to those carried out by Western European states in the mid-1980s, because both of these regions were at different phases in the model as they had faced different HE problems and thus had gone on to establish remarkably distinct QA in subsequent years. Secondly, the temporal sequence of QA development involves the closure of the previous stage when the problems faced have been solved as well as the subsequent emergence of
the next one. As a result, as Westerheijden (2007a) posited, the stage that a particular type of QA has reached can be identified by examining the nature of the four elements discussed above.

**QA role: purposes of QA**

The role of QA is one of the elements being included in the phase model. From the literature it appears that national QASs can be perceived as multifunctional policy instruments that are implemented in and by the public sector to address a number of HE problems. Harvey and Newton (2007) pointed out that not only can QA be conducted so as to encourage institutional autonomy in a HE system that has been controlled ministerially, but it can also serve to strengthen institutional compliance with national requirements in cases where a HE system is keen to become more autonomous. That is, in such circumstances QA is put in place to meet political demands, in terms of supporting the transfer of power from the state to HE institutions or ensuring compliance with government requirements. Equally, QA may be given an educational orientation, such as towards facilitating mobility of students; informing prospective students and assisting decision-makers with the distribution of resources (Amaral et al., 2007, Neave, 1998, Stensaker, 2007, Stensaker et al., 2007).

QA may assume multiple roles which can sometimes appear contradictory as participants (e.g. HE institutions and stakeholders) tend to put their own emphasis on different aspects of QA functions (de Wit and Knight, 1999). Woodhouse (1999, p. 30) defined QA as “the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced”. This underlines the two prime purposes that many QA systems aim to achieve quality accountability and quality improvement. In the phase model, accountability figures prominently during the earlier stages as a key purpose, whereas in the later stages there is a perceived shift in favour of improvement in QASs. In this regard, a study by Westerheijden et al. (2007a) substantiated that this tendency has occurred in parts of Europe, particularly in the Netherlands and Flanders. In addition, they also observe that the decision about which QA role should be assumed is never a simple task, considering the complicated relations between accountability and improvement. The balance between these two QA purposes affects the methods designed in a QA system during the whole trajectory of its development and therefore, it is worth discussing the relation between accountability and improvement in more detail.
Relation between accountability and improvement

Scholars have described the tension between these two roles as being between a rock and a hard place (Stensaker, 2007, Westerheijden et al., 2007b), forming two extremes on a continuum with respect to QA functions. On the one hand, a QA system that targets accountability exclusively tends to emphasise the viewpoints of external stakeholders, with such stakeholders assuming most of the power in the HE system and thus HE academics have to comply with these external requirements. On the other hand, a system that places improvement as its exclusive purpose tends to reflect the perspective of internal stakeholders, such as the value of HE institutional culture and ownership, and under these circumstances external actors are reluctant to become involved. In reality however, regardless of the purpose, internal stakeholders rarely maintain their enthusiasm when they perceive that there will be an administrative burden or that they are likely to be manipulated. Other authors have posited that accountability and improvement are by no means two conflicting notions and have offered at least two potential explanations for this. One view is that accountability is followed by improvement, and that the latter is, in fact, a side effect of accountability, as a QA system entailing definite objectives and procedures and working towards greater accountability can stimulate an internal impetus towards quality improvement. The alternative argument is that accountability and improvement do not lie on two ends of a single continuum, but are two unconnected and only partially related dimensions. In other words, neither of them is able to stimulate the other and thus, there is no tension between them (Harvey and Newton, 2007). As a result, the two notions can be addressed by considering each in terms of three ‘continuums’: aims, definitions of quality and methods.

- Aims

The main aim of accountability is to ensure that the performance of HE provision fits with the stakeholders’ expectations. Although there may be various actors involved, HE units have to be accountable to their funders and, particularly in Europe, the national government is the major agency providing financial support. QA systems thus have an obligation to serve the government’s demands, such as to ensure compliance with national regulations and to control HE development, for example, in times when there is rapid expansion in the numbers of HE providers. In addition, the government requires HE units to be accountable for public budgets, especially when
the HE system is expanding under the circumstance of reduced public spending. The governmental strategy of allocating HE financial resources based on the performances of HE units is a clear example of QA systems aimed at establishing accountability for the money invested. HE units also have the responsibility for making their customers (i.e. the students of HE provision) feel satisfied and it can be argued that students, both enrolled and prospective, ought to be informed of the quality of HE provision so as to give consumer protection. For the last requirement, QA results can generate information about HE provision and/or enhance communications and facilitate comparisons being made between respective HE units (Harvey and Newton, 2007, Westerheijden, 2007b).

In contrast to the function of accountability, improvement relates to knowledge and truth. That is, QA systems that are oriented towards improvement aim at bettering future performances of HE provision, in terms of the achievement of teaching knowledge and of searching for truths (Amaral et al., 2007, Westerheijden, 2007b). It is worth noting that concerning the term improvement, another almost interchangeable term is enhancement, with the difference between them being that the former entails the judgment that there is value-added, i.e. being better, whilst the latter is more neutral and describes changes in provision in terms of appearance, e.g. more students or quicker response (Harvey and Newton, 2007).

- Definitions of quality

Quality in HE is a multiple concept and its constitution may be perceived differently by different stakeholders in the HE sector. For instance, university managers emphasise the attribute of quality that can attract prospective students/customers, whereas teaching staff stress quality as represented by the reputation among their academic peers. In addition, what is understood as “useful” knowledge that graduates have to possess in the globalising economy is different from place to place. In this regard, the accountability perspective values the extrinsic quality of HE, whereby HE provision is perceived as having the ability to fulfil the respective expectations of different external stakeholders, who include the service users (e.g. students) and funders (e.g. government and employers) or to meet a variety of societal demands (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994), such as the government’s requirements of complying with national laws and controlling HE development, and customer demands for information about HE performance. One thing in common among the
QA systems involving accountability is that quality is for the sake of either societal members or the society as a whole. In this vein, quality is regarded as fitness for purpose and as value for money, according to the categories developed by Harvey and Green (1993).

On the other hand, the main concern of the concept of improvement is the intrinsic quality of HE that underlines the ability of the sector regarding teaching knowledge and searching for truths (Amaral et al., 2007, Westerheijden, 2007b). Under Brennan’s typology of QA values (Brennan, 2007), what intrinsic quality encompasses is close to the academic value of quality that concerns knowledge and curricula or the pedagogic value, namely that associated with academic teaching. This type of quality can be regarded as excellence, exceeding required standards, zero defects or transformation/empowerment (Harvey and Green, 1993). For example, the fitness of the objective of educating students to live in the modern and flexible world; the fitness of the state-of-art knowledge that disciplines need in the changing world; and the standards for knowledge and abilities that graduates should possess in their future lives and jobs, all come under this perspective. By contrast, extrinsic quality can be regarded as a compound of several aspects of quality: the managerial type of quality valuing institutional autonomy and focusing on organisational procedures; the relevance type, being associated with societal expectations and drawing attention to graduates’ standards and learning outcomes; and the consumerist type, putting faith in market principles and emphasising customer satisfaction.

- Methods
As a result of the emphasis being on external demands and extrinsic quality, a QA system that entails accountability as its major purpose tends to adopt the methods that can provide valuable information about HE outcomes to all types of stakeholders. Under this lens, activities and procedures such as accreditation, external QA, meta-evaluations, peer reviews that are conducted by independent experts, and follow-ups by government departments, are considered to be suitable QA methods (Harvey and Newton, 2004, van Bruggen et al., 1999). In addition, the ‘shelf life’ of QA systems implemented for accountability purposes tends to be relatively limited and is more likely to undergo change. This property is premised upon the assumption that the QASs reflecting external quality and serving external demands have to be validated
by various stakeholders as part of a political process. Therefore, if the actors involved in the decision-making process are replaced, the QAS needs to be changed accordingly (Westerheijden, 2005). Moreover, the results of a QAS which is focused on accountability aims need to be publicised in the form of written formal public reports, particularly when the outcomes are to be utilised to inform performance-related funding (Westerheijden, 2007a).

On the other hand, the methods of QASs for improvement purposes, particularly in terms of intrinsic quality, tend to be devised under the premise that academic peers can contribute to fostering a better understanding of the intrinsic quality relating to generating truth through research and delivering knowledge through teaching, than public servants in government departments can (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). As a result, internal QASs, such as peer review and self-assessment, are usually adopted as the common methods for improving the internal quality of HE provision. The outcomes and recommendations of these, which are typically produced by academics and without any direct reference to financial resources, are relatively apolitical and mainly focus on the issues related to knowledge. This is in contrast to external QASs and accreditation schemes that tend to be influenced by value for money agendas and external stakeholders’ demands so they cannot focus specifically on the issue of knowledge itself (Stensaker, 2007, van Bruggen et al., 1999, Westerheijden et al., 2007b).

As the working definitions of quality and reputation deployed in HE units under the systems that value intrinsic quality are usually formulated by academics, there has been a substantial variety emerging from knowledge fields and even within individual units, which raises the issue of the appropriate methods for controlling quality (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). Moreover, such diversity brings about the need to assess a whole range of subjects and distinct institutional arrangements, and thus a QAS of an intrinsic nature requires a high level of decentralisation, because external agencies are insufficiently equipped for addressing the multitude of variations (Amaral et al., 2007, Westerheijden, 2007b).

In sum, the diversity and changes discussed above appear to be influenced by the intrinsic dynamics entailing the learning effect and certain inherent properties in these schemes, i.e. aims, definitions of quality and methods. The learning effect
generated in the process of implementing QASs is posited as a significant driver for changing the existing QASs. Moreover, the purposes of QA, namely accountability and improvement, and the notions of HE quality, determine the procedures and methods regarding the QASs that are actually set up. According to these properties, QASs can be divided into two categories and each one includes specific QA elements. That is external QASs are formulated to ensure accountability purposes that emphasise extrinsic quality and are implemented especially through formal public reports entailing qualitative terms. On the other hand, internal QASs are applied to improve intrinsic HE quality and the methods adopted are normally conducted by academics or internal stakeholders.

2.2.2. EXTRINSIC DYNAMICS

Although the effects of inherent dynamics on QA change have an influence over time, empirically, such processes are not as obvious as another mechanism, namely the impact of extrinsic dynamics. Moreover, this mechanism appears to override other possible influences regarding QA development and can even interrupt the impact of intrinsic dynamics, in terms of its trajectory (Stensaker et al., 2007, Westerheijden, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, Westerheijden et al., 2007a). It is worth noting at the beginning of this subsection that the notion of extrinsic dynamics does not correspond exactly to the definition of ‘external dynamics’ coined by Westerheijden (2007a) that comprises two kinds of mechanisms: social dynamics, which refers to the accounts of what happens exogenously regarding HE systems; and a hierarchy of HE problems, the addressing of which results in QA development according to the inherent sequence set out in the phase model, as discussed above. The latter mechanism is identical to the intrinsic dynamics concept defined above, which therefore by implication involves the four interactional elements contained within the phase model.

Firstly, the notion of extrinsic dynamics is taken to include contextual dynamics of HE, which relates to the immediate contexts of QASs and other HE regulations (e.g. the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act in the UK). The second extrinsic consideration here is social dynamics, which covers national contexts, such as other domestic policy instruments, the political climate, demography, limits on public budgets and the governmental steering model, as well as the international contexts including global influences and, in particular, the Bologna Declaration that relates
more precisely to the process of Europeanisation (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2002, Westerheijden, 2005, 2007a, Westerheijden et al., 2007a, Westerheijden et al., 2007b). Despite the fact that the issue of extrinsic dynamics is divided into these two categories, the line between contextual and social dynamics is not, in practice, clearly defined. This can be demonstrated by considering the case of the change in HE quality control models, which has shifted from the state control model to the state supervision model. It can be classified under the heading of the contextual dynamics of HE, but to some extent it also can be seen as representing political conflicts surrounding the unstable relations between the state and HE institutions, which is an issue falling under the heading of social dynamics.

**HE contextual dynamics**

Brennan (2007) discusses, in detail, two features of the context in which QASs are implemented, with the first referring to characters of the HE system, including the institutional arrangements, degree structure (i.e. two-cycle degree or three-cycle degree) and the size of the HE system. In particular, whether the system is binary or unitary has a primary influence on the way in which QA is functioning. In this regard, a binary HE system that comprises both academic and professional education usually has two separate QASs each of which functions differently. Further, even in a unitary system, HE can still be differentiated according to other characteristics, such as the varying missions of the respective HE institutions. Also, the size of the HE system can make a difference with regards to QASs, as larger systems tend to keep their own domestic traditions, whereas smaller ones often may appear to adjust to international demands. What is more, compatibility with international requirements from, for example, international academic communities and European policies, appears to be more crucial for smaller countries, which normally have smaller HE systems (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, pp. 20-1). In the smaller HE systems, for instance, foreign experts are often required to be involved in peer reviews, so as to counterbalance the close relationships between the members in the domestic academic community (Brennan, 2007). This also suggests that certain informal relationships and sets of extant knowledge prevailing in a HE system can influence the implementation of the formal procedures of QASs.

The second feature of contextual dynamics of HE concerns the power structures, the origins of which can be traced back to medieval times, where two ideal models of
quality control can be identified (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). One form was the external control model, the so-called French model, in which the HE system was controlled by an external authority, which was the Pope during medieval times and then the governments of modern states, rather than HE academic staff. This external authority had sovereignty over the whole HE system, in relation to policies, quality control models and the centralised curricula (Neave, 1994, van Bruggen et al., 1999, Westerheijden, 2005). Extrinsic quality was emphasised in the external control model, and therefore HE policies that were compatible with external demands, particularly contemporary governmental goals and issues that captured the attention of the contemporary society as a whole, were strongly favoured (Amaral et al., 2007, Maassen, 1997, van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994, Westerheijden, 2007b). By contrast, the internal control model emerged in medieval England. It involved sovereignty being exercised by self-governing communities (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). The internal authority included academic fellows in universities or professional agencies outside the HE system, for examples, lawyers, doctors and teachers (Neave, 1994). In this control model, the government had no direct power to interfere in the teaching content, decisions about lecturer qualifications and examination of graduates (van Bruggen et al., 1999), and thus institutional autonomy could be exerted over curricula, finances and the election of self-governing authorities (Westerheijden, 2005).

Moving on to the modern era, from the 19th century onwards the two historical types of control models gradually became hybridised and have increasingly transformed into dual quality control systems since then. More specifically, sovereignty over the HE sector started to be shared by the government and academic communities in the new model (Neave, 1994), where the government controlled procedural autonomy, which refers to financial matters and formal standards, whilst HE institutions assumed substantial autonomy over, for example, curricula, the content that eligible graduates needed to study, the methods of examination and qualification of lecturers, and what was generally interpreted as each individual professor’s freedom to teach and research (Westerheijden, 2005). However, the hybrid quality control model that combines external and internal control models became unstable in the late 1970s. This came as a result of certain challenges, e.g. massive expansion in the numbers of HE institutions and students, limits set on public spending and increasing international competition, all of which have been successively experienced in
modern HE systems across numerous European countries since that time. As a consequence of these contextual dynamics, doubts have been expressed about the capability of HE to meet today’s social and economic demands, and HE provision is increasingly seen as being unsatisfactory. In particular, under these circumstances the call for improvement of HE arose from external stakeholders, and thus the requirement of extrinsic quality control has increased in importance (Maassen, 1997).

New public management ushered in a modernisation-oriented ideology which asked for the delivery of service being in faster and more flexible ways, introduced market type mechanisms such as deregulation and accountability into the system, and suggested the approach of minimisation including pushing decision-making downwards to smaller units and giving them greater autonomy (Shattock, 2008). It is believed that market principles could enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the HE sector, so as to solve those problems that mainly were the result of a shortage of resources. Based on this, the managerial principle of deregulation is expected to foster a transformation of the relation between the government and HE institutions. That is, on the one hand, the control of central government over HE is decentralised and only maintains minimal interference, acting as being at arm’s length. On the other hand, HE institutions assume more autonomy and tend to comply with market principles, which denotes HE self-regulation. Being influenced by the market-orientation approaches, the linkage between the HE sector and economic concerns would be strengthened and in turn a new quality model based on governmental remote control could be observed (Neave, 1988, 1990, 1998, Westerheijden, 2007b). In this regard, some innovative governmental structures have emerged at both the system and institutional levels, as substitutes for strict regulations or routine evaluations, and such strategies are aimed at rebuilding trust and strengthening the legitimacy of HE institutions (Huisman and Kaiser, 2002, Paradeise et al., 2009, van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994, Westerheijden et al., 2007b). One study (de Boer et al., 2008) has revealed that in some European HE systems, particularly the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria, it has become evident that a progressive withdrawal of governmental intervention has been experienced at the system level, and accountability rather than strict regulations is required at the institutional level.

Two key differences can be identified between the earlier hybrid quality control form and the new one under the NPM agenda. Firstly, under the self-regulation approach,
HE institutions have assumed greater autonomy and responsibility for budgets, teaching staff, and programme content (Gornitzka and Maassen, 2007). Secondly, a new form of monitoring agencies has been established at the middle layer, between central government authority and HE institutions, so as to minimise the interference of central government, but at the same time also to provide some degree of remote control over HE quality. These intermediary bodies have been given authority that used to be in the hands of central government. Some agencies, for example, enjoy ‘primary status’ through a managerial strategy that connects the result of evaluation and financial support to ensure HE institutions’ compliance. These new administrative bodies have assumed the authority, both to enforce quality standards and regulations on HE institutions as well as being responsible for the distribution of HE budgets. One example of this type of agency comprises the three Higher Education Funding Councils in the UK. By contrast, other similar agencies, such those found in France and the Netherlands, have no control over financial resources, and as a result they are considered only to have had ‘secondary status’ conveyed upon them, which involves the right to coordinate and provide HE institutions with advice (Neave, 1994).

In order to compensate for certain drawbacks that may result from models of decentralised control, the importance of value for money has been emphasised, along with the adoption of the assumption that competition amongst HE institutions can be stimulated, which will thus make the HE sector more accountable to diverse demands (Olsen and Maassen, 2007). In addition, a more formal legislative, political process of decision-making has been introduced, so as to counterbalance the perceived weakness arising from the previous orientation towards consensus, which was achieved by informal negotiation that was seen to allow for too much institutional autonomy and flexibility. In this vein, the Education Act (1988) in Britain was an example of formal steps being taken to enforce centralised legislation, thereby challenging the extant somewhat ad hoc arrangements (Neave, 1990, 1994).

Some of the changes in governmental strategies arising from the extrinsic dynamics in the HE context have led to the weakening of the traditional bond between the HE sector and central government and contributed to a remote control approach to HE quality. Against this backdrop, changes relating to perceptions of QA and the methods for implementing QASs have also occurred (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden,
Firstly, it can be observed that there have been shifts in the notion of HE quality and the roles that QA has played. Previously, quality was perceived as being grounded in the professional concept and guaranteed on the basis of a somewhat discretionary trust placed in the HE sector (Westerheijden et al., 2007b). For instance, an Oxbridge education was accepted to be providing high quality in earlier times without doubt, as trust in HE was established according to the historic reputation of a HE institution and/or its available resources (e.g. recruiting the best students). In those days, HE provision was perceived as being inherently of a high quality and thus not requiring any assessments relating to the actual process of teaching or delivery (Harvey and Green, 1993). Moreover, it was taken to be the preserve of elites and virtually inaccessible to ordinary people. However, since the onset of the challenges that emerged in the HE system in the late 1970s, this perception was no longer deemed suitable in the new HE context surrounding the need for significant expansion of the number of HE institutions, as well as that of students (Westerheijden et al., 2007b).

With the emergence of mass HE systems, the proportion of HE costs that had to be covered by HE consumers (i.e. students), prospective employers and other stakeholders, began to grow. As a consequence, the institutions had to take a more active stance towards being accountable to their consumers, if for no other reason than the increasing tuition fees paid by students. Moreover, the widening of responsibilities, such as HE institutions providing prospective students with necessary information regarding how to choose the most attractive universities (Westerheijden, 2007b), indicated that economic drivers had begun to shift HE provision away from a public towards a private good, and thus ran counter to traditional HE purposes (Westerheijden, 2002). The linkage between the HE sector and economic or commercial concerns has gradually led to a shift away from the prevailing notion of quality being excellence in intrinsic quality, towards one focusing on assurance about meeting thresholds set for extrinsic quality, such as fitness for stakeholders’ expectations or value for money. QA, in this vein, has started to be regarded as a type of instrumentality serving diverse extrinsic demands (Harvey and Green, 1993, Westerheijden, 2007a, 2007b).

In sum, as a result of the changing HE context, different perceptions of quality have
emerged and these in turn have led change in the role of QA as well as the orientation in relation to the methods employed. For example, the distribution of the HE budget nowadays tends to be decided on the basis of the performance of HE institutions, rather than negotiations through political processes (Westerheijden, 2007b). Correspondingly, QAS reports present data on measurable performance and comprise objective judgments about outcomes of HE provision, rather than subjective judgments about processes (Neave, 1990). Further, the timing of conducting quality control schemes has switched from being ex ante to ex post (Neave, 1988, 1998).

Social dynamics: the impact of international/European influences
With regard to social dynamics, the impact of global competition on QA development has been noteworthy, with the expansion and improvement of the HE sector becoming a clearly recognised development. Many nations have paid attention to the issue of HE quality and been eager to strengthen their domestic HE competitive capacity. Apart from national initiatives, supranational organisations under the banner of internationalisation have dedicated themselves to furthering this issue. The World Trade Organization, for instance, has set the requirements that its member states concentrate on consumer protection against inadequate HE provision and provide fair competition between HE institutions, between domestic and foreign or between public and private institutions (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003).

The rapid growth in transnational education and the corresponding pressure of global competition has encouraged certain governments, particularly those in Europe, to recognise the relatively marginal position in the global HE market of their domestic HE sectors and consequently, to launch European-wide initiatives regarding QA (van der Wende and Westerheijden, 2001). The impacts of European HE policies on domestic HE systems have been considerable (Tomusk, 2006), in that policy-makers in any one European member state have had to become increasingly aware of policy developments in the other states belonging to that continent. In particular, after the Sorbonne Declaration (1998) and the Bologna Declaration (1999), the process of formulating domestic policies has been imbued with interrelated influences, such as intergovernmental (Neave and Maassen, 2007) or supranational relations (Gornitzka, 2007). The Bologna Declaration was signed by the ministers in charge of the domestic HE systems in 29 European countries, gathering in 1999, who advocated
the belief that quality should be at the core of the setting up of the European Higher Education Area. The two significant rationales behind this initiative are (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, pp. 19-20) ‘to increase the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education’ in the global HE market; and ‘to promote mobility within Europe’ of students and graduates.

Although not being dealt with in any detail in the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations, the concept of quality was mentioned in the statements, such as in a text of the latter, where it is stated: ‘promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies’ (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, p. 22). Thus it would appear that intergovernmental initiatives for addressing HE quality were expected to arise as a result of these declarations. In this context, the European influence on domestic QASs can be recognised through several actions (Westerheijden, 2007a). Regarding these, there were formal European initiatives that addressed HE quality, such as the EU Pilot Project in 1994, which eventually led to the establishment in 2000 of a network of QA agencies, such as the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), which was backed by the European Union. Moreover, there were some informal initiatives, for instance, the Dublin Descriptors (2002). In addition, there were other European influences that were indirectly caused by certain side effects of the Bologna Declaration on domestic QASs. For example, in order to precipitate harmonisation within all the European countries that had signed up to participate in the process, the European Commission encouraged them to develop common standards across HE systems (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003).

Apart from these initiatives, it can be seen that the European level of influence has been in evidence as a result of further meetings held in order to process the Bologna Declaration. For example, in 2001 the Prague Conference of European ministers for HE announced that the sector had an important role as a public good, which could be recognised through emphasising the importance attached to QASs in ensuring the quality of degrees and in facilitating systems that allowed for comparability of qualifications. A key outcome of the conference was the call to establish a common framework which could be a point of reference for facilitating the dissemination of best practice and promoting closer co-operation and mutual acceptance between and across different QA systems (e.g. certification and accreditation), QA agencies (e.g.
ENQA and HE institutions), countries, and individual HE institutions (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003). By 2003, the initiatives stemming from the Bologna Declaration appear to have affected many European countries, with regards to constructing or amending their domestic QASs (Westerheijden, 2007a).

In relation to the European influence on domestic QASs, two kinds of impact of the Bologna process can be observed. The first relates to the purposes of QASs and with respect to this, they have been regarded as a set of multifunctional instruments introduced under the movement of NPM for solving specific problems that have arisen in the HE sector, since the late 1970s. In particular, accreditation has become the significant purpose of QA spreading across Europe, owing to the increasing importance of extrinsic requirements that have been demanded by central governments, who have acted as the major financial contributors to the sector and as representatives of the wider public interest (Westerheijden, 2007a). Moreover, under the forces of world-wide internationalisation of economies and societies, the purposes of QA in the sector have focused on competitive advantage as well as quality.

Europeanisation, on the other hand, has encouraged harmonisation of HE systems, especially through the Bologna process, in that there have been certain demands, such as that of international cooperation regarding quality criteria, supporting the establishment of comparable HE systems across European countries. In this regard, cooperation between the Netherlands and Flanders stands out as a prime example (Neave, 1994, Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003). Given the need for international cooperation and mobilisation of participants in HE systems, in the current era it is paramount that students, lecturers as well as researchers have access to information of a transparent nature, if they are to be protected as consumers. Thus, it is thought essential that QASs exhibit this transparency, in terms of reliability, with regard to such matters as course provision, as well as teaching and research quality, if they are to be robust (Orr, 2004, Westerheijden, 2005, Westerheijden et al., 2007a).

The effects of the growing internationalisation and Europeanisation on the choices, in relation to which QA instruments to employ, appear to have placed increasing importance on quality improvement. Further, the key matter of QA accountability has been switched subtly away from meeting government demands, towards a much
greater concern for consumer protection (van der Wende and Westerheijden, 2001).

In addition to extending the range of the QA purposes, there have been other influences brought about by the European requirements, in relation to amending the design of domestic QASs in member states, particularly with regards to target objects for evaluation/accreditation and forms of judgements. Firstly, the object of QASs under the Bologna process would appear to favour degree qualifications, rather than the HE institutions or their programmes. One explanation for this phenomenon is that degree qualifications, have a relatively weaker bond with other national domestic regulations than input quality (e.g. the funding and staffing levels) and process quality (e.g. the curriculum), and thus it is easier to deal with these as separate entities. In other words, degree-oriented QASs that measure an output quality can be amended more easily, nation by nation, to correspond to overall European requirements, than programme-oriented QASs that focus on the other two quality attributes: input and process (Westerheijden, 2007a, Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, Westerheijden et al., 2007b).

The second change that has been instigated by the Bologna Declaration relates to the forms of judgments in QA. In this regard, in a number of countries that aim at promoting transparency and consistency on a pan-European scale, the selected QASs have been devised towards the approach of accreditation systems in preference to those based on evaluation. Moreover, the judgments in relation to accreditation take the form of summarised statements and documented qualitative data. It is widely accepted that both of these forms make the results of QA more transmissible and subsequently more comprehensible to stakeholders across all the countries that are taking part in the Bologna process. Further, the predefined, published criteria for accreditation, which include comparable quality standards or fixed quality thresholds, are deemed to be ideally suited for promoting consumer protection, because they appear to give weight to its credibility and efficiency (Westerheijden, 2007a, Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, Westerheijden et al., 2007b).

2.3. RESEARCH GAPS

From the above review of the relevant literature, it is apparent that QA has been at the top of the HE agenda since the 1980s, and QASs have been perceived as a
prominent policy solution for addressing multiple HE problems, or as sets of policy instruments for achieving the different purposes of the various stakeholders. Moreover, even under the same extrinsic demands placed on countries under, for example the Bologna Declaration, it has been evidenced that the European countries adopted different QASs and applied them so as to meet their own needs (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003). To conclude, both convergence in QASs and diversity in some QA elements have been observed. Further, the QAS continues to change owing to their mutable circumstances and the variable requirements of diverse stakeholders. In research terms, these varied developments of QA can be perceived as a dependent variable and on the other hand, independent variables refer to the various demands generated by both the extrinsic and intrinsic dynamics. As far as the two kinds of dynamics are concerned, a number of explanations for the diversity in QASs have been advanced in the literature.

Firstly, extrinsic dynamics cover the factors in relation to broader HE contexts, which include national and international matters. With regard to the international aspect at the European level, the Bologna process has guided the actions associated with the introduction of the European dimension into domestic QASs. Under this influence, the QASs in Europe have gradually come to emphasise the function of transparency and have shifted towards accreditation. Likewise, there are still some localised particularities among different nations. For example, the UK and Denmark showed less willingness to comply with the European requirements through reforming their existing HE systems or adjusting current QASs than Germany and Italy (Westerheijden, 2007a). Furthermore, Denmark and the Netherlands have also developed respective QASs with different pathways, despite having similar characteristics in that they both are small countries, were front-runners in developing the movement for European QA, and were early adopters of the Bologna Declaration (Faber and Huisman, 2003). Westerheijden (2002) argued that possible explanations for the national differences are not only HE related, but also associated with the side-effects created in other public policy domains such as human resources. In addition to the international influences, national factors have also had significant explanatory power in relation to QA development. For example, the quality control models of domestic HE systems were changed owing to the aforementioned challenges encountered by numerous developed nations in the 1980s. As a consequence, most shifted their emphasis towards extrinsic quality and more attention was paid to the
organisational level of HE and the function of accountability. Furthermore, QA methods appeared to switch from those relating to subjective-process assessment and ex ante control to objective-outcome judgements and ex post justifications (Maassen, 1997, Neave, 1998).

In contrast to extrinsic dynamics, intrinsic dynamics refer to the temporal influence exercised by the nature of QA. One example of this mechanism refers to the aforementioned phase model, which leads policy development from one phase towards the next. In this regard, van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) observed a tendency or learning effect which pushed QA functions into change from accountability towards improvement. Another example of the temporal effect on QA development was shown by a study of Neave (1988), in which England and France had experienced different QA change during 1986-1988 owing to their distinct historical backgrounds, even though being under similar extrinsic dynamics. During this process, the English HE system followed a decentralised decision-making approach, which led to the perception of QA development associated with a restrictive control model; whereas in the French case HE institutions were traditionally controlled by the central state and QA transformation was towards a flexible self-control model.

Apart from these two types of explanations, the next set of accounts considers the possibility of a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic dynamics. That is, it is necessary to take various factors into account, although the differentiation between them is by no means certain or certain factors are equally influential. For example, it has been claimed that extrinsic factors, in particular those relating to the national context, could significantly influence the QA development and direct it away from its inherent tendency that results from the intrinsic dynamics (Stensaker et al., 2007, Westerheijden, 2007a).

The explanations for the drivers of QA development seem to have provided a fairly comprehensive understanding of this issue, but there are at least two contestable issues that are identifiable in the literature. The first is related to the triggers of QA change. On the one side, it has been argued that the reason for the introduction of QASs is to address specific HE problems (Westerheijden, 2007b, Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003). The rationale behind this argument is that QASs as policy
solutions were formulated to reduce the pressure encountered by those systems and/or deal with specific policy problems effectively. In other words, the reason for a QAS being chosen as a ‘remedy’ is based on an expectation that it is capable of solving specific problems, which implies that there must be some logic behind the relations between HE problems and QA elements. However on the other hand, Olsen and Maassen (2007) claimed that QASs are ready-made remedies that have already existed before HE problems occur. This perspective was elicited from the garbage can theory and posited that policy entrepreneurs search the HE policy area for a plausible policy problem which they expect the QAS of their preference can solve. This assumption is in contrast to the rational order followed by the previous one, and assumes that policy solutions have existed before policy problems happen or are recognized. Accordingly, the second assumption could explain why in some cases the QA methods adopted (e.g. performance indicators; peer review) were decided upon before the QA purposes (e.g. fitness for purposes; value for money) were established; or why in some QASs the relation between the QA method and the QA purpose lacked any theoretical logic or even sometimes appeared to be contradictory (Harvey and Newton, 2007). Under such circumstances the logic of the emergence of QA change appeared to depend on political rationale rather than on what is appropriate (Harvey and Newton, 2004).

Another controversial issue which is associated with the policy change in European QASs refers to the directions of QA change, i.e. whether QA developments have a tendency towards convergence or become less similar. Empirically, there has been evidence for both scenarios. Support for policy convergence was offered by the study of van Vught and Westerheijden (1994), in which case a general QA model was recognisable in both North American and Western European countries. By contrast, some studies have revealed divergent development and contended that the QA change pattern was dissimilar across nations. The possible explanations involved certain factors such as: individual preferences and interpretations, local contexts, and culture in relation to QA development (Faber and Huisman, 2003, van der Wende, 1999). Brennan and Shah (2000) found that the diversity of QA methods at the institutional and systems levels was evident after an international comparison between 14 countries. In addition to convergence and divergence, there are some other scenarios, which partially result from the increasing degree of interdependence between different countries. In the international context, the influence coming from
other HE systems has made the issue of domestic QAS choices more substantial. With respect to this, Stensaker et al. (2007) suggested that the notion of translation had more explanatory power than the dichotomy between convergence and divergence. Likewise, Vidovich (2004) claimed that commonality and diversity could happen simultaneously. This assumption was based on the research into the experience of the Australian HE system in the 2000s, where certain QA elements were similar to those in the UK, the Netherlands and New Zealand yet at the same time, diversity in these QASs could be also observed. This means that policy convergence and divergence have to be both considered in tandem.

In summary, the contradictory explanations for QA change offer an interesting context for research. In terms of the dependent variable, the tendency of QA development in the European context, it is still controversial regarding whether the QASs in Europe have been becoming increasingly similar or dissimilar since the mid-1980s. Similarly, investigation is still required into whether those QASs should be perceived as responses to specific HE problems based on actors’ rational choices or as ready-made remedies for political conflicts. With respect to the independent variables, i.e. the drivers of QA development, the results of the literature review are by no means conclusive in terms of explaining the emergence of QASs. Particularly, given the possibility that the policymaking process could be affected by the QA elements which are imported from other countries, factors such as extrinsic and intrinsic dynamics have to be reconsidered across spatial and temporal boundaries.
As discussed in chapter two, the research topic relates to change in higher education policies, particularly QASs in Europe, and the key foci are what triggers QA change and what are the patterns regarding this change. To this end, the theories taken into consideration were limited to those which have been applied to analyse or describe the specific policy phenomenon concerned with policy change/development/dynamics, particularly associated with domestic policy elements (e.g. policy settings, policy instruments, policy goals and objectives). Therefore, some alternatives which might emphasise intergovernmental or supranational relationships in the process of European integration (e.g. liberal-intergovernmentalism, two-level games, multi-level games/governance, federalism, functionalism, and neo-functionalism) were not covered in the literature review, owing to their lack of capacity to analyse and measure changes in different policy elements. Likewise, those potential theories that meet the two criteria, for instances, named policy learning (Bennett and Howlett, 1992, Radaelli, 2008), policy transfer/diffusion (Dolowitz, 2000, Evans, 2006, 2009, Marsh and Sharman, 2009, Mooney, 2001) and policy convergence (Busch and Jörgens, 2005, Knill, 2005), are not included as they represent very specific research domains and interests, i.e. either divergence or convergence; either process or outcomes; either policy instruments or policy ideas. In other words, it is difficult to form a comprehensive picture that covers all of these dichotomies. As a result of the preliminary review, this researcher opted for general policy theories rather than those that have served a specific topic (e.g. European integration) or approached a particular interest (e.g. the impact of Europeanization on domestic policy).

In section 3.1, new institutionalism is introduced as a promising approach to analysing the policy process. However, this theoretical approach has some limitations, which are further discussed before moving into the next section 3.2, explaining the theory that is applied for the analysis of the present study.
3.1. NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

3.1.1. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

John (1998) claims there are five contemporary approaches that can be applied to address the majority of policy questions in relation to policy formulation (i.e. how policies are made and implemented), policy variation (i.e. why policies vary between policy sectors and countries) and policy change (i.e. whether policies are stable or change). Among them, institutional analysis is the one having a longest history and however, its initial assumption that policy development was a stable and even static process was perceived as an obstacle to providing explanations for scenarios involving rapid policy change. As a result, the institutional approach with its early forms had only a marginal influence in the field of policy-making. After the slogan 'Bringing the State Back in' coined in the 1980s encouraged scholars to promote the concept of the state being at the centre of their research, the definitions of state and institutions were revised (Hill, 2005, John, 1998). That is, the notion of institution was conceived as not only covering the formal apparatus of government introduced by traditional institutional proponents, involving formal structures and operating procedure, but also encompassing norms and conventions that can affect individual behaviour and human action (John, 1998, 2003).

After the definition of an institution was widened, the early institutional analysis renamed as new institutionalism, embraces several schools of thought and tries to encapsulate various factors affecting policy change (Hall and Taylor, 1996, Portes, 2006). All these amendments have made the new institutional approach not only significantly different compared to its past forms, but they also have allowed for widespread application, thus providing more robust explanations as to why governments facing parallel problems often conduct different policies (John, 1998). Within the theoretical camp, three prominent approaches can be discerned, named rational choice institutionalism (RCI), sociological institutionalism (SI) and historical institutionalism (HI), in the light of their distinctive strengths.

In particular, RCI has shed light particularly on actors and its proponents have believed that their interest-based strategies and goal-oriented behaviour can generate critical consequences in terms of institutional arrangements and thus determine the outcomes of institutional development (Ostrom, 2007, Scharpf, 1997). In contrast to
RCI paying more attention to institutional arrangements, SI focuses on the institutional aspects relating to normative and cognitive ideas and draws attention to individuals' choices and their preferences, which are affected by social constructions, culture and identity (March and Olsen, 1989). HI particularly emphasises the influence of history on policy change, such as policy legacies. Scholars in this school, borrowing explanations of the relations between actors and institutions eclectically from RCI and SI, have posited that not only the current institutional arrangements, political environment and social contexts shape policy decisions, but also pre-existing ones are seen to have an influence on subsequent decision making (Hall and Taylor, 1996, Pierson, 2000, Thelen, 1999).

3.1.2. CRITICISMS OF NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

Despite the fact that these diverse approaches to institutional analysis exhibited capabilities for overcoming the limitations of traditional institutional analysis, these schools still faced criticism. For instance, within the school of RCI the independent variables of institutional change refer to actors’ interaction and interests that are exogenous to the institution. As a result of this exogenous property, the explanatory factors encompass all the possibilities outside the institution, and subsequently result in the empirical applications of RCI being exposed to the criticism that they are unable to measure or explain all the factors affecting actors’ interests or their interactions (John, 1998, Knill, 2001). Sabatier (1991) identified this weakness more specifically by pointing out that the proponents of the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IADF) have paid little attention to policy information that is used in policy-choosing situations. Thus, they have largely ignored how this information impacts upon the definitions of policy problems and the expectations of policy effects. With respect to this, understanding the probable answers to, for example, how serious policy problems are, what factors can affect the problems and what consequences the policy alternative may produce, is crucial to both the actors who are involved in policy subsystems and making policy decisions and those who are outside subsystems, but taking their cues from them. Moreover, the research carried out under the IADF has mainly been preoccupied with either one single type of institution or small groups of institutions at a single level of government, and has thus neglected to analyse intergovernmental policy communities that are composed of a multitude of policy subsystems, such as agencies and interest groups at different levels of government or professional associations and researchers.
Regarding SI, one limitation that has been highlighted relates to the concept of isomorphism or homogeneity, which has been widely employed to describe the phenomenon pertaining to when institutional practices or ideas are diffused across the boundaries of different institutions with little modification. According to the results of various studies, institutional isomorphism does not always happen and the foreign institutional elements that spread from other places are not necessarily going to be adopted by local policy makers or implemented in the local context. Moreover, it has been contended that the concept of institutional isomorphism fails to explain the variation of institutional adaptations, as SI theorists have overlooked the fact that an institution encompasses a variety of policy entrepreneurs. This diversity plays a significant role in terms of political outcomes, insofar as these actors generate varying interactive strategies, which provide the opportunities for breaking the boundaries of institutional structures (Börzel and Risse, 2003, Campbell, 2004, Knill, 2001, Knill and Balint, 2008).

The main criticism of HI rests in the handling of the issue of change. In this regard, firstly, its assumptions about what influences institutional change, by and large, have been far more suited for describing and explaining persistence rather than rapid change or transformation, even though some modifications, such as the concept of critical juncture and the model of punctuated equilibrium, were subsequently added to the mechanism of path dependence. Secondly, the question about what triggers institutional change is still controversial, in that the explanations of path dependence or critical juncture cannot resolve the dispute over whether the initial forces that disrupt the original status quo of an institution and contribute to change within it, are exogenous or endogenous (Campbell, 2004).

3.1.3. SECOND MOVEMENT OF NEW INSTITUTIONALISM
As a response to these criticisms of the different schools, the so-called second movement in institutional approaches emerged in the late 1990s, advocating integration of these different approaches into new institutionalism. Under this lens, the view is that although each school concentrates on a specific dimension of human behaviour, they still share a foundation comprising common characteristics that can offer the possibility of connecting and complementing each other. Therefore, the institutionalists involved in this movement posit that study on intersections of these
diverse schools can enrich the explanatory power of new institutionalism in terms of institutional emergence and change, and can compensate for each of their weaknesses (Campbell, 2004, Hall, 2009, Hall and Taylor, 1996, Thelen, 1999). Here are some examples of the combinations of these schools.

Firstly, according to the observation of Hall and Taylor (1996), although HI appears to exhibit less originality on the issue of how the institution affects individual behaviour than its two counterpart schools in the sense of adopting fundamental ideas from the latter two, there have been some insights elicited from the combination done by the HE proponents. More specifically, in HI actors are conceived of as ‘utility maximizers’ and ‘satisficers’. The definition of the former is similar to how RCI have described individuals, that is, actors seek to maximise the attainment of a set of goals; whilst the latter concept reflects the understanding of SI exponents, according to which individuals follow routines and patterns of behaviour so as to feel satisfied and attain their purposes. In addition, scholars of HI have tended to make connections between RCI and SI in order to generate further theory. For example, the strategy calculus of actors, which has been identified by exponents of RCI as a central part of this school of thought, has been linked to the shaping of the cultural dimensions of institutions as contained in SI, by HI researchers in terms of a temporal perspective. As a consequence, HI is often perceived as an eclectic mixture of RCI and SI (Hall, 2009, Thelen, 1999).

Secondly, a set of examples of the combination of different schools relate to the issue of European integration. Pollack (2005) suggested that during the late 1990s the dialogue between SI and RCI had shed light on the nature of EU policies. For instance, the circumstance in which actors adopt and accept European identities and norms should be perceived as an integration of the process of bargaining and the process of socialisation, with the former emphasised by rationalists who represent RCI and the latter being the focus of constructivists like sociological institutionalists. Likewise, Börzel and Risse (2003) utilised the combination of RCI and SI to explain the process of policy adaptation and the differential impacts of Europeanization on change that happened in member countries. Moreover, in order to address the question of how the process of Europeanization has been affecting national administrative structures, Knill (2001) proposed a modified analysis model that complements HI, with an eclectic view of the institution-based approach of a
sociological perspective and the agency-based approach of rationalist perspectives. Other examples include a study adopting a combination of RCI and HI (Stacey and Rittberger, 2003) and one comparing European HE systems through HI, in which it is claimed that this approach can balance the weaknesses of RCI and normative institutionalism (Kogan et al., 2006).

In order to further confirm the proposal that integrating different schools belonging to new institutionalism is a promising approach for constructing an appropriate theoretical framework for the present study, here some explanations of how the weaknesses of the respective schools might be compensated for by adopting this strategy are put forward.

The first refers to a key limitation recognised in HI, where it is argued that its proponents have seldom paid attention to the strategies that actors utilise at the institutional micro-level, such as how policy entrepreneurs convince decision-makers to support their policy alternatives (Bland, 2009). In contrast, RCI theorists have concentrated on the issue around actors and strategies such as roles and interactions, and have also focused on ascertaining the relations between individual behaviour and institutions. In this regard, there is a multiple level approach of RCI that analyses four levels of action areas and each level covers seven types of rules that individuals use, concerning participants, position, action, information, control, costs and benefits as well as outcomes (Ostrom, 2007). Scholars using the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework adopt the actor-based perspective to demonstrate the situation where changes in rules can directly affect individual behaviour, which in turn can have an impact on governmental policy decisions. The classification of institutional rules and actions that has been developed by Ostrom and her colleagues enjoys considerable advantages in that it narrows the scope of independent variables concerning policy changes (John, 1998, p. 126), particularly in terms of the action area where institutional rules determine the attributes in relation to decision situations and individuals’ values and resources (Sabatier, 1991). Given this, this researcher contends that amalgamating the well-defined variables of RCI regarding individuals’ actions with the HI’s emphasis on the temporal aspect would help to compensate for some of the shortcomings contained in the latter school. In addition, research under the HI lens has also paid relatively little attention to the topic of framing policy problems and agendas and thus has tended to ignore certain crucial
matters, such as how a significant social and economic problem that policy actors seek to address is defined, how policy actors conceive the content of policy alternatives and how they make their policy choices (Bland, 2009). Regarding this point, SI scholars have focused on the influence of culture and ideas and this could compensate for the weakness of HI proponents’ concentration on policy legacies and formal institutional arrangements.

Secondly, SI and RCI involve two different logics in relation to how actors make decisions and behave. In general, scholars under the new institutionalism umbrella accept the assumption that the institution constrains actions in terms of actors’ preferences and expectations, the range of alternatives that actors can choose from and how they make sense of their situation, whereas the definition of the institution and the ways in which institutional influence occurs differentiate the schools. In this regard, RCI proponents tend to take the view that the institution comprises sets of formal rules and procedures and moreover, that actors behave on the basis of the logic of consequentiality, thus implying that they rationally choose the action which consequently can maximise their benefit and interest or enhance the means-end efficiency of their organisations. This approach has focused on individuals’ strategic calculations and indeed has provided insights, particularly at the micro-level, into what actors do to establish and modify the institution, in order to advance and fulfil their self-interest (Hall and Taylor, 1996, Scharpf, 1997). However, the self-interest assumption is problematic for it has difficulties in providing convincing explanations as to why actors make specific moves in particular situations (John, 1998), or accounting for the uncertainty and inefficiency that surround institutional change (Hall and Taylor, 1996). By contrast, the definition of institutions in the SI approach is broader than that of RCI, for SI sees institution to include not only structures but also attitudes and values. In turn, the main assumption within the SI perspective is that the institution is furnished with both normative and cognitive templates for the actors’ actions and interpretations, both of which are contributed according to their value, preference, self-image and identity formulated in social and cultural contexts. In addition, actors are perceived as behaving based on the logic of appropriateness, that is, they take actions when the consequence can be expected to enhance social legitimacy in relation to either their organisation or its participants (Hall and Taylor, 1996). As March and Olsen (2004) argued, the logic of appropriateness applied in SI is more applicable for understanding complex problems regarding human actions in a
longer time frame than the logic of consequentiality adopted in RCI research, which is best suited to analysing behaviour exhibited over a shorter time period. Furthermore, the assumptions of SI, when compared with those of RCI, have the advantage of providing a clearer explanation regarding the development of institutions, such as their creation or dissolution, whilst they are surpassed by the latter in terms of institutional influence and characteristics (Peters, 2005).

With the increasingly common phenomenon of institutional arrangements or ideas travelling from one country to another, HI has been adopted to analyse the influence of foreign ideas and beliefs on domestic decision-making and policy change. For example, Pierson (1996) utilised HI to explore the issue of European integration by examining the evolution process of social policy in the European Community. The results of this type of cross-national research shed light on the fundamental concepts of policy process, particularly in relation to learning, the travel of ideas or policy diffusion and transfer, as well as on certain important considerations, such as how policy information and ideas transfer and what roles the intergovernmental and supranational policy community play during the process of policy development. These proponents also contend that apart from institutional arrangements the diffusion of ideas is another significant influence on institutional change (Bland, 2009, Peters et al., 2005). In this regard, the emergence of another school under the new institutionalism banner, entitled discursive institutionalism, has fruitfully contributed to this research topic, and scholars working within this frame have highlighted the content and usage relating to sets of policy ideas and values in the process of policy formulation and communication (Schmidt, 2008, Schmidt and Radaelli, 2004). This researcher contends that all of the benefits contributed by the proponents in the schools of HI or discursive institutionalism can adequately compensate for the weakness of RCI, in terms of ‘ex ante hypotheses’ as mentioned by Knill (2001, p. 25).

In the next section an approach to institutional analysis is considered that belongs to the second movement of new institutionalism. Its proponents attempt to blur the boundaries between different schools under the new institutionalist umbrella, so as to eliminate some of the analytical problems discussed above.
3.2. THE THEORY OF CAMPBELL

Campbell’s book (2004), Institutional Change and Globalization, has been viewed as one of the main contributions of the second movement that offers an analytical framework for identifying and explaining institutional change by integrating insights from the three schools, namely rational-choice, sociological and historical institutionalism. Crouch et al. (2007, pp. 527-8) points out that Campbell has made two significant contributions to institutionalism: the perspective of actor-centred institutionalism and the concept of ‘within-system incremental change’. In respect to the first, not only does he adopt actor-centred institutionalism to provide leeway for creative human agency in institutions and to avoid the accusation of determinism, which institutionalism has been faced with, but also he has moved things forward by applying this approach to institutional change in both a historical context and one of globalisation. Secondly, Campbell combines internal challenges and external shocks, both of which have been used to explain the triggering of institutional change for periods of long duration and he also makes use of the term ‘within-system incremental change’ to describe gradually accumulating change in institutions. This concept enables analysts to account for radical change based on the premise of path-dependence and the idea that an institution is composed of bundles of dimensions. In this section some fundamental ideas attributed to Campbell are discussed in four parts: definitions of institutions and change; the constraints of the institution; the initiative of actors and the mechanisms of institutional change.

3.2.1. INSTITUTIONAL CONSTELLATION AND CHANGE

The conception of an institution is a much debated issue in new institutionalism and the different schools have generated several definitions that are clearly distinguishable from each other, depending on their respective interests. For example North (1990), under the viewpoint of the RCI, contended that institutions consist of formal and informal rules as well as compliance procedures, whilst Scott (2008), taking an SI perspective, paid most attention to the normative and culture-cognitive elements of institutions. Instead of creating another definition adding to the wide variety already in existence, Campbell advocated a unified understanding in which three of the institutional approaches are used to complement each other and thus, in his opinion institutions are:
‘sets of formal and informal rules, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and systems of meaning that define the context within which people and organizations interact. They result in durable practices that are legitimated by widely held beliefs’ (Campbell, 2004, p. 174).

Campbell (2004, pp. 35-37) emphasised the notion of ‘sets’, the implication being that an institution is multidimensional, comprising a bundle of institutional dimensions and these dimensions may relate to formal and informal rules; national economies that historical institutionalists often focus on; compliance procedures; or small groups of people in an institution that rational choice institutionalists are often interested in. Equally, taken-for-granted cultural norms, cognitive schema, and processes of reproduction that organisational institutionalists always emphasise can be an alternative configuration. This kind of inclusive definition of institutions inevitably has attracted similar criticism to that which RCI has incurred: there are too many aspects of political life, such as formal rules, norms and taken-for-granted values, which constitute an institution. In this regard, John (1998) pointed out that when such a wide ranging definition is adopted, it is difficult for institutional analysts to disentangle the effects of formal rules, cultures as well as political interests and ideologies. However, Campbell (ibid, pp. 36-41) claimed that what constitutes an institution and which dimensions should be highlighted and tracked over time in relation to institutional change are open questions based on the analysts’ own theoretical perspectives and the levels of analysis chosen. This kind of flexibility in Campbell’s theory does offer a promising approach to blending the different schools together in order to compensate for the limitations of the separate schools of new institutionalism.

In addition, the concept of multidimensional institutions is also imperative when a researcher wants to ascertain the answers to questions related to the extent to which institutional change takes place, identifying patterns of change and explaining what constitutes institutional change. The first is concerned with degrees of change and in this context patterns of institutional changes can be identified on a continuum that ranges from evolutionary to revolutionary change. Evolutionary change is characterised as an incremental process, during which actors are constrained by already given institutional settings, and the institution adjusts through actors’ learning and reflection in small steps. Moreover, in these circumstances the
institution evolves continuously in one specific direction, with only a few institutional dimensions experiencing change. In contrast, revolutionary change is much more rapid and profound than evolutionary change, in that the institution is confronted with simultaneous transformation across most of its institutional dimensions. An institution subject to this type of change, which is similar to the pattern of discontinuous change and that of punctuated equilibrium, may be suddenly interrupted by crises or events in the first place and then actors are required to react and create new institutional arrangements in a relatively short period of time, yet eventually equilibrium or an incremental pace of change will be restored.

Secondly, the multidimensional approach is also helpful in explaining reasons for institutional change, which remains a contested issue in the different institutional approaches. In this regard, it has been widely accepted that the factors that cause substantial disruption to institutions should be classified as either exogenous or endogenous and in addition, most new institutionalist scholars appear to accept the incremental notions of either evolutionary change or punctuated-equilibrium change (Harty, 2005). Moreover, exogenous shocks are seen to normally result from international events, such as economic crises and wars, whilst endogenous factors refer to problems involving internal structures and processes (Lecours, 2005). In relation to these, Campbell (2004) appeared to pay most attention to endogenous factors owing to his interest in predicting institutional change. Yet he still acknowledges that critical events and turning points are crucial for determining how such institutional change occurs. In more detail, he contended that the diversity of and the interaction among these dimensions within the constellation of an institution can bring endogenous pressure on decision-makers to take actions to change the current institutional arrangements. This is compatible with a claim made by Scott (2008) that despite the fact that some dimensions of an institution may dominate in the process of institutional change, the dimensions often affect each other and even work in combination. Two types of triggers can be identified regarding the generation of endogenous pressure, which subsequently contributes to institutional change. One of these relates to different speeds of change being experienced in each dimension, which produces time lags followed by internal tensions within the institution that push decision-makers to stimulate change in order to diminish these. This explanation can be found originally in the literature from the schools of new institutionalism. For example, some proponents have demonstrated that formal rules
change more rapidly than informal institutional dimensions and others have revealed that culture-cognitive and normative dimensions change more quickly than formal dimensions (Campbell, 2004). Moreover, North (1990) suggested that when change within informal dimensions occurs at a slower speed than that in formal ones, this can impose restraints on the latter, whereas when the informal components change faster than the formal elements, the former act as a catalyst for changes in the latter. In other words, his findings have shown that the lag and the sequence generated from diverse speeds can lead to different effects on institutional change.

Apart from the lags among the dimensions, the inconsistency that emerges when two conflicting ideas, such as the ideas of bureaucratic and professional logic, are present in an institution, can lead to institutional problems as actors may sense pressure or even a crisis. As a result, policy entrepreneurs seek new institutional arrangements and introduce innovations to the decision-making arena, where they advocate that these should become accepted practice (Campbell, 2004). During this process, actors play vital roles as their perceptions of the current circumstances are individually shaped and thus may be diverse, particularly in relation to whether crises or problems are recognised, how serious an issue is perceived to be and which solution should be followed for its resolution. In this regard, Campbell cautions that there is no guarantee that pressure will always precipitate change as tensions within institutions are socially constructed.

Campbell believes that endogenous factors regarding interactions between dimensions, such as inconsistencies in individuals’ perceptions and the lags resulting from different speeds of development, can lead to tensions and generate effects that both facilitate and constrain change. This dual function is demonstrated in his study regarding the effects of institutional dimensions on the process of globalisation, where, initially, ideational dimensions are found to provide impetus towards neoliberal tax reform and subsequently, regulative dimensions constrain the unlimited race to the bottom associated with reduction in taxation, with eventually both these types of dimensions working in tandem to restrict the innovative degree of policy programmes. Campbell (2004, pp. 8; 173-4) termed this as being ‘constrained innovation’, where on the one hand, institutional structures can constrain the range of options available for actors to choose, whilst on the other hand, the institution can also provide opportunities that enable actors to enjoy some leeway in how to act and
creatively transform the previous circumstance in spite of these institutional constraints. This term synthesises two concepts, i.e. constraints of structures and innovation of actors, which have been adopted from different schools of new institutionalism as the major clusters of variables affecting institutional change in both its evolutionary and revolutionary forms (Campbell, 2004, Crouch et al., 2007).

The following two sections are devoted to addressing the seemingly paradoxical relationship in which institutional structures constrain actors’ behaviour (subsection 3.2.2), whilst at the same time facilitating them in creating institutional innovations (subsection 3.2.3).

3.2.2. STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINT

Apart from building on the definition of the institutional constellation, Campbell (2004) highlighted the role of actors in the process of institutional change. This position is similar to the propositions contained in RCI (Ostrom, 2007), but it is different from this camp in emphasising that actors are constrained by institutional conditions. According to Campbell, institutions influence what actors want and what they believe. What actors want is related to interests, which RCI proponents treat as being objectively given by the institutional context. What actors believe refers to ideas that have been perceived by SI as being subjectively constructed. In Campbell’s theoretical sense, however, interests and ideas are interconnected. Both are socially constructed by individuals or groups within institutional constraints that are imposed on these actors (Campbell, 2004, pp. 90-1).

More specifically, interests are argued to be a particular type of ideas among, for example, identities, norms, values and culture; all of which are social constructions that constrain actor behaviour. Campbell, unlike protagonists of rational choice theory or actor-centred institutionalism such as Scharpf (1997), maintained that interests, which are constructed on the basis of the interpretation of the individual or group’s situation, are not given (ibid, pp. 90-2). In other words, interests are not a materially derived notion, but rather a perception of actors’ material circumstances. Regulations of taxation, for example, were observed to render actors acting in certain ways rather than others, due to incentives and interests that would be perceived differently by employees, businesses and politicians. That is, ‘regulative institutions shape people’s perceptions of their interests’ in fundamental ways (ibid, p. 149), and

59
it implies that actors’ interests and preferences should not be considered as fixed or exogenous. In this vein, actor behaviour, including instrumental or strategic action, is conceived of as a reflection of ideational constraints involving different kinds of ideas and the perceptions of interests (Crouch et al., 2007, p. 559). As actors’ conduct is not merely determined by material conditions, it is suggested that ideas could play a significant role in institutional analysis (Blyth, 2003, Hay, 2004).

In relation to ideas, Campbell (2004, pp. 90-4) developed a typology which can assist in identifying which types of ideas carry most weight in the process of institutional change and in addressing the questions how and when ideas matter in the policy process. Two criteria, namely articulation and orientation towards outcomes, are employed to distinguish four types of ideas each of which exert unique effects on institutions. Under the criterion of articulation, relating to the extent to which ideas are expressed, two types of ideas are distinguished: foreground and background forms.

The former refers to the ideas that are applied by decision-makers to challenge the status quo in the institution. In order to gain access into the decision-making arena and to facilitate institutional change, foreground ideas have to be explicitly articulated as clearly and convincingly as possible. Background ideas, on the other hand, are not as obvious as foreground ideas, because they are often well-institutionalised and remain unquestioned and as a consequence influence decision-making debates in a tacit way. As such, they can often exert constraints on actors’ perceptions and interpretations through normative or cognitive locks, which can result in changes in the institution being path-dependent in that there is a limit to the range of options available for actors to choose from. The second criterion refers to the extent to which ideas are aligned with outcomes resulting from actions undertaken by actors. In this regard, ideas can be divided into those which are cognitive and the others being normative, both stemming from Scott’s (2008) institutional pillars. Cognitive ideas relate to actors’ subjective understanding or interpretation, such as descriptions and theoretical analyses, and cause-and-effect relations can often be specified between these ideas and the outcomes resulting from actions. Normative ideas tend to be non-outcome oriented and refer to the expectations regarding what people value as appropriate and legitimate, i.e. what is good and one ought to do (Campbell, 2004). The four types of ideas emanating from
these considerations and the corresponding types of actors who manipulate and convey each are demonstrated in table 3-1.

Table 3- 1: Types of ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreground ideas</th>
<th>Background ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- articulated concepts and theories;</td>
<td>- underlying assumption;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cognitive ideas**
- outcome oriented;

**Programmes**
- Decision-makkers

**Paradigms**
- Theorists

**Normative ideas**
- non-outcome oriented;

**Frames**
- Framers

**Public sentiments**
- Constituents

Source: Adapted from Campbell (2004, p. 94)

Programmes are the ideas that combine the features of foreground and cognitive forms. Foreground ideas are constrained by those prevailing in the background and as cognitive ideas they are involved with applications of concepts/theories so as to produce prescriptions for a clear course of action, which can resolve specific problems or challenge the status quo (ibid, pp. 94, 151). In this vein, programmes initially function as facilitators for institutional change, before becoming part of the current institutional arrangements. Gradually they become institutionalised and start functioning as constraints that reinforce their influence, thereby limiting the range of options available for decision-makers (ibid, pp. 107-8). Programmes can refer to policy agendas or alternatives that have yet to be legitimised as authorised regulations, and one dominant example in the United States and Sweden during the 1930s was the macroeconomic agenda employing Keynesian ideas (ibid, pp. 151-3).

Decision-makers, such as politicians and bureaucrats in the legislative and executive branches of government, are the type of actors that are mostly associated with conveying this kind of ideas (ibid, pp. 101-2).

Frames are the ideas with foreground and normative attributes and are differentiated from programmes by their normative quality. Having the property of foreground ideas enables frames to facilitate or constrain change in programmes, by generating new ideas that can be accepted by the decision-makers who legitimise programmes. In addition, frames have to be consistent with background ideas, particularly those
categorised as public sentiments, which refers to the prevalent opinions and ideas advocated by constituencies (ibid, pp. 98-100). Framers, such as spin doctors, advertising firms, political handlers, and campaign managers, play multiple roles in the process of acting as ‘carriers’ who conveying ideas, ‘gatekeepers’ who control the entry of ideas into decision making arenas, and ‘transformers’ who generate new ideas by blending several old ones and producing new ones (ibid, pp. 102-3).

Frames are manipulated as strategic symbols by framers in order to fulfil their purposes, that is, to either facilitate or constrain change. For example, frames can be generated through raising memories of historical experiences, defining a current situation as a ‘crisis’ involving serious problems, or blending several old ideas into a new one. For example, republicans in the United States framed the 1981 tax reform through combining suspicions of big government and beliefs in family and freedom (ibid, pp. 154-5). Thus, it is possible to see that any programme can be framed variously owing to the involvement of different framers or being considered in different contexts. For instance, the Thatcher government justified neo-liberalism in terms of the virtues of the free market, whilst Prime Ministers John Major and Tony Blair framed this idea in the contexts of individualism and globalization, respectively (ibid, p. 99).

Paradigms are closely associated with the concept of institutional logic, which is used by SI scholars (ibid, p. 94). Examples of these include a particular view about the structure of family systems or a specific assumption about the economy that requires more governmental intervention, so as to achieve maximum economic performance. The cognitive quality of paradigms exhibits itself in the taken-for-granted meanings of how the world works and this can exert ‘cognitive locks’, which limits actors’ understanding. Nevertheless, their background quality can influence institutional change in a more subtle but substantial way than foreground ideas, in that they can constrain the way programmes are articulated and limit the extent to which decision-makers perceive programmes as useful and worth considering (ibid, pp. 108-9, 156). The actors who generate and convey paradigms appear to be theorists, such as academics or intellectuals, and the ideas that they advocate can have huge consequences for programmes in terms of: defining the scope of the policy debate, possible solutions for policy problems and policy goals (ibid, pp. 101-2).
Public sentiments are defined as normative background ideas, which comprise logic of appropriateness and normative assumptions, and are held by the largest segment of constituencies, examples being national culture and norms, collective-shared expectations and identity, and other public opinions and values. They are usually perceived through public opinion polls and other forms of feedback from the constituencies of decision-makers (ibid, pp. 96-8). Constituency refers to the collective actors who convey public sentiments and they can be the general public, electorate, or even the decision making elites who have votes on policy matters. Moreover, national governments can also be the constituents in the cases associated with international communities, such as the European Single Market Project (ibid, p. 104).

These ideas can exert ‘normative locks’ that constrain both the public and decision-makers’ perceptions of programmes and influence whether the latter will advocate specific ideas, as programmes are deemed valid only if they can conform to public sentiments, be acceptable for policy agendas, prevail in the decision-making arena during the formulating stage and can be carried out smoothly during the implementation stage (ibid, p. 109). One example of public sentiments affecting how decision-makers perceive their interests can be seen in the late 1970s in the United States, where neo-liberalism received much political support in the decision making arena, because the public strongly expressed the view that big government was wasteful and corrupt (ibid, pp. 159-63).

3.2.3. CREATIVE INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

As mentioned in subsection 3.2.2, Campbell’s theory deviates from rational choice theory in the conception of interests. This leads to another deviation from the RCI camp in relation to the understanding of actors. Drawing upon the assumption that institutions and actors are mutually constitutive from historical institutionalism (G. Jackson, 2010), Campbell argued that, on the one hand, institutions tend to lock in actors’ behaviour and limit the range of options available to them from changing, yet on the other, institutional constellations enable institutional entrepreneurs to create innovations and opportunities for change. He termed this ‘constrained innovation’ (Campbell, 2004, p. 173).
Institutional entrepreneurs play a crucial role in creating innovations and making them stick in the process of institutional change. In accordance with Campbell’s theory (2004), they are perceived not only as rule-takers but also as rule-makers; a notion that builds on different schools of thought. More specifically, aligned with rational choice theory, Campbell agreed that interest-driven actors are capable of changing institutions through their rational, instrumental, strategic action. Their behaviour and strategies appear to be influenced by the amount of information provided and the degree of certainty about other actors’ actions (Hall and Taylor, 1996). In contrast, the SI exponents tend to pay relatively more attention to actors, insofar as these scholars tend to believe that the constraints imposed by the normative and cultural dimensions of institutions are too powerful for actors to resist. The possibility of breaking the existing institutional structure appeared to be overlooked (Knill, 2001). In short, the theoretical synthesis considers the relationship between institutions and actors as consisting of a complex set of mutual interactions.

The mutually constitutive relation leads to the properties of actors (e.g. perceptions and capacities) that are by no means assumed or fixed. They may vary over time and place and therefore, it is argued that the understanding of institutional entrepreneurs cannot be completed without considering their specific institutional context. Regarding this, Campbell (2004, pp. 74-7) maintained that for understanding the role of institutional entrepreneurs, their position in a set of social relationships in the institutional constellation is pivotal. It can serve to explain why entrepreneurs create and opt for one specific policy alternative rather than another, and why some innovations are more evolutionary in nature than others.

In relation to actors’ perceptions, such as self-interests and preferences, they are seen as the reflection of their institutional locations (ibid, pp. 114-9). The perceptual process is concerned with the ways in which policy entrepreneurs define policy problems, interpret their current situation and evaluate possible solutions. It is crucial as the process relates to what policy alternatives would be chosen and what decision makers would stand for. Generally speaking, Campbell contended that policy entrepreneurs with different institutional positions tend to differently perceive uncertainty, evaluate their self-interests and interpret feasible alternatives. In addition, it is implied that the view of rationality held by actors making decisions is a mixture of the logic of instrumentalism and that of appropriateness. That is, all action
involves some combination of rational calculations and non-rational premises with some value orientation.

With respect to actors’ capacities, this is considered as a cluster, consisting of sub-concepts that are concerned with the extent to which actors can access the critical decision-making arenas, garner political and financial support and convince decision makers to accept their institutional innovations or policy alternatives. In particular, the capacity to access resource is a prominent one, related to material interests and political power (ibid, pp. 177-80). Repertoire is another property of actors, determined by their institutional location. The institutional entrepreneurs that have more connections with different social networks and organisational fields appear to possess a more extensive repertoire (ibid, pp. 74-7). Campbell’s contention was that the actors that possess higher capacities (i.e. greater resources and a more extensive repertoire) are more capable of articulating and demonstrating their innovations deliberately, and thus more likely to convince decision makers that the alternatives are promising in addressing the current problems. Eventually, they have more opportunities to push their innovations into the key decision-making arenas and make them become institutionalised. In sum, it is assumed that the amount of capacity that actors possess is positively correlated with how creative and compelling the innovations would be and how revolutionary the institutional change can be.

3.2.4. MECHANISMS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

In addition to the processes of perceptions and the creation of innovations, Campbell (2004) devoted substantial attention to describing the process of path-dependent institutional change. To explain this kind of change processes, two underlying mechanisms, bricolage and translation, was utilised. Campbell (2004, pp. 82-5) believed that the development of institutions engages either of the two mechanisms and is influenced by: local institutional context, power struggles, leadership support, institutional logics of action, implementation capacities and entrepreneurs’ repertoire. The diversity of the combinations of these factors could serve to explain the phenomenon of which policy entrepreneurs adopt similar ideas yet end with different scenarios.

Bricolage is assigned to the scenario where institutional entrepreneurs recombine existing principles and practices in the current institution to create institutional
innovations. As a consequence, the new institutional form would resemble its predecessor as inheriting a substantial number of elements from the previous one. Although this process is similar to the biological process of genetic mutation, it is by no means suggested that institutional change is always evolutionary, in terms of evolving in a path-dependent way. One exception to this refers to the process in which certain institutional dimensions were initially undergoing the bricolage mechanism at an evolutionary pace yet begin to interact with each other and in turn triggering the whole institution into a revolutionary pace of change. Furthermore, this mechanism could be defined as two subtypes. Substantive bricolage refers to the process where entrepreneurs recombine locally available elements in the institution based on the logic of instrumentality, which Portes (2006) named the calculative approach or what March and Olsen (2004) termed the logic of consequentiality, containing the implicit assumption that this recombination can successfully address substantive problems. The other type, symbolic bricolage, describes the process where entrepreneurs follow the logic of appropriateness to recombine symbolic or cultural elements in an existing institution, with the general aim being to conform to the prevailing dominant normative and cognitive dimensions of extant institutions (Campbell, 2004, pp. 69-74).

The second mechanism (translation) refers to the process of recombining existing institutional practices and principles with new ones originating from elsewhere. This mechanism is often associated with the concept of diffusion, which (as discussed in section 3.1) is employed to provide explanations for cross-national policy transfer or the travelling policy ideas which are conveyed by politicians, academics, international organisations or other institutional entrepreneurs. Regarding the process of diffusion, Campbell (ibid, pp. 77-79) raised doubt regarding the contention suggested by SI scholars that the process of diffusion inevitably results in homogeneous or isomorphic outcomes in relation to policy change. In contrast, he argued that innovative elements diffusing from outside are rarely adopted without any modification. Institutional entrepreneurs will have to revise the foreign elements based on what is being experienced in the current institution in order to ensure the fitness for the recipient entity. Moreover, the imported institutional arrangements which are suitably altered would gradually become institutionalised, yet those which diffuse externally and cannot fit with the existing institutional context to a reasonable extent would be unable to be translated into subsequent practice successfully.
Accordingly, Campbell (2004) contended that successful diffusion is never a one-step process, yet one involving translation. Furthermore, given the perspective covering both the process of translation and the nature of multi-dimensional institutions, it can be expected that the most common scenario of institutional change is that some institutional dimensions experience homogeneous diffusion, whilst others are subject to heterogeneity. In addition, revolutionary change is more likely to be experienced in those cases where the proportion of institutional dimensions associated with foreign elements is greater than that with local ones.

To sum up, what determines change is one of the key contested questions under the umbrella of new institutionalism. Regarding this, Campbell argued that the logic of instrumentality that focuses on the distribution of resource/power and the logic of appropriateness that concentrates on the interpretation of ideas, should both be taken into account when analysing institutional change. Moreover, he claimed that by applying this synthesis two issues can be investigated more fruitfully: what triggers institutional change, and how to measure the extent of the change.

With respect to the question of whether change is led by exogenous or endogenous factors, Campbell established a close link between ideas and actors, that is, which ideas actors advocate and how they act, in terms of such matters as defining the problem, framing the solution for it and convincing decision-makers to adopt their remedy, with the actors being constrained by both their capacities and where they are located in the institution. Given this interplay between ideas and actors, when either external or internal forces provoke an institutional problem, how it is addressed and the nature of any change that is triggered are associated with the interpretation by the actors, which in turn is governed by their ideational mindset and the regulatory situation.

The last issue that Campbell’s theory has been offering to the debates within the new institutionalism camp relates to the pattern of change or how to distinguish degrees of institutional change. Addressing this gap in the institutional school’s framework, Campbell suggested that the concept of multi-dimensional institutions can benefit the analysis of institutional change, particularly in detecting how many dimensions in a layered institution have been altered within a given time frame. In addition, adopting this approach allows for improved explanations in terms of the processes of both
radical institutional and path-dependent change, thereby shedding light on the key differences to be found in evolutionary and revolutionary scenarios. More specifically, the underlying mechanisms, identified by Campbell as bricolage and translation, can be investigated so as to establish the ways entrepreneurs combine existing and foreign institutional elements to create plausible innovations for changing the present institution. According to this, institutional change is normally the incremental evolutionary result of path-dependence and the bricolage mechanism. However, sometimes an institution can experience revolutionary change, particularly when foreign institutional elements are diffused from outside and then successfully transferred into the present institution. Furthermore, degrees of institutional change are perceived as being dependent upon: the actors who engaged in the process of bricolage or translation, where they are located in the institution and which ideas they convey.
The research design of the present study generally follows a deductive measurement procedure which consists of three steps: conceptualisation, operationalisation and the application of operational definitions to collect the data (Neuman, 2005), and these guide the contents of chapter four. A flow chart of the process is demonstrated in figure 4-1.

**Figure 4-1: The process of deductive reasoning in this thesis**

This chapter explains the adjustment of the chosen theoretical framework to the specific context of this study. Firstly, an analytical framework is formulated on the
basis of the theory of Campbell (2004) and research propositions are correspondingly to be drawn up, followed by specific research questions. In section 4.2 the second stage of research design is introduced, where the operationalisation of the research serves to make a logical link between the conceptual and the empirical dimensions. Lastly, section 4.3 gives the details of how the empirical work is to be conducted so as to be able to address the research questions developed in section 4.1. The data collection and analysis procedures as well as the criteria for interpreting the findings will be covered in that section as well.

4.1. THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The succeeding subsections comprise: the analytical framework that is derived from new institutionalism and Campbell’s ideas (subsection 4.1.1); the theories specifying certain fundamental variables of the framework and the relationships amongst these variables (subsection 4.1.2); and the compiling of appropriate research questions for testing whether these theories can be substantiated in relation to capturing QA change (subsection 4.1.3).

4.1.1. THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

There are two prominent clusters of variables in the framework (figure 4.2): the constellation of European HE systems and the patterns of policy change. The former is perceived as comprising explanatory variables that influence the processes and patterns of policy change, and the latter is conceived of as forming the dependent variables in the study.
The constellation of HE systems and QASs

Scholars of new institutionalism, either historical institutionalism (Kogan et al., 2006) or sociological institutionalism (Meyer et al., 2007), tend to take the concept of multi-dimensional institutions into account. Knill (2001) contended that this approach would benefit the analysis of Europeanization as including two kinds of interactions: those between the supranational and member-state levels, such as the idea diffusion of EU policies to domestic policies; and those between member states, for example, mutual learning across different countries. In this vein, a HE system could be conceived of as an institution which comprises a compound of formal rules and informal norms and values. In line with Campbell’s ideas, the constitution of European HE systems can be taken as being associated with the HE system at the European level as well as domestic HE systems at the national level.

A QAS would be perceived as being one part of a HE system composed of numerous schemes, rules, norms and values. In addition, as being a set of HE policies, a new QAS could be conceived of as an output of a policymaking process and this formulation is directly influenced by the current QAS (i.e. the predecessor of the new QAS), other relevant HE policies in the same HE system and even by those QASs in

Figure 4-2: The conceptual framework
other HE systems. More specifically, some elements associated with the local current QAS and other foreign QASs, such as purposes/functions, approaches, and regulations, would contribute to the new QAS through the mechanisms of path-dependence, policy learning, diffusion and/or policy convergence. In other words, the development of a new QAS is connected with its predecessors in particular from the historical perspective, with the requirements generated at the European level and with some successful experiences of QASs that have emerged from the HE systems of pioneer countries.

**Patterns of change in the national QAS**

This definition of the dependent variable in this study refers to the pattern of policy change which could be divided into three sub-concepts: the emergence of change, the degree of change and the direction of change. The first sub-concept is associated with one of the debates, which has been covered at the end of chapter two, the driver(s) of QA change. According to the literature, there have been two scenarios regarding what triggers policy change. One is that policy entrepreneurs advocate a QAS as a policy solution for addressing specific HE problems, and correspondingly, a new QAS would be formulated on the basis of theoretical logic and be influenced by their rational choice activities. Alternatively, their activities could be part of political strategies for pursuing specific purposes in the policymaking process of a QAS, which have been explained by ‘garbage can theory’. The second sub-concept, the degree of QA change, includes two categories: evolutionary or revolutionary QA change in nature. More specifically, it refers to the differences between two QASs experienced in one particular country at different points in time. The concern of the third sub-concept is the direction of QA change. It can be differentiated as either convergent QA change, where QASs in two places become increasingly similar, or divergent QA change that refers to increasing differences.

**4.1.2. THE THEORIES AND PROPOSITIONS**

The overarching research question is: how does the HE system influence the pattern of policy change regarding QASs in the European context? With respect to the relationship between institutions and policy change, the central idea in Campbell’s new institutionalism refers to ‘constrained innovation’, which involves two main tenets: ‘structural constraint’ and ‘institutional innovation’. In the following part, five propositions are formulated, which stem from Campbell’s work (2004), having direct
connections with the phenomenon of QA change in relation to the literature review in chapter two.

Structural constraint
A HE system, defined as a multi-dimensional institution, could be accordingly divided into several parts, the composition of which could be used to differentiate a HE system from another. This assumption, which was discussed in subsection 3.2.1, highlights the importance of the identification of institutional dimensions in HE. In this study those that compose the constellation of the HE system are taken as two interwoven dimensions, namely regulative and ideational. The former denotes formal rules, laws, sanctions and those laid down by an authority and other HE policies; whereas ideational dimensions consist of cognitive (e.g. meanings and values) and normative ideas (i.e. norms and expectations). These dimensions exert their influence together, thereby constraining policy entrepreneurs’ activities as well as the extent of institutional change.

According to Campbell’s proposition 10 (2004, p. 180), the tendency to maintain current regulations, norms or identities in an institution is referred to as an innate self-reinforcing effect, the extent of which would depend on how consistent those institutional dimensions are and how long they have existed. The first contention inferred from the above proposition is that HE policy change is less likely to occur in the process of agenda setting when the dimensions of a HE system are compatible with each other. That is, the sense of crises, pressure or problems could be generated by sensible contradictions among institutional elements, such as those within a QAS and HE system. Such institutional tension would push policy entrepreneurs into seeking QA innovations and stimulating the policy change, in order to relieve this pressure. The second argument is that the length of time during which a particular QAS has been in place can influence the possibility of the current scheme being changed again. In other words, QA change is less likely to happen in a HE system where the current QAS has been institutionalised for a longer duration of sustained policy implementation. The causal relationship between the emergence of new QA elements and the two features (i.e. consistency and the duration of policy implementation) associated with the self-reinforcing effect lead to the following two propositions. In these two casual linkages, QA innovations refer to foreign QA elements or local HE policy ideas and regulations, which are policy alternatives or
programmes that could be on the policy agenda; on the other hand, QA schemes are those that legitimately become part of the new QA system.

Proposition one: If policy innovations in QA schemes are more consistent with the currently existing QA system, then they are more likely to be adopted as new QA elements in the process of policy formulation.

Proposition two: If QA schemes are more consistent with the currently existing QA system, then they are more likely to be sustained over time in the process of policy implementation.

Inconsistency does not only influence the emergence of policy change but also the degrees of the change and Campbell’s proposition 11 (2004, p. 181) denoted an assumption about ‘fitness’ of innovations for the prevailing institution. In this regard, it is posited that provided the innovative QA elements that diffuse from outside the HE system are compatible with the existing QAS, the innovations are more likely to be translated successfully into practice and to persist over time, and accordingly cause evolutionary rather than revolutionary change.

Proposition three: If policy innovations in QA schemes are more consistent with the currently existing QA system, then they are likely to lead to a lower degree of QA change.

**Institutional innovation**

The property of structural constraints refers to the influence of the arrangements of the HE system on the emergence of policy change in QA, which takes the form of two mechanisms: the inconsistency among the HE dimensions that is caused by exogenous shocks or endogenous problems; and the duration for which the QAS has been in place. At the same time, institutional arrangements are exerting another influence on the degree and direction of policy change by policy entrepreneurs who actively engage in formulating institutional innovations and subsequently campaign for their implementation. Campbell (2004) assumed that the institutional constellation influences how policy entrepreneurs are located in the institution and to what extent they can access diverse institutional connections. Moreover, the positions of policy entrepreneurs reflect their roles and activities in the process of policy change, for example, generating institutional innovations, conveying their
innovations in an identifiable and unambiguous way, persuading decision makers to adopt their innovative ideas and translating the innovations into practice. Furthermore, policy entrepreneurs play vital roles in the process of QA change, as they actively engage in creating QA innovations through recombining what they have inherited from the past and what is available to them from their repertoires.

In addition, Campbell’s proposition 6 (2004, p. 178) posited that there is a relation between positions of policy entrepreneurs and the degree of change. More specifically, when entrepreneurs are located at the interstices within a HE system which can offer them diverse connections to other HE systems or policy networks, they are more likely to be exposed to ideas about, for example: contents of innovative QA elements and how they can recombine QA elements and policy ideas. All of these can precipitate QA change in the revolutionary sense.

Proposition four: If policy entrepreneurs are located at the interstices, their policy alternatives to QA schemes are more likely to be adopted as new QA elements and sustained over time.

Proposition five: If policy entrepreneurs are located at the interstices, they are likely to precipitate a higher degree of QA change.

These aforementioned theoretical statements revolve around the main issue: the mechanisms that explain how a HE system influences policy change in QA. With regard to this, an illustration of the causal relationships is simplified as figure 4-3, composed of the dependent variable on the right hand side, i.e. the pattern representing the process of policy change, and independent variables on the left hand side, which can be further categorised into two sets: the property of the current QA system and the features of policy actors/location of policy entrepreneurs.
Figure 4-3: The variables employed to analyse the influence of a constitution of European HE systems on policy change of QA in country A

Compared with figure 4-2 that emphasises the interactions across countries and the European-national levels, figure 4-3 more specifically focuses on how a constitution of European HE systems influences the QA policy change occurring inside one country. These variables in figure 4-3 are to be defined as follows.

The pattern of policy change in QA in European HE systems is collectively determined by the two dependent variables: the emergence of policy change and the degree of policy change. On the other hand, the empirical research component of independent variables consists of the consistency of policy elements and the position of policy entrepreneurs. The two conceptions represented the two highlighted properties in relation to the constellation of HE systems.
The emergence of policy change in QASs has a twofold meaning. It denotes, first, the potential for the existing QAS to experience change in the process of agenda setting and second, the extent to which the previous QAS has been institutionalised. In particular, the latter refers to how long the previous QAS had been implemented in the HE system. In general, this variable relates to when the policy change in QA schemes happened and the persistence of the QA schemes in the whole policy-making process. The degree of policy change in QA systems refers to the difference between the newly-adopted QAS and those policy elements in the previous QA system.

Consistency is defined as the extent to which the QA innovation/scheme is consistent with the composition of the QA system in the national HE system. QA innovations refer to those policy alternatives on the policy agenda, which could be a combination of existing elements in this HE sector through the bricolage mechanism or a foreign one that amalgamates those diffusing from outside the system through the translation mechanism. Therefore, the analysis of the components of QA innovations, i.e. whether they are translated from outside the domestic HE system as new policy ideas or inherited from a previous QAS of the same system as old policy ideas, can assist in revealing which mechanism (bricolage or translation) is dominant in the process of QA change. Based on proposition one, the property of QA innovations (i.e. whether they are consistent with the current QAS and the HE system) positively influences the potential for QA change. By contrast, QA schemes are concerned with legitimised regulations. Following proposition two, the property of QA schemes (i.e. whether they are consistent with the remainder of the current QA system and with the HE system) is expected to positively influence the duration of the current QAS being in place. In addition, proposition three anticipates a positive causal relationship between the property of QA innovations and the possibility of evolutionary policy change occurring in the current QA system.

The key issue regarding analysing policy entrepreneurs concerns their location within the HE system, i.e. the position (agency) from which they advocated QA innovations. As mentioned in section 3.2, firstly, policy entrepreneurs play a fundamental role in the entire policymaking process, whose function can be conceived of as tying together respective QA elements/innovations with other actors
relevant to the national QAS. For example, a policy entrepreneur connects a QA innovation which he/she has created to other actors such as policymakers if he/she endeavours to persuade these decision-makers to adopt his/her policy alternative. In addition, he/she also needs to connect this innovation to some convincing evidence that the QA innovation preferred had already succeeded in achieving expected HE objectives elsewhere (and/or at another time). Secondly, location is a crucial indicator for reflecting the extent to which the entrepreneur connects with different groups of actors, either in the same or in foreign systems. According to propositions four and five, the locations of policy entrepreneurs have a positive influence on the emergence of policy change in QA schemes and on the degree of QA change. That is, provided a policy entrepreneur is located with extensive institutional connections which should provide enough resources and power, he/she would have more potential for advocating his/her QA innovation on the policy agenda, eventually becoming an adopted element of the QAS. Likewise, this superior location would offer sufficient information about QA elements, either local or foreign, thereby assisting in generating a more revolutionary QA innovation and in turn precipitating revolutionary QA change.

4.1.3. Research questions

To address the main research question mentioned in subsection 4.1.2, the following research questions are formulated on the basis of the four aforementioned propositions.

1. With respect to the properties of QA systems, does the level of consistency of the policy innovation in QA schemes with other policy elements in the current QA system, influence the pattern of policy change in QA systems?

2. With respect to the properties of QA systems, do the locations of policy entrepreneurs in a HE system influence the pattern of policy change in QA systems?

3. How do both the highlighted properties in relation to QA systems and policy entrepreneurs affect the pattern of policy change in QA in European HE systems?

As illustrated in figure 4-3, questions one to two are derived from propositions one to five, which posit crucial explanatory variables and specific causal relationships
between the constellation of European HE systems and the pattern of policy change in QASs. By contrast, question three specifies the general mechanism that accounts for the whole process of policy change. Theoretically, through answering these questions the phenomenon of policy change regarding QA in European HE systems can be described and the mechanism through which the constellation of European HE systems would influence the pattern of policy change can be explored in one research endeavour.

4.2. THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL

The operationalisation stage focuses on developing the measurements that link the abstract theoretical constructs with the indicators that represent the matters of interest at an empirical level.

The operational definitions of variables relate to the rules of correspondence that define how indicators connect to constructs and what a researcher needs to observe and record systematically (Neuman, 2005). In the following subsections, the variables that play crucial roles in the causal chain linking the constellation of the HE system and the pattern of policy change will be operationalised. However, before engaging with this, the paradigm of the study and how the unit of analysis is understood are explained in subsections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 respectively.

4.2.1. THE ENQUIRY PARADIGM

Enquiry paradigms in early policy science were founded in logical positivism. Its objectivist epistemological foundation led to the practice of policy analysis aligned with ‘decisionism’ and ‘empiricism’ (Durning, 1999, p. 238). Such orientation (e.g. neo-positivism or logical empiricism) is manifested in quasi-experimental research designs, which includes the use of sampling techniques and multiple regression analysis, emphasis on data-gathering procedures, the development of causal models and/or cost-benefit analysis (Fischer, 1998). The common ground among these methods for policy analysis is that they are required to be conducted in a value-free way. That is, when applying these tools for defining policy problems and identifying possible solutions, analysts have to avoid incorporating personal values into the process (Durning, 1999).
In addition to objectivity, from the perspective of positivist analysts, policymaking processes, policy outputs and outcomes are the results of the conjunction of multiple sets of external factors. Proponents of most functional social theories, for example, have often based their analyses on social, economic, geographic and/or technological determinants, which are believed to influence the policy process. However, when those factors fail to explain the cases when diverse policies were developed even in similar socioeconomic or demographic situations, other theorists have made efforts to reintegrate political variables in particular. They modify the previous assumption and claim that political determinants that are conditioned and constrained by these external variables are the key factors that influence the policy process. Generally, either perspective has viewed the policy process, outputs and outcomes as being determined by certain sets of objective causal variables (Howlett and Ramesh, 1998).

In contrast to the positivist paradigms, post-positivism has gradually found support in the field of policy analysis since the 1980s. This approach has incorporated some form of subjectivism into the epistemologies, which contributed to establishing an array of paradigms that can be identified as post-positivist perspectives, ranging from interpretive analysis, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and action studies to critical theory (Durning, 1999, Hoppe, 1999).

Post-positivist critics have disputed the positivist assumption and have claimed that facts never exist independently of the context. With the improvement of theories in relation to the physical world, such as quantum theory and chaos theory, the understanding of social phenomena as a stable or fixed reality is no longer adequate. Also, positivist policy analysis paradigms were criticised for poorly analysing complex issues. With respect to the problem of complexity, Fischer (1998, p. 133) pointed out that: “Given the inconclusiveness of available data, it is impossible technically to isolate fully an ‘if-then’ hypotheses from the vast realm of untested ancillary propositions and statements that make the deduction of such a hypothesis possible. Put a different way, without a fully tested theory from the outset, researchers never can be entirely sure of what they have predicted and measured. Under this condition …most of what goes by the name of scientific generalization can be rejected only by a rigorous application of the falsification principle”.

Accordingly, post-positivist theorists have claimed that the positivist-based policy
approach, whereby the analyst ignores the significant role of analyst’s subjective viewpoints and tends to process factual information without giving the context and subjective aspects careful consideration, make trust in such analyses highly problematic (Durning, 1999). In other words, the possibility of determining 'objective' truth is doubtful. To improve the analysis approach, the proponents of post-positivism have contended that subjective statements and objective matters are not antithetical and that both should be considered in the process of policy analysis, particularly for opening up the policy dynamics and enriching the potential of policy change studies (Kay, 2009). In this way, the analytical framework of this study, according to which the QA schemes are multidimensional and is constituted by regulations and cognitive and normative ideas, does not represent a value-neutral form and is much more compatible with the post-positivist assumption.

The second reason for adopting post-positivism refers to the explanations for policy change. Regarding this, most positivist theorists have agreed that the policy process, outputs and outcomes are determined by certain objective causal variables and therefore, they have paid full attention to external factors. Although there have been some efforts made by positivist analysts to clarify the relationships between political and non-political variable, post-positivist analysts have criticised them for not being able to specify how each set of variables is to be weighted in particular policymaking circumstances (Howlett and Ramesh, 1998).

In contrast to the proponents of positivism focusing on the ‘objective’ conditions that ‘cause’ policy, policy analysts holding a post-positivist perspective lay particular stress on subjective understanding and perceptions, particularly that of policy actors who integrate and convey ideas in the policy realm (Kay, 2009) and believe that the understanding of policy actors’ ideas, interpretations and actions is undeniably substantial (Durning, 1999). Subjective factors and actor variables (e.g. behaviour and beliefs/ideas), which are encapsulated in a larger historical and social context, are suggested to need more attention in analyses (Howlett and Ramesh, 1998).

Moreover, the policymaking process is conceived of as being flooded by various ideas, which are clustered and various, covering different thinking styles, interpretative frames, ideologies, policy designs, belief systems or world views, and in the policy process they interact with each other (Hoppe, 1999). In this process, not
only is the generation of policies affected by conflict, politics and power, it also reflects the social arrangements in a particular situational context (Fischer, 1998). That is to say, the policy process is never a value-neutral form in that policy practice such as the perception of policy problems and policy outputs and outcomes are solely affected by policy ideas (Howlett and Ramesh, 1998). In other words, policies, which are combinations of objective and subjective factors, are not only a result determined by those external factors; relevant policy ideas and policy actors also have influence on the policy process. The assumption parallels the bricolage concept of Campbell’s theory (2004), which can be conceived of as the process during which policy arguments and ideas, either local or innovative, generate varied idea combinations through the policy process. In addition, the emphasis on policy ideas and actors in post-positivism suits the analytical framework of the present study, which is employed to analyse the property of the current QA schemes and that of policy entrepreneurs as well.

In accordance with post-positivist policy analysis, certain points grounded in this enquiry paradigm are to be clarified before describing the full details of the research methods at the operational and the empirical levels.

Firstly, it must be pointed out that post-positivism and positivism are not at the two opposite extremes of the spectrum of research logic. For example, post-positivist research still can be aimed at producing predictive generalisation (Fischer, 1998). It has been noted that a wide variety of paradigms scattering around these two groups respectively, owing to the lack of precise theoretical boundaries. Considerable overlaps between the varieties of post-positivism and even between positivism and post-positivism make the exact locating of the present study in the field of policy analysis paradigms difficult. Given this, a typology of research logics is proposed to approximately distinguish these policy analysis paradigms, based on their different approaches to research design and conduct. According to Neuman (2005), two types of research logics can be identified. On the one side, there is reconstructed logic, the proponents of which tend to execute their studies based on formal knowledge, following standardised instruments and highly structured procedures with a linear, clear, fixed sequence of research steps. On the other side, scholars aligning themselves with the logic of practice prefer to depend on informal, implicit knowledge, and carry out studies through the sharing of practical experience. In
according to this typology, the post-positivist paradigm adopted in the present study is located on the continuum between reconstructed logic and logic in practice.

Similar to traditional positivist scholars who follow reconstructed logic, there have been some post-positivist scholars who develop precise measuring variables to test the theoretical statements that posit causal relationships between identified variables. These analysts also rely on deductive reasoning that requires detailed planning prior to conducting data collection and analysis. In addition, as well as computer-assisted methods, certain quantitative techniques and procedures, such as low-level statistical analyses and frequency counts, have often been utilised in multiple levels of data analysis. All these methods are carried out to facilitate objective measurement and subsequent replication of studies (Creswell, 2007, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In the present study, deductive logic reasoning can be witnessed from figure 4-1. In relation to this, some measuring variables are to be developed in the following subsections, from 4.2.2 to 4.2.5. However, the generation of these variables is not aimed at theoretical falsification whereby the analyst tests objective hypotheses through rigorously formulated causal relationships. Instead, these variables and causal propositions have to be situated in particular places and times and be understood historically and sociologically.

Secondly, as mentioned above, adherents of post-positivism have criticised the separation between facts and values and in turn tend to perceive reality as being multidimensional in nature. That is, each dimension is influenced by other dimensions of the same social phenomena. In addition, Guba and Lincoln (2005) pointed out a salient philosophical assumption of post-positivism, that is, reality can never be fully apprehended, but only imperfectly and then only approximated. This stance elicits an underpinning tenet held in the study, i.e. that all theories are revisable as scientific rationality or all observations are fallible. Moreover, it has been posited through the above discussion that post-positivist policy analysts emphasise the potential of the amalgamation of objective factors and subjective statements. In other words, not only have the interpretations of the analyst as an outsider to be taken into account when studying the complex policy process, but also the perspectives of insiders (e.g. stakeholders and participants), which can help the analyst/outsider fully understand the context of analysis (Durning, 1999). Based on the post-positivist assumptions, multiple methods are mandated (Creswell, 2007,
Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), so as to collect holistic data and capture as much of the essence of reality as possible. The collection of multiple data resources is also emphasised in the present study, given that the different backgrounds of actors, either insider or outsider perspectives, can generate diverse contextual understanding and therefore can assist in capturing different angles of reality. In this regard, several types of triangulation are to be incorporated and processed integrally (see subsections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4). Lastly, grounded in post-positivism, internal and external validity criteria are integral elements in the research design, regardless of whether the data handling procedure is qualitative or quantitative (Creswell, 2007, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In order to fulfil these requirements, several tactics are adopted, explications for which are provided in subsection 4.3.5.

4.2.2. UNITS OF ANALYSIS: QA SYSTEMS
In a study based on new institutionalism, it is suggested that the choice of institutional dimensions to be focused upon should be left to the researcher’s interests, theoretical perspective and other practical considerations, which in turn determine the choice of the unit of analysis (Campbell, 2004, Crouch et al., 2007). The object of the present study is concerned with policy change in QA schemes, intimately connected with two key institutional aspects: regulative and ideational dimensions.

Regulative dimensions
Given that regulative dimensions are not conceptualised as thoroughly as ideational dimensions in Campbell’s theory, a typology of rules derived from the IADF (Ostrom, 2005, 2007) is applied to advance the analysis of the former in a QA configuration. This theoretical approach is able to capture the complexity of policy change due to its emphasis on the role of institutional rules and its well-developed variables relating to institutional arrangements. Another reason for incorporating the typology into the operational definitions is that the IADF is associated with new institutional economics or rational-choice institutionalism and thus compatible with the theoretical framework of this study.

The term rule in the IADF is used to denote regulations that are laid down by an authority, such as a legislature, judge, magistrate, board of directors, university president being “shared understandings by participants about enforced prescriptions concerning what actions (or outcomes) are required, prohibited, or permitted”
There were types of rules classified by Ostrom and applied in the study.

Position rules establish positions in an action arena and sometimes state the number of participants in a position. The position created by this type of QA rules may refer to who are the decision-makers and thus can claim ownership; who initiates and sets up the QA procedures; who controls and conducts the QA process; who decides which subject or unit is to be evaluated; who nominates and appoints the evaluators; who are the evaluators accountable to and/or who evaluates HE performance.

Boundary rules (entry and exit rules) affect which participants can enter or leave an action arena as authorised appropriators and under what conditions. These rules define: (1) who is eligible to enter a position associated with a national QAS and (2) the process that determines which eligible participants may (or must) enter the positions. For instance, the QASs state the requirements of the procedures for selecting authorised evaluators or how peer review groups are constituted.

Information rules affect the level of information available to participants about actions in terms of, for instance, the past and current moves of other participants. The rules may specify which communication channels of information flow among the participants and the frequency of exchange of such information. For instance, evaluation reports must be published and filed containing summative judgement on either a regular basis or any time when the government requires. Moreover, this type of rule relates to: resources (e.g. from students, staff or graduates), characteristics of data (e.g. subjective or objective; whether performance indicators are quantifiable or not; reference to statistics or descriptions) and data collection (e.g. the extent of standardisation of evaluation; guidelines or a framework of questions provided by agencies).

Payoff rules assign benefits and costs to participants in light of the outcomes achieved or based on the actions chosen by the participants. For instance, only the universities that reach the required performance level can receive financial awards.

Scope rules delimit the potential outcomes that may, must, or must not be achieved as a result of actions within an action arena and as such define the possible outcome space. They are similar to choice rules but different in that they make linkages
between actions and specific outcomes. For instance, a QAS which incorporates potential goals into the scope rules specifies the expected level of performance that universities have to achieve, whereas authority rules only prescribe what actions universities must, or must not take to improve their performance. They can also refer to specific follow-up activities after evaluations, for example, decisions that are made dependent on particular QA outcomes.

In addition to these categories of rules, it is necessary to clarify the level of QA activity that the analysis is focused upon, as there has been no uniform policy template across EU member states and various policy strategies for dealing with quality issues in HE. In this regard, according to the ‘multiple levels of analysis’ in the IADF, rules are characterised as four levels of nested action arenas: the operational, collective-choice, constitutional and the meta-constitutional levels. Moreover, it is crucial to recognise that rules are constrained by other set at a deeper level. To be specific, the rules at the operational level are the closest to day-to-day actions and decisions. They are directly determined by those at the deeper level, i.e. collective-choice rules, which stipulate the matters in relation to the actors who are eligible to participate and the regulations that are to be adhered to at the operational level. In sum, how a set of rules can be changed is affected by another set that is nested at a deeper level, and thus changes in deeper-level rules are less likely to occur and tend to have the slowest pace (Ostrom, 2005). Within this terminology, the prime analytical level in this study was that of collective-choice, given that the research interest is in the development process of national HE policy. Nevertheless, rules at the constitutional level involving the establishment of the judiciary, executive, etc. and those at the operational level where HE organisations allocate resources and decide on employment issues, were also taken into account and analysed, if their intimate association with the chosen level could be observed.

**Ideational dimensions**
Apart from the regulative dimensions, the other part of QA constellations refers to ideational dimensions. In this regard, the typology of policy ideas employed here was derived from Campbell (2004) (see also 3.2.2).

Programmes are what Schmidt (2008) categorised as the first level of ideas and cognitive ideas, which exert their influence through the actors of policy subsystems
whose behaviour is based on interest-based logic. These forms of policy ideas resemble QA regulations and act as policy solutions formulated to solve specific policy problems. In addition, programmes containing practical methods and instruments could also represent those policy alternatives on the policy agenda that have yet to be legitimised as authorised regulations.

The significant quality of the second type of ideas, frames, is their normative value, i.e. what is good and what one should do. In this regard, the sense of appropriateness is utilised when policy entrepreneurs try to convince decision makers to accept their frames, so as to get their programmes adopted and even legitimised as regulations or laws (Schmidt, 2008). QA purposes can be perceived as a kind of frame that policy entrepreneurs choose deliberately, in order to persuade decision makers to accept the policy programmes they campaign for. Further, accountability tends to be framed in accordance with multiple extrinsic purposes, whilst the frames of improvement and enhancement are geared towards stressing the future performance of HE provision.

Like programmes, the third type of ideas (paradigms) is concerned with cognitive ideas relating to “what it is and what to do” and they lead to judgements on the strategies for solving policy problems based on interest-based logic. However, the two types of ideas can be differentiated by the fact that certain constraints are added by paradigms on programmes, whereby the former are able to influence which of the latter are likely to be perceived by decision-makers as useful and worth considering, and thus limit the range of programmes considered as possible solutions to policy problems and as realistic policy goals (Schmidt, 2008). In this study, the QA approach, being either accreditation or evaluation oriented, reveals two distinct paradigms that lead to QASs being differentiated in terms of methods and instruments. More specifically, evaluation systems tend to generate diverse objectives that suit internal HE units, whilst the objectives in accreditation systems need to be fulfilled for the sake of external stakeholders. In addition, the forms of QA outcomes also appear to be influenced by QA approaches. In this regard, accreditation outcomes tend to be officially published and presented in summative forms with quantitative data, whilst for the other approach formative reports with qualitative judgements are expected to be presented so as to provide more information necessary to improve the object under evaluation.
Public sentiments, similar to paradigms, are perceived as background ideas and constrain the terrain of foreground ideas, i.e. frames and programmes (Campbell, 2004). That is, the scope of paradigms is limited by public sentiments, as the latter consists of broad-based normative assumptions, particularly those involving what is appropriate, being held by large segments of the population, rather than simply by specific decision-makers, who are more likely to be affected by interest-based logic (Schmidt, 2008, Surel, 2000). In this study, drawing on the literature review in subsection 2.2.1 the assumption is that the choices of QA approaches and purposes are connected with whether external or internal quality is prevailing in the HE sector, which is determined according to public sentiments. For instance, if the HE system of interest values extrinsic quality, the rationale behind its QA design tends to be on the basis of accountability, and accordingly accreditation schemes are more likely to be adopted than otherwise.

4.2.3. CONSISTENCY OF QA POLICY ELEMENTS

On the basis of the variety of QA systems that has been discussed in the literature review in chapter two, QA ideas and schemes were divided into four types of QA elements (table 4-1) and two contrasting groups, namely extrinsic and intrinsic types (table 4-2), which were derived initially from the diversity of the definitions of HE quality. This dichotomy was employed as a criterion for measuring the consistency of policy elements, which could be distinguished as having two nominal attributes: (1) the extent to which a policy innovation in relation to QA schemes fits into the existing QA system; and (2) the extent to which the four existing QA elements fitted each other. The two subsidiary variables, therefore, were estimated through different formulas. The first one was operationalised as consistency between the new QA innovation and the other three existing QA elements, whereas the second subsidiary variable was aggregated by consistency between the existing QA elements within the QA system.
Table 4-1: Typology of QA ideas and schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The existing QA system (period 1)</th>
<th>The new QA system (period 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreground ideas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive ideas</td>
<td>1. QA schemes</td>
<td>2. QA approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. QA schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative ideas</td>
<td>3. QA functions</td>
<td>4. Quality definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. QA functions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Table 3-1

Consistency of the QA innovation
A. Consistency of the new QA scheme with existing QA approaches: 5 versus 2
B. Consistency of the new QA scheme with existing QA functions: 5 versus 3
C. Consistency of the new QA scheme with existing quality definitions: 5 versus 4

Consistency of the current QA elements
D. Consistency between foreground elements: 1 versus 3
E. Consistency between background elements: 2 versus 4
F. Consistency between cognitive elements: 1 versus 2
G. Consistency between normative elements: 3 versus 4
Table 4-2: Dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic QA elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QA ideas</th>
<th>Extrinsic type</th>
<th>Intrinsic type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Public sentiments <strong>Definitions of HE quality</strong></td>
<td>Extrinsic quality</td>
<td>Intrinsic quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Paradigms <strong>QA approaches</strong></td>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>Evaluation (Audit; Assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Frames <strong>QA functions</strong></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QA scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>1. Position and boundary rules</strong></th>
<th>Who are claiming ownership</th>
<th>- Actors external to the HE unit evaluated. E.g. government or external agency.</th>
<th>- E.g. university managers, academics, individual staff members, students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who are eligible to determine standards/criteria</td>
<td>- Customers take part in the process and their requirements tend to become the specification for HE provision.</td>
<td>- Students can take ownership of their learning process and have responsibility for determining the mode of education delivery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>2. Information rules</strong></th>
<th>Sources of information</th>
<th>- Measure outputs against inputs; heavily rely on the outcome-data.</th>
<th>- Investigate the process, yet also can be the parts of input and output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Property of information</td>
<td>- Focus on efficiency and effectiveness</td>
<td>- Feedback from students is a crucial aspect of evaluation (can be qualitative or quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Standards emphasise the measurable and quantifiable.</td>
<td>- Tends to be subjective, descriptive information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Entails objective statements (e.g. a binary scale), and reference to statistics (e.g. number of publications and citations)</td>
<td>- If performance indicators are included, they would be formed by peer reviews, e.g. feedback from students or fellow teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Quantifiable performance indicators (e.g. staff-student ratios) provide a</td>
<td>- Criteria focusing on the parts of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to collect information</td>
<td>Duration: one off; for particular proposes</td>
<td>Continuous process for progression data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>Reports are used to provide a quality rating, with a threshold, e.g. pass/ fail</td>
<td>Reports are used to check for quality, whatever on a scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive/ strategic report for advertisement, and to provide information to stakeholders</td>
<td>Normally without grading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Results will be published</td>
<td>Confidential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summative judgement</td>
<td>Self-evaluation reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formative and descriptive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3. Payoff rules**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effects of outcomes</th>
<th>Outcomes are used to inform funding/resource allocation</th>
<th>Concerned with reputation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits/ costs</td>
<td>Highly connected with value for money agendas, e.g. give award, lead to classification and permission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4. Scope rules**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected outcomes</th>
<th>Outcomes are external to the investigated HE units</th>
<th>Outcomes are internal to the investigated HE units, e.g. teaching knowledge being improved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>Performance of HE provision fits with the stakeholders’ goals and expectations</td>
<td>Stimulate self-regulation capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customer satisfaction provides the evidence of quality that is constituted differently owing to different stakeholders in HE, who have different views about the purpose/mission of HE</td>
<td>Standards of input and output can be objective and static, yet negotiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conformance to specification of process which is predefined and measurable</td>
<td>Conformance to specification of process which is predefined and measurable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.4. LOCATION OF POLICY ENTREPRENEURS

In post-positivist policy analysis, an emphasis is on policy actors, particularly their attributes relating to capacities, perceptions and preferences, all of which influence the interpretation of what a policy problem is, how a policy proposal is articulated and how policy ideas are created or combined (Howlett and Ramesh, 1998). These actors can be characterised by a set of coalitions, which are aggregated owing to some shared policy beliefs in a policy subsystem (Sabatier and Weible, 2007), or by a policy monopoly as a result of the policymaking venue which is occupied by a dominant policy idea or image (True et al., 2007). The set of policy participants can include iron triangles (i.e. legislators, agency officials and interest group leaders), policy communities and issue networks, yet this study focused on the type of actors: policy entrepreneurs. The elements of entrepreneurship are considered below.

Generally speaking, they are conceived of as advocates of policy change, generating innovative policy solutions and promoting policy proposals to governmental programmes. Policy entrepreneurs could be affiliated with government as elected officials or in appointed positions. On the other hand, they could be individuals or coalitions outside of the government. Also, they may play any roles defined by Campbell (2004, pp. 100-7): decision-makers, theorists, framers, constituencies or brokers. Nonetheless, there is the defining characteristic of all policy entrepreneurs maintained by Kingdon (1995, p. 122): a “willingness to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of future return”. By doing so, the policy entrepreneurs expect that the policy change that they precipitate would promote their personal interests or values.

In addition, Mintrom and Norman (2009) claimed that policy entrepreneurs can distinguish themselves from most actors and organisations participating in policy development through certain elements. First, policy entrepreneurs must exhibit high level of social acuity in their local policy context, capable of effectively operating in policy networks or understanding others’ ideas, motives and concerns. Second, they manipulate the political process to affect how people relate specific policy problems to their own values or interests. Third, they promote policy change by means of building teams, such as using their professional or personal networks and working with coalitions. Fourth, in order to engage with others, policy entrepreneurs demonstrate successful examples and show the workability of a policy proposal. This
is intended to reduce the perception of risk, particularly among decision makers. They argued that all policy entrepreneurs would, to some extent, exhibit the four traits, yet some would appear stronger in certain contexts than others.

Apart from these criteria for identifying the policy entrepreneurs, the policy entrepreneurs were referred to as those who endeavour to convince other actors of the utility of supporting specific QA schemes or approaches, mainly the regulative dimensions. In other words, the advocates of QA ideational dimensions (e.g. new public management, specific market mechanisms and accountability) would not be conceived of as the policy entrepreneurs under investigation in the present study.

In relation to the form of policy entrepreneurs, there is no theoretical suggestion as to whether they should be addressed in the form of individuals or corporate actors/organisations (Kingdon, 1995, Mintrom and Norman, 2009). Different approaches can be found in empirical research. For instance, in a study on the roles that change agents played in initiating policy change in local communities of Colorado (1998-2007), citizens and experts were found as the major policy entrepreneurs (Crow, 2010). In contrast, Corbett (2005) identified seven individual actors as the policy entrepreneurs advancing HE policy agenda in the European Union during the time frame 1955-1987. Each one was a member of European Community institutions and was argued to be significant in stimulating policy change in a specific period of time. In another study on policy change in Europe, Donnelly and Hogan (2012) defined types of policy entrepreneurs, including civil servants, academics, civil society organisations (e.g. labour unions and consumer groups) and international organisations. Their research was concerned with domestic policies: industrial policy in Ireland during the 1950s and macroeconomic policy change in Sweden in the 1980s. Drawing upon both the theoretical and empirical literature on policy change, policy entrepreneurs in the present study can be either individuals or organisations. To a large extent, whether actors and/or organisations have been policy entrepreneurs would be determined by the empirical data collected in the process of historical analysis and interviews.

According to Adam and Kriesi (2007), policy entrepreneurs’ attributions are systematically associated with their interactions with other actors or coalitions. As explained in subsection 3.2.3, actors are not assumed to have fixed sets of interests
and identities; these are dependent on specific contexts and setting. Likewise, the influence of policy entrepreneurs and the way in which they are organised are accounted for by their respective resources and capacities. These, to a considerable extent, are related to their positions in the institution. Experts, for example, acting as policy entrepreneurs, may be especially influential to drawing attention to their professional perceptions of policy problems and promoting specific policy solutions within their area of expertise. Furthermore, given an increasing need to coordinate policy actors that interconnect across different arenas, the operationalisation of the location of policy entrepreneurs requires to take into consideration the policy domain, and national and transnational contexts.

Accordingly, the measure of the location of policy entrepreneurs was related to a typology of HE stakeholder classes (Jongbloed et al., 2008), in which there was a wider range of actors and communities who all have a stake in what universities do, yet may have diverse identities, obligations and values. Nevertheless, in order to be compatible with the European context and the focus of domestic HE systems in the present study, some alterations were made to the original table, in the light of the multilevel and multi-actor HE nature, as emphasised by Westerheijden et al. (2007b), including the transnational, national and the institutional dimensions. For instance, some international actors, such as the EU supported ENQA and the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), were responsible for the dissemination of QASs and policy harmonization (Brennan, 2007). Thus, they were included as transnational communities that take QA agendas from pioneer countries to others introducing QASs, thereby contributing to the acceleration of policy transfer (Vidovich, 2004). Moreover, government regulators were regarded as prominent actors in Western Europe, having responsibility for public resources and representing taxpayers and society as whole, and they also promulgated the requirement that HE units should demonstrate their accountability in terms of public funding as well as meeting the needs of the wider population (Westerheijden, 2007b). In contrast to the level of government, a lower level covering institutions providing HE provision consisted of universities and competitors, such as: private and public providers of post-secondary education and distance education providers. In addition, given the increasing crucial roles played by networks of experts or epistemic communities, in relation to international accreditation practices (de Wit and Knight, 1999) or in ensuring soft compliance
through peer review (Wallance, 2005), several relevant communities were further differentiated to deal with the situation regarding the need for agreements to be reached on international quality standards and on mutual recognition of professional qualifications. In this context, this variable was measured by first identifying stakeholder groups, who may be either: academic or non-academic, internal or external to a HE institution, and intergovernmental or domestic, with which a policy entrepreneur was connected. Subsequently the number of connections was measured.

4.2.5. PATTERNS OF QA CHANGE

In the previous two subsections, the independent variable regarding the constellation of HE systems has been operationalised. In contrast, this subsection is concerned with the outcome variable, i.e. the pattern of QA change, which was measured by the synthesis of the two sub-constructs: QA change in terms of time of emergence and degree. Eventually, the variable would be identified on a continuum that ranges from an evolutionary pattern through to a punctuated-equilibrium being manifested at the end of the continuum as revolutionary change.

Firstly, emergence of QA change concerned how long it takes for a HE system to encounter a change in its QAS, so as to be able to solve identified HE problems or to fulfil the purposes of some policy entrepreneurs. In other words, the indicator was focused on the duration for which a QAS has been implemented without a noticeable change since its launch and thus it could be defined as a continuous variable. It was also an interval variable as its values could be theoretically taken from 1 year to the infinite, from which zero (years) was excluded. In addition, the time frame of emergence also had an implication for another outcome variable: the degree of QA change. That is, for instance, when two QASs had experienced an identical degree of change, but one had undergone this in a substantially shorter period of time than the other, then the former would be considered an evolutionary QA change having lower potential for change, in contrast to the latter being revolutionary.

Secondly, degree of QA change was discerned through assessing the difference between the new QAS and the already existing QA system, and according to Campbell’s ideas, this is affected by which types of policy ideas carry most weight in the decision-making episodes and how many dimensions of institutional change are involved. On this basis, this concept, parallel with the consistency of policy elements,
were measured on the basis of the characters of the four policy elements (i.e. QA schemes, QA approaches, QA functions and quality definitions) which were identified by way of historical analysis and the Q-sort methodology. Also, it was taken as an ordinal variable with three possible values representing different degrees of change.

4.3. THE EMPIRICAL LEVEL

The last stage of the methodology is concerned with deciding on two empirical aspects: the measurement of data, through the deployment of which the researcher can observe the reality associated with the theoretical concepts of interest; and the methods of data analysis that are employed for producing numerical and qualitative information that represents the phenomena observed. Firstly, the link between the logic of post-positivism and the deploying of the empirical procedures and methods carried out in this study is described in subsection 4.3.1. Secondly, because this investigation draws on comparative case studies, the principles behind case selection are explained in the next subsection, 4.3.2. Thirdly, data collection and analysis are demonstrated in subsections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4. Fourthly, the issues of reliability and validity are summarised in subsection 4.3.5., and finally, ethical issues are addressed in subsection 4.3.6.

4.3.1. MIXED-METHODS WITHIN A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

Regarding research logic and methods, a comparative case study approach with a few countries is to be adopted for the following reasons. Firstly, a case-study approach was applied, following the suggestion of Campbell (2004) that it can provide thick descriptions and in turn benefits the interest in examining and identifying the causal mechanisms involved in the process of institutional change and diffusion. In addition, from the post-positivist perspective, the consideration of context is crucial when the analyst believes that reality should be understood without the separation between facts and values. In accordance with this, case studies are a promising approach to explaining the contextual difference that is dependent of specific places, times or circumstances. Moreover, Yin (2009) claimed that case studies can be adopted as a research strategy for dealing with ‘why’ and ‘how’ forms of research questions which require intensive context information. The present study has the ‘how’ type as the main research question, which focuses on the causal relationship between the
constellation of European HE systems and the pattern of policy change in QASs, mentioned in subsection 4.1.2.

Secondly, the approach of comparative studies along with small-N methods was chosen owing to the possibility of fine-grained analyses. Landman (2007) claimed that large-N comparative studies are variable-oriented and focus on examining variation in macro-variables between countries. Therefore, the great strength of the comparison of many countries lies in making broad empirical generalisation, whereas this extensive approach sacrifices this for the ability to probe more deeply into each case. Likewise, Rueschemeyer (2003) argued that comparative analysis of a limited number of cases not only can serve to generate initial hypotheses to be tested, but also allow for the generation of robust theoretical accounts through providing rich data for explaining underlying mechanisms which operate in the research setting of interest. Reflecting the above reasons, a well-known case of the adoption of the comparative cases-study approach with small countries in the field of comparative HE policies is the study carried out by Kogan et al. (2006) on change in HE policies and systems across a number of European nations: England, Norway and Sweden.

Generally, comparative case studies involving small countries can provide detailed information which benefits not only the discernment of mechanisms and the generation of explanatory propositions, but also the testing, revising and retesting of them. Correspondingly, the process of conducting the study at the empirical level is illustrated through the flow chart presented in figure 4-4. In particular, the pilot study was conducted, revolving around the UK experience of QA development, in order to test whether or not those operational variables and propositions that had been developed according to the theoretical framework were feasible. Drawing upon the corresponding results, the four QA elements in terms of regulative, cognitive and normative policy ideas were settled, which led to the closure of selecting case countries and designing the case protocol.
As mentioned in subsection 4.2.1, researchers who adopt a post-positivist stance recognise the difficulty in apprehending reality in a completely perfect way and accept that any theory generated faces the problem of fallibility. In light of this, the research design at the empirical level is devoted to ensuring that intervening variables are not overlooked and to diagnosing defects in the theories chosen. To achieve this, triangulation in terms of resources and methods was adopted, which
allows the researcher to probe any spurious relationship between the variables that may have existed in the initial casual chain, and/or to determine potentially unidentified missing variables that are hidden behind in the causal relations that emerge.

Figure 4-5: The methods of data collection and analysis adopted in an individual case study

Figure 4-5 shows the whole process of data collection and analysis, regarding the methods and abstract procedures that are to be carried out for one single case study. The details of the process are discussed in subsections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4.

4.3.2. CASE SELECTION
In the study of comparative cases analysis, the strategies for the selection of case countries were concerned with the logic of theoretical replication and, more
pragmatically, readily available information and documentation.

Following the logic of theoretical replications, there is a need of research findings being able to be reproduced. This reasoning can be differentiated from sampling logic which emphasises that research findings should represent the prevalence of a particular population based on the results obtained through inferential statistical analysis. Eliciting from the application of replication logic, a multiple-case design was adopted as the strategy for the selection of case countries (Yin, 2009). This approach was chosen primarily due to its potential for maximising the access required to gather necessary information and the utility of information collected, as well as for minimising the chance of misrepresentation.

In relation to the consideration to information/documentation, it appeared that the answers to the research questions required case countries that would bring the greatest possible amount of information on QA policy change. Therefore, random sampling was not considered as locating representative cases was not the first priority (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Likewise, neither the most similar system design (MSSD) nor the most different system design (MDSD), the two primary research designs seeking generalisations, was not under consideration (Landman, 2007).

Against these criteria, also in the light of practical feasibility (of gathering data), England and the Netherlands constitute interesting cases due to the follow considerations. The two countries vis-à-vis the rest of Europe have been considered as pioneers in developing and conducting national QA systems, in that both of their commencements can be traced back to about 1985 (Westerheijden et al., 2007a). In the middle of the 1980s, both countries appeared to have reached crossroads in their HE developments. Since their HE systems were extending, the quality of their respective binary HE systems was to some extent being questioned. Against that background, England envisaged a better linkage between HE and the labour market as a consequence of improving its QAS, and the Netherlands sought an improvement in terms of the nature of trust between the state and HE institutions (Westerheijden et al., 2007a). The two longitudinal cases, to a significant degree, would be available for providing sufficient information. Another temporal consideration was related to the learning effect that was discussed in subsection 2.2.1. As the two countries launched their initiatives for addressing the quality issue at a similar time, they might
have expected similar phases of QA development (see also Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2002), up to the present day though not necessarily in a corresponding time frame.

Aligned with the replication logic, the multiple-case design requires different cases so as to cover the most unique, diverse scenarios. If research findings confirm that chosen cases follow the trajectory predicted by initial theoretical propositions, the propositions can be substantiated. However, if the results show opposite or contradictory scenarios, further evidence gathered from more detailed or qualitative oriented information would assist in identifying intervening variables or causal relations that were overlooked by the initial propositions. In this situation, the initial theory and propositions need to be revised, rather than merely tested (Yin, 2009). In accordance with this logic and given the research propositions provided in subsection 4.1.2 as well, the case selection was aimed at testing the relation between institutional arrangements and policy change.

With respect to this, the chosen cases were expected to be able to represent extremes in relation to the constellations of HE systems in Europe. In the literature on policymaking processes, it has been deemed necessary taking into consideration the features of respective policy domains when addressing the issues regarding policy change (Adam and Kriesi, 2007, Kriesi et al., 2006). That is, the diversity of policy-specific contexts within and between countries is an influential factor in shaping policy outputs. Considering that, the Netherlands and England represented two opposite types in terms of the distribution of power in HE (Witte, 2006). More specifically, Witte’s study on HE policy domain showed that power in the Netherlands was centralised in the hands of a few political actors delegated by the government to make decisions about laws and important national regulations, such as the ministers in charge of the sector. It was different from the fragmented power structure in the UK, where the universities held a significant degree of autonomy and sovereignty over the domain appeared to be shared by HE policy subsystem, including an association of university rectors, a buffer funding agency and the government.

Having given due consideration to the above criteria, QA changes in the Netherlands
and the UK are deemed to be suitable as the country cases to be adopted in the present study, as they provide for the observation of the maximum number of embedded units of analysis and comply with the requirements for literal replication. In addition, these two countries fulfil the need for theoretical replication in that they cover each type of the subgroups in relation to the theoretical propositions and thus provide an opportunity to gather the most variations regarding the dependent variables. In sum, the case selection was based on embedded multiple-case designs, that is, each country case consists of a few embedded units of analysis, namely QASs, and the boundary that defines the characteristics of these was set between each QA change that had emerged. Moreover, data for each country case was collected and examined in depth with regards to a considerable length of time: from 1985 when the two nations first launched QASs, up until 2005.

### 4.3.3. Data Collection

In accordance with the methodology of post-positivism, one of the matters to take into consideration in terms of data collection is that perceptions regarding evidence differ depending on observers’ positions, which makes multiple data sources and the triangulation of measures essential. To address this issue, the process of data collection was composed of two methods: historical analysis conducted first in order to collect (largely) factual information from documentation; and then Q-methodology was administered to participants so as to garner their personal opinions in the form of quantitative as well as qualitative information gathered through interviews (figure 4-6). That is, a combination of the two would gather soft data in the form of narratives, and hard data in the form of numbers as outcomes of a Q-sort.

Historical analysis examines the sequence and process of the social reality of interest, which according to the paradigm of post-positivism has been created by actors on the one hand, yet restricts human activity on the other. Given this lens, indeterminacy is introduced into historical explanations and this attribute makes the enquiry paradigm and the methods of historical analysis compatible with each other (Neuman, 2005). Regarding this, documentary sources were the main form of information targeted in the first stage of evidence gathering, which comprise three main types: primary documents which include official reports and announcements (e.g. policy statements, regulations and standards), administrative proposals, articles in the mass media of the period and unpublished written documents; secondary sources which were written by
specialists having expertise in using the primary sources; and records which were maintained by organisations such as the Quality Assurance Agency and the Higher Education Funding Councils for England. Meticulous record keeping and labelling were essential activities during the process of analysing the documentation.

Figure 4- 6: The process of data collection

Although QA policy ideas may be identifiable solely through historical analysis, the consideration of documentary evidence at a distance from the reality of interest is open to criticism as it can result in neglect of the key actors’ perceptions and preferences. In order to compensate for this weakness, Q-methodology was incorporated into the analysis for the sake of the triangulation of methods. There has been a widely recognised application of Q-methods in social sciences, particularly in the field of policy analysis (S.R. Brown, 1993, Durning and Osuna, 1994). The results generated from this approach have been deemed as valuable for offering insights into stakeholders’ perspectives on policy issues (e.g. policy problems and beliefs) and their perceptions regarding policy values and interests (Durning, 1999).
There were two types of information collected in the course of conducting Q-sorting: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data was recorded against specific layouts for Q-sort cards (see appendices c and d).

Qualitative information was also collected during the course of Q-sorting. The participants were invited to further elaborate on their “most agree” and “most disagree” Q-statements, referring to those placed at the two extreme ends of the layout. Sometimes, participants may refuse to abide or struggle sorting these cards against the distribution of the layout. In such cases, they were encouraged to offer explanations or personal perspectives, which were also valuable for revealing their preferences to specific statements; even though the Q-sorts may end in failure (i.e. one person was unable to complete a Q-sort). After all, the Q-sorts were a means devised to force participants to contemplate the statements in a rather thoughtful way.

The first step of Q-research was to collect a wide range of contents and statements regarding the topic of interest. The population referred to the following concepts: (1) QA policy ideas: public sentiments (i.e. definition of the HE quality) and frames (i.e. accountability and improvement in terms of QA purposes); (2) connections between the policy ideas and key policy entrepreneurs: e.g. which QA ideas they convey/advocate. Next, two Q-samples (or Q-sets), consisting of selected statements according to the result of the historical analyses (for the Netherlands and for England), were collected and developed on a theoretical basis. Then, they were individually printed on cards and then each Q-deck containing all the statements was presented to all the participants (S.R. Brown, 1993). In other words, each Q-set was a wide ranging cluster of representative statements of existing opinions about QA ideas pervading in the specific case-study country.

The third step of the Q-methodology was to select participants, termed a P-set. Q-methodology has the aim to investigate the structure of the interviewees’ perceptions, and thus the underlying principle for selecting the participants is based on their capability to offer an opinion that is of theoretical or practical interest. As a consequence, the number of required participants tends to be limited (S.R. Brown, 1980). Moreover, given the limited knowledge of the researcher regarding the population from which the sample needs to be taken, it is difficult to determine the sample size in advance and, therefore, non-probability and non-random sampling are
taken as the principle for sampling. In accordance with this, two techniques were adopted to reach the small number of well-informed subjects (Neuman, 2005).

Snowball sampling: This is a multistage technique that begins with one or a few respondents and spreads out according to the referrals from these on to other potential participants. In this current study, the process started with interviewing a leading expert in QA and HE policies area, as identified through the documentary analysis. The person was asked to name two other experts and two active practitioners who had participated in the process of QA change in the specific case country. The researcher then approached one of the experts and one of the practitioners, and subsequently repeated the process. If several respondents named the same person, the person would be considered of high priority for interviewing. The snowball sampling was terminated when no new names were forthcoming.

Sequential sampling: Case selection here is on the basis of locating cases with information that fits a specific purpose. Unlike purposive sampling, through which researchers try to find every possible case that is informative, in sequential sampling researchers continue to gather cases until the amount of information has reached a saturation point, i.e. when the incremental benefit gained from including each additional case drops significantly or levels off.

After sampling, the fourth step was to conduct the Q-sorting (S.R. Brown, 1993) and interviews. The procedures for the survey were as follows.

1. Contact respondents: Locate sampled participants by telephone or email and send them a copy of the draft case report.
2. Survey schedules: In order to avoid the possibility of introducing sources of variation which can compromise the reliability of the study findings, a standard Q-sort and an interview schedule with a set of rules regarding the procedures to be employed by the interviewer when conducting the survey, were designed (see appendices c and d).
3. Q-sorting: The Q-set was administrated to the P-set (see appendix e) who were instructed to rank the cards/statements in light of their personal perspectives (on the topic according to the extent to which they feel agree, disagree or neutral).
4. Interviewing experts and practitioners: The Q-sorting was followed by several open-ended questions. In addition, interviews offered the interviewer the opportunity
to communicate with relevant experts and practitioners the diversity of interpretations in terms of QA ideas (and connections to policy entrepreneurs). Therefore, it can be perceived as a method for assuring contextual equivalence across different HE contexts.

5. Carefully record the responses to the Q-sorting into a computer format that is to be subject to statistical analysis, promptly, after each interview.

4.3.4. DATA ANALYSIS
The process of data analysis, as presented in figure 4-7, was divided into two steps: within-case and cross-case analyses.

With respect to the historical analysis of documentation, pattern matching was the primary analytic logic followed in the present study (see Mahoney, 2003). Firstly, it can function effectively in terms of identifying causal inference in small-N studies and it forms a valuable supplement to the cross-case comparison. Secondly, it is flexible about the levels of measurement, e.g. measures of ordinal and interval variables are permissible. The analysis logic of pattern matching is that researchers can have strong grounds for believing their propositions are valid when the match between the empirically-observed evidence and theoretically predicted relations are sustained. Three matching criteria are comprised, which are logic models, time-series analysis and causal narrative. The former two are to be particularly applied for the within-case analysis when individual case studies are conducted, whilst the latter one is only adopted for cross-case analysis. These three analytic techniques are explained as follows.
The use of logic models within individual case studies was adopted as an attempt to identify certain cause-effect patterns from the array of empirical events and thus to infer causality in theoretical propositions. More specifically, the causality can be inferred through a sequence of events which is correlated with a causal relation between an explanatory variable and an outcome variable, or alternatively through a complex causal path whereby intervening variables exist and exert causal effects on an outcome variable (Yin, 2009). This strategy to draw out the inference about causality is termed process tracing by Mahoney (2003) and refers to avoiding making the mistake of spurious correlation in comparative historical research, because it can distinguish intervening variables from the empirical evidence.

In contrast to the logical sequences of events approach, the second technique applied
within the individual case studies was time-series analysis (Yin, 2009), and this stipulates the temporal sequence of empirical events being used as a criterion for identifying the validity of theory. In this regard, investigators can locate empirical events on the basis of chronology and check whether they are consistent with those predicted according to the theoretical propositions. Unlike the technique of logic models which only focus on explanatory and outcome variables, this can cover many different indicators.

Causal narrative was applied specifically to the cross-cases synthesis rather than the within-case analysis. The procedure is first to unpack each individual case and reconstitute it by describing its events in sequence, and second to compare these disaggregated causal interpretations across cases, in order to determine whether any aggregated causal patterns exist. Pattern matching is achieved when the within-case findings in relation to the propositions for each individual case are consistently repeated across cases. This technique can provide narrative arguments by providing contextualised descriptions of cases, where either fine grained stories or event structure diagrams can explicitly illustrate the logical and temporal connections relating to the theoretical propositions (Mahoney, 2003).

In the current study after applying these techniques to analysing the data, three types of case reports were presented. (1) Draft individual case reports were written according to the results of documentary analysis, and each report was constituted by QA rules (i.e. regulative dimensions regarding the change in the constellation of QA schemes) and QA policy ideas regarding ideational dimensions. These reports can assist in identifying the key policy entrepreneurs for each case country and the policy ideas they convey. The key purpose for drafting the case reports before conducting Q-methodology is to elicit the contents of the instruments employed in the interviews, i.e. the Q-deck, and to compile appropriate lists of participants. In addition, they are also a type of translation, that is, the researcher translates the meaning of the theoretical constructs for participants who are asked to make the connection between theory and their own empirical information through reading these reports, thus contributing further data, e.g. empirical information, to the study. As such, the draft individual case reports function as a procedure for reducing possible errors in interpretation and improving lexical and conceptual equivalence,
given different nations and the divergent cultures involved in the research comparison. (2) The final individual case reports incorporated the reporting of the Q-methodology outcomes, which combined the Q-sort analysis and new qualitative information collected through the interviews and the insights obtained from the documentary analysis. By so doing, each final individual report can reveal the associations among these theoretical constructs based on the situation of each case country, thereby demonstrating whether or not the propositions are substantiated. (3) The last was the cross-case report, which in contrast to the two former ones that focus on individual cases, was composed of: the evidence, theoretical constructs and synthesis elicited from the individual case reports. Consequently, it could be utilised to address whether the theoretical propositions, in relation to the causal links between different variables, is consistent with the scenarios of QA change in each case country. In sum, the rationale behind of the design of the three forms of reports is multiple, that is, firstly the draft individual case reports served to generate the Q-sets to be employed for collecting participants’ opinions and testing the theoretical propositions covered by research questions one and two. Secondly, both the final individual case reports and the cross-case report contributed fine-grained information and contextual descriptions, through which research question three can be addressed.

Lastly, the Q-methodology aimed to determine how individual participants perceive the reality of interest in this study. More specifically, after the original data from each Q-sort has been put in a computer based format (PQmethod 2.11), the correlation matrix of all Q sorts is subjected to factor analysis. The result of statistical analysis shows the groups of statements which are highly correlated with each other and the specific groups of participants sharing similar opinions. In this way, the Q-sort analysis identifies the salient QA policy ideas that prevail in each case country and the groupings of participants that support these ideas (S.R. Brown, 1993).

The analysis of Q sorts is a set of objective procedures, including factor analysis, factor loading, factor rotation and the calculation of factor scores. Yet the description and interpretation of the factors occasionally require the explanations given by the participants during the course of Q sorting. In particular, when the magnitude of difference between the aggregate scores of the Q-statements under the same category was too small to distinguish, the subjective narratives of these salient statements
placed at the two ends of the layout would be instrumental in interpreting the results of Q sorts. Nonetheless, the qualitative information was primarily treated as a source for triangulating the data collected during the historical analysis. For instance, if a participant indicates that the Q-sets remotely capture his/her perspective on the issue, the results of the historical analysis are likely to be problematic. Some questions, such as if there were any important Q statements missing from the sample, would help immensely to diagnose the quality of the historical analysis conducted in the first instance. Generally speaking, participants’ comments assisted in the understanding of why people ranked one Q-statement much lower/higher than another similar statement. In addition, the face-to-face interviews provided an opportunity to clarify and collect some documentation which was difficult in gathering in the first place.

4.3.5. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability and validity are essential criteria when judging the quality of research based on the post-positivist perspective. All the strategies designed to improve the research quality which were deployed in the current study are summarised in table 4-3.

The criterion of reliability is concerned with whether the results of research can be replicated under identical conditions (Neuman, 2005). Two strategies were incorporated into the research design to increase the reliability of this study (Yin, 2009). First, the use of a case study protocol contained an account of the background information to the project (e.g. an overview of the objectives, hypotheses and the theoretical framework), empirical procedures and general rules (e.g. outline of case reports). Not only did this provide clearly conceptualised constructs, but also it set out the procedures for measuring them, thereby assisting the researcher in maintaining a clear focus on the research targets throughout the whole process of data collection. Second, developing a formalised case study database to organise and document the raw data collected for the case studies, which comprised a presentable database system, including notes, documents, tabular materials and narratives thus enabling other scholars to inspect the evidence at a later date.
Table 4- 3: Tactics for research design tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Function/ Purpose</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
<td>Case study protocol</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>Guide the investigator</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study database</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guide other investigators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct validity</strong></td>
<td>Pilot study</td>
<td>Documentary analysis</td>
<td>Test the logic linking the data to the propositions</td>
<td>Prior to data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple sources of evidence</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>Triangulation of observations and measures</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintain a chain of evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Corroborate the data collected from documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal validity</strong></td>
<td>Use analytic techniques</td>
<td>Historical analysis</td>
<td>Formulate individual and cross case reports</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External validity</strong></td>
<td>Incorporate diverse perspectives in the process of generalisation</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>Analytic generalisation</td>
<td>Research design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validity refers to the relation between the reality being measured and the constructs that the researchers develop to understand the reality and endeavour to make it match with the theoretical constructs (Neuman, 2005). There were three types of validity incorporated into this current study to ensure the quality of the research design (Yin, 2009).

1. Construct validity benefits the establishment of operational measures for the abstract constructs being studied. Firstly, a pilot study was conducted to test whether the set of theoretical indicators generated from new institutionalism is feasible. It was a preliminary case study on the UK experiences in QA policy-making, and a paper containing the results was presented at the Seventh International EUREDOCS Conference (Lausanne, 28-30 May 2010), entitled ‘Deconstructing the Europeanization processes of higher education and research’. Based on the recommendations and discussion collected from academic participants during the conference, the original version of the operational constructs was adjusted and the final version was applied to the whole research process.
Further, the tactic of collecting multiple sources of evidence was adopted for increasing construct validity. More specifically, both relevant documentation and the information collected from the interviews were gathered as the research sources for a post-positivist analysis.

Previously, documentary analysis has often been criticised for merely covering evidence that has not been destroyed, or only including that which is recorded according to specific theoretical perspectives, without following random sample principles. Thus, its use in isolation has yet to provide robust outcomes (Neuman, 2005). In order to compensate for this limitation, interviews were undertaken, involving the gathering of multiple narratives and quantitative information collected through the procedure of Q-sorting during the interviews, thereby facilitating the triangulation of the observations and measures.

Lastly, a chain of evidence is designed to ensure that the link between the empirical data and theoretical constructs is validated. This procedure involves the case study protocol, case study database and draft individual case report, all of which are offered to all of the participants during the interviews. More specifically, these theoretical indicators and the draft individual case reports are to be presented to these experts, whereas the key informants are to be questioned solely on their opinions regarding the report elements.

2. The second test is that of internal validity, which is concerned with whether there are causal relations between the events of interest and whether these causal inferences are consistent with the process described in the historical analysis approach. The relevant analytic techniques which are employed for data analysis are the aforementioned, namely pattern matching, logic models, time-series analysis and causal narrative.

3. External validity relates to replication logic, that is, whether research findings are applicable to other settings, which are identical to those specified by the researcher. However, replication in historical analysis or policy research undertaken from the post-positivism basis has been criticised on the grounds that the results of this type of research are often the product of a body of evidence assembled by subjective investigators (Neuman, 2005). With respect to the issue of subjectivity, particularly
in relation to policy ideas, Hoppe (1999) suggested that this weakness can be compensated for by adding the debates involving the various opinions of different actor groups (e.g. politicians, officials, interest groups and experts) into the process of analysis. That is, through this method the information base is enriched by the different inputs of actors and thus validity and representativeness of the interpretation made by the analyst can be improved. In particular, in relation to the current study the method employed to stimulate debate with the participants is as follows.

Firstly, after analysing the documentary evidence on the basis of analytic generalisation, the individual case reports regarding the particular nations of interest are drafted, the findings of which can be attributed as the theoretical viewpoints of this researcher, as an outsider, to each historical case study. Next, the perspectives are to be presented to the participants in the form of targeted Q-sets, whereby the QA ideas which are held by these insiders (viz. experts and practitioners) are to be measured. Subsequently, the researcher uses the responses to the perspective indicators to ask follow-up open questions that aim to elicit detailed explanations and interpretations regarding QA issues from each insider. In other words, the interviews are of a semi-structured form with the structured format of instruments, thereby allowing substantial opportunities for lively debate between this researcher, the experts and the practitioners, and thus rich data collection.

4.3.6. Ethical issues

Being aware of the importance of avoiding any harm to the participants arising from their involvement in the present study, this researcher gives ethics serious consideration in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 1992) and the 1998 Data Protection Act (Becker and Bryman, 2004). During the investigation, particularly relating to policy studies, confidentiality of information needs to be taken into account and accordingly certain procedures are designed for dealing with this.

The first is associated with an informed consent process, which is conducted before starting data collection. In this regard, when contacting participants this researcher has a responsibility to provide them with sufficient information about the nature of this study, in terms of: research purposes and implications; when the research is taking place; possible consequences, such as the potential risks and benefits of taking
part. In addition to the endeavour to enable them to make autonomous choices, before they become involved in this study, their informed consent needs to be obtained, thereby demonstrating that their decision to participate is made under well-informed and voluntary circumstances (Becker and Bryman, 2004). Both the information and consent is delivered in a written form and dated as well as signed by this researcher and the participants.

The second matter that is also crucial regarding confidentiality concerns data protection, particularly in relation to identifying information. To preserve participant identities, sensitive data need to remain secure, both when they are being collected and stored. Following the suggestions of Becker and Bryman (2004), this researcher systematically replaces each subject’s identity with a research code, so as to keep the database anonymous. More specifically, all information gathered through interviews and Q-sorting will be recorded by the researcher herself, without transcribers, and will be transferred to an Excel database on her laptop in an encrypted way, with research ID as the only means of access. Further, any documents relating to personal information, such as informed consent forms and records of participants identities, will be stored separately to the main database and destroyed when an appropriate period after the end of the study is deemed to have elapsed. In addition, all hard copies of the database and transcriptions of interviews will remain secure throughout the research process. Lastly, at the stage of writing results and publishing reports, the provenance of information will be disguised in a way that quotations are unable to be attributed to a specific individual or organisation, so as to protect the interests of the participants who have contributed to the findings.
CH5. POLICY CHANGE IN ENGLISH QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

This chapter reports on the episodes of policy change in QA systems observed in the English HE system. To this end, the course of the policy change during the years in question is divided into five time periods and each case description addresses the four QA policy elements (i.e. quality definitions, QA functions, QA approaches and QA schemes) and the policy entrepreneurs involved.

5.1. POLICY ELEMENTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM 1985 TO 1991

5.1.1. PUBLIC SENTIMENTS

Quality control in the English universities is not entirely a modern device, insofar as its history can be traced back to medieval times where sovereignty was claimed by self-governing communities (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). As well as academic fellows in universities, professional agencies outside the HE system were involved, e.g. lawyers, doctors and teachers (Neave, 1994). This quality control model was compatible with the model of state supervision, where the government had no direct power to interfere in teaching matters, such as: content and materials, decisions about lecturer qualifications and the examination of graduates (van Bruggen et al., 1999). Universities in turn enjoyed comprehensive autonomy over curricula, finances and even the election of self-governing authorities and discretionary trust was placed in the academics and intellectuals who guaranteed and monitored HE quality (Westerheijden, 2005, Westerheijden et al., 2007b). In those days, high quality had very little to do with actual teaching processes or assessment results in terms of quality delivery, but rather, resources (e.g. recruiting the best students) and reputation stood for the quality provision of study programmes. In this context, an Oxbridge education was perceived as high quality and complete trust was placed in it (Harvey and Green, 1993).

Inherited from the tradition of internal professional control, the English government did not concern itself with the quality of HE provision for they accepted that there were sufficient warranties through universities’ internal mechanisms. That is, until the 1980s, under a light touch model, universities had high autonomy in managing their own affairs and they could choose for themselves whether any reforms were
necessary (Kogan and Hanney, 2000)). Against this background, professional quality was the predominant perception of higher quality in universities. That is, ‘quality is best protected by institutions’ own quality arrangements, which reflect and reinforce the values and professionalism of staff’ (R. Brown, 2004, p. 151). Furthermore, academic standards stemmed from an internal dialogue involving university members (e.g. teachers and students) and the academic community. In other words, the university with high quality effectively matched the provision of programmes with its internal requirements (ibid). In accordance with such perceptions of quality, it was believed that quality control was best left to self-regulation, with the central premise of this being that ‘only those responsible for designing and delivering programmes in conjunction with assessing and accrediting students have the experience to do it’ (Tapper, 2007, p. 169). These intrinsic-oriented perceptions of HE quality parallel the results of the English Q-sort analysis presented in appendix b (statements 1 to 4).

5.1.2. Policy Frames

According to the Coopers and Lybrand Report (HEQC, 1993), there were no formal objectives for the Academic Audit that was formulated by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) and the Academic Audit Unit (AAU) in the early 1990s. The explicit absence of stated objectives, to some extent, was ‘a pre-emptive tactic’ (ibid: para 310). That is, by means of establishing a self-regulated QA system, the university sector expected to prevent the possible imposition of external inspection from the government.

In spite of this, the review under the Academic Audit still identified a couple of primary objectives through discussions and document reviews held during the course of their analysis (HEQC, 1993). Accountability was the first objective in that audit would bring external benefits to the university stakeholders by producing relevant information, for example, how the institution was maintaining and enhancing the quality of its provision. The other audit objective concerned development and improvement, which would internally benefit the university being audited. Audit, in the first instance, could assist individual universities to develop internal QA methods by formally documenting their own institutional quality control procedures. Further, by means of providing evaluation of individual universities and sharing good practice, audit could stimulate internal change in the universities, which would ultimately
According to the comparison of statements 5 to 8 in appendix b, the result of Q-sorts showed that the pervading perception of QA functions during this period was related to improvement of performance. This intrinsic-oriented idea was reflected by statement 5, which had the highest aggregated score.

5.1.3. Policy Paradigms

Stemming from the British tradition of academic autonomy and also probably from the high reputation for teaching and scholarship of the sector, a good deal of trust was held by the universities. This privilege allowed them to enjoy significant freedom as to how the provision delivered in the sector was evaluated. Owing to this, seldom was university teaching and learning subject to an external quality control system nor was it affected by any national quality agency independent of the institutions. Nonetheless, the absence of an external quality regime ultimately raised governmental concern, which caused the sector, under pressure, to commence addressing the issue in the 1980s. Consequently, the CVCP established an Academic Standards Group (ASG) in 1983 and commissioned the Jarratt Committee to inquire into university management. The Jarratt Report, published in 1985, acknowledged the universities’ responsibility for being accountable and deemed it necessary that the universities clarify their institutional objectives and develop performance indicators. In 1986, the second ASG report was completed under Professor Philip Reynolds, Vice-chancellor of Lancaster University. The CVCP, drawing up the Reynolds Report, set up several formal codes of practice in relation to the quality maintenance and monitoring of standards and its frame of reference actually covered external examiners, postgraduate training and research as well as research degree examination appeals (R. Brown, 2004). Albeit the Reynolds Report had led to the first steps towards the introduction of an external quality regime, the two ASG reports did not entirely reduce the government’s scepticism and doubts remained.

The university sector, to a considerable extent, resisted the imposition of external control over teaching quality. Owing to the inclination to retain as much autonomy as possible, the 1989 Sutherland Report, produced by another ASG group, included a compromise regarding the implementation of the code of practice. The report proposed that the universities create their own quality agency to scrutinise externally...
quality arrangements within individual universities (R. Brown, 2004). Subsequently, in view of the fact that the government would impose external inspection on the universities if the community did not initiate any self-regulation, the CVCP determined to take further action and accepted the recommendations in the Sutherland Report, particularly regarding the establishment of an academic quality agency (Salter and Tapper, 2000). The Academic Audit was introduced by the CVCP after the AAU came into being in October 1990. By and large, most of the English universities during the period 1985-1991 had no experience of audits or any external quality processes exclusive to teaching and learning, except for those procedures relating to qualifications under professional and statutory bodies (R. Brown, 2004).

The initial audit launched by the AAU was mainly aimed at taking away doubts about the effectiveness of institutional self-regulation, and therefore was designed to evaluate how the universities assured their academic standards and how quality was maintained and enhanced. In addition, the universities accepted, to some extent, that they would need to relinquish some of their self-regulation by guaranteeing their engagement in the process of self-evaluation so as to demonstrate that their quality was managed effectively, thereby avoiding any further encroachment on their autonomy. That is, the Academic Audit was concerned with internal quality control procedures (e.g. how institutional standards were determined and maintained and how quality procedures were arranged), rather than the quality of provision. With respect to the audit process, the university firstly provided an audit team with briefing materials in preparation for the visit. The introductory self-evaluation document contained a description of the structures and processes used by the university to assure the quality and standards of provision. Subsequently, the audit visit typically took three days, in conjunction with a group of three auditors scrutinising the institution’s quality procedures and an audit secretary (HEQC, 1993). At the last stage, audit reports, which in essence were accounts of site visits, rather than judgements, were produced (Williams, 2009). On the whole, the audit process can be conceived of as an intrinsic approach, insofar as the quality control was undertaken by the individual universities.

5.1.4. Policy Programmes
According to the Annual Report of the Director, the Academic Audit was merely undertaken by invitation and theoretically, the external quality agency had no right to
enter any institution, albeit every university had scheduled a visit during 1990 to 1991 (Williams, 1992). This account to a considerable extent points to the intrinsic nature of the QA scheme in general.

5.1.4.1. Position and Boundary Rules
The AAU, as a unit of the CVCP, was devised for scrutinising the quality arrangements within individual universities and its remit was associated with: the evaluation of the institutional mechanisms for monitoring standards and promoting quality, the identification of good practice with regard to quality maintenance at the national level, the review of the system of external examiners, and reporting to the CVCP (Williams, 1992).

The management board of the AAU, consisted of eight vice-chancellors, four members external to the university community and the secretary of the CVCP, and it set up the methods of the Academic Audit. Its consultative committee was composed of the management board as well as representatives of students, trade unionists, non-university education and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate. Regarding auditors, they were selected from a list of nominations by vice-chancellors and all came from the academic community. Before commencing their work, there was a six-day introduction programme equipping the auditors with information about quality procedures and the AAU. Audit secretaries, who were normally experienced university administrators, were involved in the audit process by providing audit teams with administrative support (Williams, 1992).

5.1.4.2. Information Rules
Drawing on the university’s briefing document along with the information that the audit team gathered during the on-site visit, the audit report would be drafted for the university as a whole. The fundamental assumption behind auditors’ judgements was that the quality of a university could only be judged in the light of the institution’s own aims and objectives. Due to the intrinsic quality, firstly, the Academic Audit did not attempt to make absolute judgements about quality, but it did provide a full account of a university’s QA mechanisms and arrangements. Therefore, there was no overall or potentially adversarial commentary offered in the report, e.g. a judgement categorised as satisfactory/unsatisfactory. Secondly, audit reports included formative descriptions of the internal QA procedures in place and judgemental elements in
relation to what auditors viewed as the strengths and weaknesses of quality arrangements in each institution. The final report, in conjunction with the comments made by the vice-chancellor of the university on the draft version, would be sent to the university. Thirdly, audit results would be reported back to the CVCP via the management board of the AAU and nearly all institutions that were visited, in practice, placed their audit reports in the public domain. Nonetheless, the audit reports were perceived to be the property of the corresponding institution and the CVCP did not formally publish the QA results. In other words, the circulation of the audit report was excluded from the remit of the quality agency (HEQC, 1996).

5.1.5. POLICY ENTREPRENEURS
The academic advocacy of the Academic Audit was evident. Firstly, the ASG that was successively chaired by senior vice-chancellors published the Reynolds and Sutherland Reports in the late 1980s, in which the policy innovation promoted by the CVCP was clearly rooted. That is, this influential documentation urged the CVCP to adopt audit as the QA approach and to create the AAU. More specifically, the policy innovations constituted the Academic Audit, whereby the quality body would be independent of individual universities and was to assure the quality of HE provision by monitoring the mechanisms and structures for QA internal to individual universities. Secondly, such academic influence remained in the implementation process. The first year of AAU’s work was mainly based on a checklist devised by the ASG to scrutinise universities’ QA mechanisms and structures (Williams, 1992). As one of the interviewees mentioned, Lord Stewart Sutherland who was a chairman of the ASG and the AAU, in particular, was perceived as a key figure in the policy process. Generally speaking, the CVCP was the pivotal policy entrepreneur during the period 1985-1991, which advocated the QA approach and also the policy maker who made the decision as to whether or to accept the procedures developed by the AAU.

5.2. POLICY ELEMENTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM 1992 TO 1994

5.2.1. PUBLIC SENTIMENTS
The Further and Higher Education Act, placed on the statute book in 1992, represents a watershed in British HE development. Before this, the public sector consisting of
polytechnics and colleges was separated from the university sector, which meant that the English HE system was binary. The two sectors were expected to be responsive to different societal demands and therefore, were under different regulations.

With respect to the polytechnics and colleges, unlike their counterparts representing traditional elites, these institutions were tasked with addressing wider societal needs by incorporating “ordinary” people to whom the elite universities were virtually inaccessible. Owing to this feature, these institutions had been controlled by external authority since their inception. That is, government intervention was evident in most arrangements in the public sector, such as: policies, quality control procedures and centralised curricula (Neave, 1994, van Bruggen et al., 1999, Westerheijden, 2005). Furthermore, governmental goals and the external demands that could capture societal attention were strongly favoured on the policy agenda in the sector (Amaral et al., 2007, Maassen, 1997, van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994, Westerheijden, 2007b). Probably as a consequence of this, external authority and self-governing communities (e.g. HE organisations, academic fellows as well as professional bodies outside HE) had a collective influence on the definition of quality for polytechnics and colleges (Neave, 1994).

Generally speaking, polytechnics and colleges were under three sets of quality control. Firstly, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) was responsible for making external judgements on the quality of these institutions in terms of teaching and learning. Moreover, based on direct observation of their fitness for professional practice, the results of subject visits would be used to inform the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) for determining the allocation of funded places in these institutions. In sum, the HMI conducted a combined function of formal inspection and informal consultation, which meant that governmental intervention into institutional arrangements would become significant due to the linkage between assessment and resource allocation. Secondly, the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) was involved in another set of quality control procedures. Since being established in 1965, the degree-awarding body had been inspecting and scrutinising institutional objectives and outcomes, whereby decisions on academic award would be made. Regarding its remit, the body had a pivotal role in degree accreditation, acting as a guardian with oversight of the quality of degree courses in the public sector. Hence, the CNAA controlled institutional arrangements, although
its focus moved over time, from scrutinising advanced courses for approval to periodically reviewing individual institutions (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). Thirdly, professional or statutory bodies were involved in approving or recognising specific programmes, both in the universities and the institutions of the public sector with regards to professional qualifications or licence to practise (e.g. law, medicine and the branches of engineering) (Brennan and Williams, 2004).

Around the mid-1980s, the public sector that was subject to external quality control was under pressure to change, due to a progressive increase in the number of students and of institutions. Consequently, the government introduced some autonomous and flexible processes for quality arrangements into the polytechnics and colleges in order to deal with this rapid expansion in the demand for HE. In particular, the 1985 Lindop Report suggested that degree awarding powers be made available to a wider range of institutions, and also that those who had received both taught course and research degree accreditation from the CNAA should be also have this right (Harvey, 2005). These recommendations, to a great extent, represented the governmental viewpoint that: those public sector institutions that were perceived as self-critical institutions should be designated full responsibility for awarding degrees and for control over their own teaching quality and standards. After the 1988 Act, local authorities, such as the regional staff inspectors of the department and the National Advisory Body (i.e. Regional Advisory Councils before 1981), appeared to be yet further removed from the public sector institutions. Moreover, polytechnics and some colleges assumed degree awarding powers after the 1992 Act (Kogan and Hanney, 2000).

An appeal for external quality control over the university sector had emerged back in the 1980s. For instance, the 1985 UGC Circular (22/85) dictated that the introduction of a few indicators of teaching performance would be beneficial to quality control and resource allocation (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). Similar demands, to some extent, were temporarily postponed whilst there was integration with the public HE sector. Nevertheless, the government in the 1992 Act envisaged the quality regime in the HE system being in common for both types of institutions. The request, which was made externally to the university community, eventually found its way into these institutions.
At the outset of amalgamating the sectors of the binary HE system, the universities retained their traditional perceptions of quality and quality procedures. That is, the internal quality control model, mentioned in section 5.1.1, was to work in conjunction with a system of professional examiners, externally appointed by the universities on behalf of specific subjects/disciplines (Barnett, 1996). In addition, there was a perceived need of the government, against the binary background, to erase differences between the universities and the institutions in the public sector. For these reasons, the policy idea about quality definitions pervading the system, drawing upon the outcome of the English Q-sorts, was intrinsically oriented. In appendix b the comparison between statements 9 to 12 show the paramount importance placed on the conception of quality as fitting the missions of individual institutions, which was particularly visible in statement 10.

5.2.2. POLICY FRAMES
After the opportunity to access HE was widened, the growth in costs led to the governmental emphasis being placed on value for money and other market concepts, such as competition for public resources or ‘cost-effective’ strategies and this featured in most British policy reform during the 1990s (R. Brown, 2004, p. 37). More specifically, competition among HE institutions was expected to intensify, thereby contributing to improving the institutions’ efficiency in terms of resource management. The government envisaged continuing to use evaluation results to determine the allocation of public funding, as started with the Research Assessment Exercise. In the Coopers and Lybrand Report, for example, there was an observation regarding the influence of such an economic rationale on HE policy, and as a result, the institutions faced taking a more active position regarding being accountable to their consumers (HEQC, 1993).

Similarly, the 1991 White Paper and the 1992 Act declared the government intention to intensify competition among HE institutions. Aiming to continue the extension of HE without jeopardising quality, the White Paper contained proposals for amalgamating the binary system into a unitary one (DES, 1991). Subsequently, the 1992 Act provided polytechnics and colleges with the possibility of being granted university status. Moreover, to generate a more equal base, the state apparatus was restructured; for example, there was the demise of the CNAA, the amalgamation of the UFC and PCFC, and the creation of the HE funding bodies. In general, by means
of eliminating the boundaries between the universities and the institutions in the public sector, there would be greater competition for funds and students in the newly-created single HE market.

Against this background, albeit that the 1991 White Paper simultaneously referred to quality control and accountability as the purposes of the QA scheme, there seemed to be less governmental stress on quality enhancement. For instance, the linkage between assessment outcomes and funding allocation was asserted in the 1992 Act and is sensible in a funding council’s circular 3/93 (HEFCE, 1993). With respect to this, Tapper (2007) claimed the Quality Assessment was linked to the function of control rather than enhancement. Further, a review of the Quality Audit saw ‘accountability as the sole objective for audit although the overall purpose of HEQC is described as contributing to the maintenance and improvement of quality’ (HEQC, 1993, p. 2). Moreover, the Q-analysis ascertained similar results. That is, the most significant purpose of the new QA system was to ensure that the HE provision would be accountable for public funding. This function was represented by statement 15 in appendix b and agreed by both internal and external participants in the Q-sorts.

5.2.3. Policy Paradigms

In accordance with the 1992 Act, the QA system that was to commence was made on the premise that the prime responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning should rest with individual institutions. In addition, the external quality procedures would work in partnership with institutional QA arrangements. Drawing on these, two fundamental components, self-assessment and academic peer review, were encompassed both in the Quality Audit and Quality Assessment. With respect to the former, it was devised to incorporate the perspectives held by individual institutions in terms of their own weaknesses and strengths into the course of quality evaluation. That is, the information appended to the self-assessment report submitted by the institution was aimed at providing either auditors or assessors with an initial understanding of the HE provision before they started visiting, regarding the preparation and conduct of peer review.

As regards peer review, certainly, there was large discrepancy between the Guidelines on Quality Assurance provided by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) for auditors and the Assessors’ Handbook for assessors published by the
HEFCE. In particular, the guidelines solely provided an account of audit procedures and a checklist in relation to relevant concerns, whilst the handbook outlined objectives and a protocol for assessment methods, all of which were presented in a relatively detailed, prescriptive way. Despite this, the vast majority of either auditors or assessors were drawn from the university community. Moreover, their judgements were, all the same, made in reference to intrinsic criteria, i.e. aims and objectives in relation to the provision of individual programmes and universities (HEQC and HEFCE, 1994).

These quality procedures adhered to an intrinsic orientation. This is, firstly, accounted for by an intensive involvement of the academics in either the process of Quality Assessment or Quality Audit, which is due to the collective responsibility for HE quality that the university community assumed. Secondly, the institutions were allowed to develop their own internal audit arrangements, whereby university autonomy remained almost complete. By and large, the QA approach emphasised the viewpoints internal to the universities. This meant that the whole set of quality processes can be differentiated from an accreditation system, where judgements are more concerned with external stakeholders’ perspectives.

5.2.4. Policy Programmes
5.2.4.1. Position and Boundary Rules
The actors that engaged in the quality process included two managing agencies, viz. the HEQC and the Quality Assessment Committee (QAC), and those practically involved in the assessment and audit procedures, i.e. assessors and auditors. Their membership and nomination led to the QA scheme appearing as being a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic features.

HEQC (1992-1997)
In response to the merger of HE sectors, several representative bodies of institutions, i.e. the CVCP, the Committee of the Directors of Polytechnics (CDP) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP), collectively proposed to establish a single unit, the responsibility of which would be inherited from the CNAA in relation to the public sector (e.g. advising the Department of Education and Science on applications for degree awarding and university titles) and from the CVCP regarding the universities (e.g. concerning quality audit and enhancement, which was
transferred from the AAU). The proposals were sent to the Department of Education and Science in October 1991 by the chairs of the three bodies (R. Brown, 2004). Although the establishment of the quality agency collectively owned by the institutions was perceived as a political strategy for dealing with the government’s economic ideology (Salter and Tapper, 2000) or for avoiding them taking over the remit of CNAA at the outset of the unitary HE system (Brown, 2004), the government gave their approval to the proposals in the 1991 White Paper, which stated that the new quality agency was to cover all HE institutions throughout the UK (DES, 1991). The HEQC was subsequently created in 1991 and incorporated in May 1992. It assumed a ‘semi-statutory nature’ and was funded by institutional subscriptions. Furthermore, the majority of its board of directors were academics: two college representatives plus equal numbers of university and polytechnic heads, but just two members (later increased to four) of employers independent of HE institutions (R. Brown, 2004). Therefore, generally speaking, the HEQC can be categorised as an intrinsic quality agency exerting collective control over HE quality on behalf of the academic community.

QAC (1992-1997)
After the necessity of establishing a unit for Quality Assessment was initially pointed out in the White Paper (DES, 1991), a proposal for its creation was further supported by a working party composed of the heads from both the universities and the public sector institutions. However, its contents were based on the discussions between the government (i.e. the CNAA officers and the Department) and the CDP, who played a greater part in these than the other representative bodies. The final document dispatched to the department suggested that the functions of the new body should include: (1) providing the funding councils advice on available sources of information about quality and responding to specific questions within particular subject fields; (2) visiting and observing institutional practices; and (3) publishing an annual report (R. Brown, 2004). These initiatives were subsequently incorporated into the Further and Higher Education Bill, which was passed by parliament in 1992. In accordance with the act (section 70), each funding council was to assess the quality of programmes/subjects whose activities the council provided (or were considering for) financial support. To this end, they were to establish their own assessment unit (i.e. QAC) assuming statutory responsibility for organising the assessment process and, the QAC would report back accordingly to the
corresponding funding council and offer relevant advice.

As regards the constitution of each QAC, the majority of its steering committee, in accordance with the 1992 Act, was to be derived from the representatives of HE institutions rather than the funding councils. Nonetheless, it is posited that this quality agency retained an extrinsic feature in the light of its role and operations being subject to guidance from the secretaries of state and the determination of the funding councils, albeit in conjunction with consultation with the universities. In addition, the members of the QAC were to be appointed by the funding council, based on their personal academic backgrounds and capacity, such as having experience in HE institutions. In general, the ownership of the quality agency was not with the universities, but rested with stakeholders external to them, especially the funding council.

Auditors and assessors
An assessment team usually consisted of four or five assessors, but this could differ depending on the nature of the discipline, such as the scope of the subject area and the type of the programmes involved. In most cases, the assessors were drawn from three constituencies: (1) specialists, possessing expertise in the subjects under scrutiny; (2) contract assessors (normally for 30 weeks a year) predominantly on secondment to the HEFCE for one to three years; and (3) permanent HEFCE staff, the proportion of which was small. Although the composition of the review team could vary, there had to be a report assessor, responsible for the conduct and management of the assessment visit, normally recruited from the funding council (either a staff number or a contract assessor). In addition, considering the necessity of being familiar with HE teaching and learning, there were at least two assessors drawn from the academic staff of institutions. On the whole, the vast majority of the assessors were the specialist and contract assessors, mainly drawn from the university community, but occasionally expertise from commerce, industry, professional bodies and the professions was brought on board. By September 1994 there were over 400 subject specialist assessors involved and around 30 were contact assessors. In contrast to the number of assessors trained by HEFCE, there were only 25 auditors provided by the HEQC each year. Generally, senior academics or managers in the universities formed the majority of the auditors and there were around 60-70 auditors at any one time in the Division of Quality Audit in HEQC.
As regards nomination, HEFCE discharged its obligation to recruit assessors, and the great majority of subject assessors were nominated by the institutions (QAA, 2003). After being selected, all qualified assessors were required to complete a two-day intensive training programme, aiming to provide an opportunity to observe the protocol and develop their assessment skills, in particular the use of self-assessment and the conduct of the assessment visit. Similarly, auditors were required to attend an induction course covering QA theory and practice as well as providing them with an opportunity to observe an audit, so as to gain the relevant audit skills. Generally speaking, training of assessors and auditors was a collective matter for the funding councils and the university community to decide upon (HEFCE, 1993, HEQC and HEFCE, 1994). Considering the fact that participants eligible to be assessors and auditors were dominated by the members derived from the university community, the inclination is to conceive of the membership as retaining an intrinsic feature.

5.2.4.2. INFORMATION RULES

In the analysis of information rules, the three aspects, viz. data collection, data judgements and reporting, contributed an intrinsic orientation in general, except for the last aspect, which is perceived as having a mixed orientation.

With respect to the information collected and reviewed in the process of Quality Audit, the report of the audit would include commendation and formative descriptions, contributing to an intrinsic feature. The requirements of the data collection in Quality Assessment reflected a similar orientation, but for the pre-1992 universities factual inputs, expected learning outcomes and development processes were also required for the first time. Moreover, further contextual information was required to be appended as a statistical profile, which would be compiled from the statistical indicators chosen by the institution and from a set of indicators reviewed by the QAC. In addition, the institution was allowed to provide commentaries on these indicators. The descriptive information could be such as: aims and objectives, course structures and modular schemes, commentary on indicator content, and discussions about how the quantitative indicators informed progress towards fulfilling institutional expectations (HEFCE, 1993, 1994b, QAA, 2003). These requirements remained in the QA schemes, unchanged, until the commencement of
the Institutional Audit in 2002.

Regarding data judgements, the rules in the QA scheme resembled those of data collection and thus, had an intrinsic orientation which was reflected in both the Quality Assessment and Quality Audit. More specifically, the quality of provision was to be externally measured against the provider’s context, for example, the institution’s mission in the audit process and the programme’s objectives in the process of assessment. That is, evaluation judgements in the course of peer review would be made by reference to the provider’s aims and objectives in relation to teaching and learning. According to *Learning from Audit* (HEQC, 1996), the evaluation reports had to reflect sensitivity to contextual variation. That is, particularly for auditors, there should be no absolute ‘gold standard’ to follow and they also should not seek to categorise or make comparisons (HEQC and HEFCE, 1994).

In addition, assessment grades were a matter for both individual programme providers and assessors to assign. Apart from that, issues such as the scope of the assessment, the timetable for receipt of documentation and the balance of the assessment team, would be discussed in the preparatory meeting held before the conduct of an assessment visit. Afterwards, a three-day visit would be conducted, along with certain activities: (1) meetings with staff (including senior managerial and academic members) and students; (2) observation of teaching and learning activities; (3) examination of self-assessment documentation; and (4) an oral feedback meeting with the institution to share assessors’ judgements for each aspect under review. Finally, according to the evidence shown in self-assessment documentation and/or collected during assessment visits, the assessors would make their judgements on student experience and achievements (HEFCE, 1993, HEQC and HEFCE, 1994).

In contrast to the requirements of data collection and judgements, there were some extrinsic characteristics identified in relation to the delivery of QA results, which could probably be accounted for by the increasing stress on public accountability and which led to these features exhibiting a mixed orientation. The institutions were required to be responsible for providing sufficient information about the quality of their provision and about how they had been achieving their stated objectives for learning and teaching, which would assist external stakeholders with making
informed decisions. Reflecting such policy ideas, judgements in the course of Quality Assessment were delivered in two ways. First, at the close of a visit there would be oral feedback given by the review team to the institution, which was confidential to the provider. Second, after the assessment visits the HEFCE would publish the institution’s statements of self-assessment as well as the assessors’ judgements and recommendations. The reporting would be based on an aggregate scale with three descriptive points, viz. excellent, satisfactory and unsatisfactory (HEFCE, 1993).

Under the same influence, the HEQC envisaged audit procedures having to monitor accuracy of the information provided by the institutions, so as to assure the stakeholders of any claims based on it. Consequently, the HEQC Board determined at its first meeting in July 1992 to publish audit reports in order to disseminate the necessary information widely (HEQC, 1993). Furthermore, the structure of the reports was required to be more precise, containing the following: (1) a description of the quality assurance process in place; (2) the auditors’ perceptions of their effectiveness and comments on areas of good practice where identified; and (3) suggestions for further development. With respect to the points for further consideration listed at the end of audit reports, from 1994 onwards they were to be categorised into three types: necessary for the maintenance of quality, advisable for the better ordering of institutional arrangements, and desirable; instead of presenting in an order of priority in accordance with the rules made by the AAU (HEQC, 1994).

5.2.4.3. Payoff and Scope Rules

Although the funding councils for England, Scotland and Wales had adopted slightly different methodologies as to assessments since the outset of their implementation, they were similar in that they linked the outcomes of their assessment processes with governmental decisions about funding for teaching and learning activities in their HE systems. In particular, if a programme or course was graded as unsatisfactory (1993-1995) or at least one aspect of the provision was rated 1 (1995-1996), its provider would receive a re-assessment within 12 months. The follow-up activity, viz. a second assessment visit, was particularly designed to stimulate improvement, for the institution was expected to address the serious shortcomings identified by the original team of assessors. In addition, the programme provider would be ineligible for any growth in HEFCE funding in the first year after the assessment visit. Next, if the provision did not improve within one year and was categorised as the same grade
in the re-assessment visit, the provider’s funding and student places would be (partially) withdrawn (HEFCE, 1993, 1994b).

The linkage between quality management and funding allocations seems to reflect an extrinsic orientation or relate to value for money, but given the low level of HEFCE funding for this, this had only a marginal impact in this direction. In addition, quality judgements were only one of several factors considered when funding decisions were made by HEFCE (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993). As regards Quality Audit, the quality process included a follow-up required to be completed by a failing institution in one year, aimed at reviewing how much progress it had made. This change happened in 1993, as a result of an evaluation commissioned by the HEQC (R. Brown, 2004). Similar to Quality Assessment, there were no direct rewards and sanctions dedicated to the quality mechanism, or any legitimate link between audit results and funding allocation. In the light of this point, it would be compelling to argue that the payoff and scope rules in the QA scheme had an intrinsic orientation.

5.2.5. POLICY ENTREPRENEURS

In 1991 the government proposed a dual QA system in the White Paper, which primarily stemmed from the governmental intention, as mentioned in subsection 5.2.2, to amalgamate the UFC and PCFC sectors or to abolish the line between them. This policy initiative that encompassed two sets of quality procedures, viz. Quality Audit and Quality Assessment, was endorsed by the academics without serious objection or dissent and was, in turn, legitimised in 1992. The smooth running of getting the policy innovation onto the statute book probably was accounted for by the lack of consensus among the university community about the QA system for the newly-combined HE system. Regarding this, as described in subsection 5.2.1, before 1992 the quality of provision in the universities was maintained through the self-governance approach whereas in the polytechnics and colleges it was assured by external control and as a result of this historical diversity, the two sectors held different, even contradictory, stances on the QA issue. For example, Salter and Tapper (2000, p. 67) described the perspective of the universities on the governmental initiative as a view of ‘the traditional liberal university ideal’, whilst the other sector saw the matter within an economic ideology. With respect to the former viewpoint, the CVCP hardly deemed necessary formal quality procedures, particularly in the form of assessment, due to the belief that the quality of pre-1992
universities was inherent. Conversely, most of the institutions originally from the public sector supported QA innovation as it provided them with the opportunity to prove that their students and staff were well qualified if they received a good outcome. However, although the CVCP was willing to change it was less ready to accept the proposals for establishing a single quality regime (R. Brown, 2004). In effect, the debate over the new quality regime for the freshly-combined HE remained fierce even after the 1992 Act was on the statute book (Morley, 2003).

The fact that there was no general agreement reached by the representative bodies of HE institutions provided an opportunity for the government to intervene in the course of formulating the QA system. Given this impasse, this provided the government with the opportunity to intervene and according to Kogan and Hanney (2000), their involvement can be traced back to the 1991 White Paper (Para 70), which gave the government power over HE quality control. Similarly, Filippakou and Tapper (2010, p. 476) perceived the passage of the 1992 FHE Act as the onset of the state’s “intrusion” into QA procedures, which to a great extent marked a shift in HE governance. That is, the traditional perception of the sector as an autonomous and self-governing corporation was gradually eroded. Moreover, Brown (2004) conceived the year 1992 of as the high water mark of academic self-regulation. As regards the policymaking process of QA in particular, it has been elicited that the government, being a dominant policy entrepreneur, advocated a dual QA approach, which involved transferring various quality procedures that had been implemented either in the universities or in the polytechnics and colleges. Eventually, all these institutions aligned themselves with the government by endorsing its proposals, albeit they may have done so for different considerations. For example, although the CVCP was willing to accept a dual quality regime collectively conducted by the QAC and the HEQC, it did not want assessment included, whereas the CDP did.

In spite of the government being the dominant policy entrepreneur in relation to the QA approach, the detailed requirements and quality alternatives were collectively provided by HEFCE and the HEQC. More precisely, the QAC would have oversight of the process of the Quality Assessment on behalf of HEFCE. Based on the PCFC experience of implementing the external assessment of teaching quality, the QAC devised the quality procedures by focusing on subject areas. Furthermore, there were to be quantifiable outcomes (e.g. performance indicators) and external judgements,
which could be linked to funding allocation (DES, 1991). With respect to the formulation of the Quality Assessment, HEFCE was influential especially in relation to the procedures for subject visits and the submission of paperwork. On the other hand, the Quality Assurance Group of the HEQC was in charge of the other quality process, the Quality Audit. The version of the audit procedures was inherited from the Academic Audit developed by the AAU, which to some extent was conceived of as a pilot project to initiate an external QA system for the English universities for the first time. During this process, there were 76 audits and 27 universities involved, before the termination of the AAU (HEQC and HEFCE, 1994). Being drawn up on these experiences, the Quality Audit closely resembled its predecessor in way of being composed of three parts: (1) the provision of briefing documentation by the institution; (2) a visit by a small group of experienced auditors; and (3) a subsequent report (HEQC, 1994). In sum, the HEQC and the QAC of the funding council were the key policy entrepreneurs and also were to be the decision-makers with respect to the introduction of the QA scheme, in terms of the practical arrangements for the dual quality system.

5.3. **Policy Elements of Quality Assurance from 1995 to 1997**

5.3.1. **Public Sentiments**

In the middle of the 1990s, the argument about the underlying quality theory (e.g. fitness of purpose or fitness for purposes) that would be suitable for the system, composed of the ex-polytechnics and the universities, remained unsettled. This was demonstrated by what was found from the Q-sort analysis (appendix b), in which statements 17 to 20 were devised to capture the policy idea about quality definitions that pervaded in the English HE system from 1995 to 1997. Drawing upon the results, the external stakeholders, whose perspective was reflected by factor A, were inclined to agree with intrinsic quality definitions (i.e. statements 17 and 18) as the pervading QA idea during this period. Conversely, the internal stakeholders who participated in the Q-sorts believed that the extrinsic quality definitions, especially ‘quality as passing externally-required standards’ (statement 19), dominated the regime of this policy idea during these years. However, judged by the highest aggregate Z-score, the statement ‘quality as fitting the institution’s missions’ (statement 17) was the one representing the public sentiment in relation to the QA element under investigation.
With respect to these statements, they are explained as follows: statement 19, in relation to an extrinsic quality definition; and statements 17 and 18, regarding intrinsic quality notions: ‘quality as fitting the institutions’ missions’ and ‘quality as passing relative standards’ respectively.

Due to an increasing involvement of external demands and policy actors, for instance, the government interference that has been highlighted in subsection 5.2.5, the argument about HE quality was gradually diverted into another issue: what contributed to appropriate quality standards. More specifically, based on the assumption that high quality could only be achieved by the institutions endeavouring to use their own resources in the most effective way, the government endorsed an extrinsic concept: ‘quality is best protected by institutions competing against one another for students and income’ (R. Brown, 2004, p. 151). The conceptions of quality reflected new public management ideas, which pervaded the Thatcher, Major and Blair governments. Many politicians and bureaucrats in the government, influenced by such ideas, believed that HE should be delivered in a way contributing to national well-being, economic in particular. Consequently, governance strategies and regulations in the HE system, to a considerable extent, were associated with market mechanisms, for example, “the size and nature of higher education should be largely determined by the demands of customers’ or the principle that the success in public services was judged in the light of the ability to attract enough customers” (Shattock, 2008, p. 192). As a consequence, the government began to devise the QA system as a vehicle for incorporating economic relevance into academic autonomy and the traditional academic criteria that were derived from self-regulated quality regime (e.g. the internal dialogue between members of universities) were presumably to be phased out. Also, performance indicators were favoured by the government as reference points against which the quality of provision was to be judged. As a result, it seemed that the governmental interest had switched from the general statements of principles to the detail of academic practice, especially in relation to teaching outcomes and process.

Despite the governmental emphasis on externally required quality standards, the perspective of the academics retained influence on the determination of QA issues. From the HEFCE perspective, the assessment approach had to be set in consultation with the institutions and be conducted against the HE providers’ respective
objectives and missions (HEFCE, 1994b), as the providers had statutory responsibilities for maintaining and improving their own quality, in accordance with the 1992 FHE Act (Section 70). That is, institutional aims and objectives, to a certain extent, were taken into consideration when evaluation judgements were made.

Nonetheless, the intrinsic quality definition covered another understanding, which was concerned with ‘quality as passing relative standards’ linked, to some extent, with the idea of quality as passing externally-required standards. A similar intrinsic QA idea was delivered through the CVCP annual review (1997, p. 12): ‘clarification and articulation of appropriate standards is now a key quality challenge for the sector’. This showed that the academic community basically accepted the policy idea that quality standards should be involved in the new QAS. In particular, in the reports of assessment visits, some criteria which academic assessors applied to make their judgements on quality showed a close connection between academic standards and employment as well as relevance to graduate employability, the involvement of employers in curricula, and the inclusion of key skills necessary for a workforce (R. Brown, 2004). In general, the academic community was inclined to believe that quality, essentially, should not only be self-regulated, but also required it to be measured against relative, instead of common, standards for different types of HE institutions and for different disciplines.

5.3.2. POLICY FRAMES

During the previous period, being accountable for public funds was perceived as the major objective for conducting the QA system. With respect to this, assessment results would inform HEFCE as an input for funding allocation, so as to ensure that the public funded provision would be of satisfactory quality or better. Nevertheless, the significance of this policy frame vis-à-vis other QA functions that were investigated in Q-sorts appears to have faded during the years 1995 to 1997, according to the analysis results in appendix b. More specifically, statement 23 was not the dominant policy idea about QA functions in the English HE system during this time, both from the external and internal stakeholders’ perspectives which were reflected in factor A and factor B respectively. Therefore, it would seem that the emphasis on accountability for public money, as an extrinsic purpose of QA, became much less of a concern during this episode. The reason for this change was that in order to control HE expansion, rewarding ‘excellent’ providers with extra student
places was replaced with the introduction of a maximum number of funded places for each university, in the modification to the Quality Assessment in 1995. Notwithstanding this shift, it does not mean that there was no extrinsic function framed in relation to the QA alternatives. Actually, those external stakeholders participating in the Q-sorts were inclined to believe that HEFCE highlighted the dissemination of assessment results, which would benefit stakeholders in making informed choices, the idea behind statement 24.

Generally speaking, the most conspicuous purposes for implementing the QA system, according to the results of the Q-analysis, were those manifesting intrinsic features; albeit people with different backgrounds would value the intrinsic ideas differently. More specifically, the internal stakeholders participating in the Q-sorts agreed that statement 21, which concerned the internal purpose of facilitating quality improvement by disseminating good practice, was the most significant vis-à-vis statements 22 to 24. In other words, publishing comparative information about the quality of HE provision was crucial, not only for consumers (e.g. potential students, staff and employers of graduates) making choices, but also for the universities in terms of enhancement. On the other hand, the Q-analysis showed that the external stakeholders believed that statement 22 was significant, that is, the QA system was aimed at the internal purpose of ultimately enhancing quality. In relation to this idea, Brown (2004, p. 62) commented that ‘enhancement was the obvious corollary of audit’.

5.3.3. Policy Paradigms
Comparing the QA approach adopted in this period and that in the previous one, there was no observable policy change encountered. Notwithstanding this, fierce debate regarding QA approaches had pervaded the English HE system since the new HE framework was devised by the 1992 FHE Act. This particularly revolved around the choice between assessment and audit and that between institutions and subjects, which were, to some extent, related to the changes in other QA elements. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss some of the underlying assumptions in the background to the debate.

With respect to the dual QA approach, there was no consensus in the university community, into which the different types of HE institutions had just been
amalgamated, about the composition of audits and assessments. However, after the CVCP Residential Conference held in 1993, an agreement was reached by the academics: a single external quality process administrated by a single quality agency. The common ground for the proposals was concerned with the burden and minimising costs resulting from the duplication of the existing QA arrangements. Influenced by the consensus built by the CVCP, in the 1994 speech of the secretary of state, the government revised their original stance on the dual QA process. The HEFCE Chief Executive (Graeme Davies) was subsequently appointed to review the possibility of restructuring the QA system and in turn, in March/April 1995 he proposed the Options Paper comprising various approaches to setting out a single QA process. Among these policy alternatives, six out of the seven options proposed concerned assessment as the core quality process. Brown (2004) claimed that the existence of audit arrangements was purely as compensation for possible weaknesses of the assessment-based approaches. The Options Paper was subsequently circulated to the CVCP members and became the basis of the discussion held at the 1995 HEFCE conference. From the perspective of HEFCE, an assessment-oriented QA system was advocated, mainly due to its advantage of providing accountability and information to the public (ibid).

In contrast to the largely consistent stance on quality assessment taken by the policy entrepreneurs outside the university community, the 1993 CVCP Residential Conference did not lead to consensus among the universities. That is, the course of formulating policy innovations in an integrated QA approach was more complicated and contested in the academic community. More specifically, the chairman of CVCP (Dr Kenneth Edwards) delivered a policy alternative to the Department of Education in June 1994, with the proposals including a focus on teaching and learning standards and the suggestion of an audit-based quality process at the institutional level. In addition, the policy alternative envisaged quality arrangements being under the control of a newly created agency, which would also represent the interests of relevant external stakeholders. In the proposed QA system, the funding councils would be involved in the conduct of follow-ups by means of subject assessments. Nevertheless, one year later, Dr Edwards personally proposed another policy initiative concerned with a different QA method: subject-based evaluation conducted by the institutions. The later version was eventually endorsed by the CVCP Council in May 1995, yet was rejected by the HEFCE. Owing to this, the CVCP published its
formal proposals in July of the same year, which retained the existing dual system comprising institutional audit and subject assessment (Brown, 2004).

Along with the CVCP proposals, there was another policy alternative generated by the HEQC, for the sake of the university community, having drawn upon the findings of 48 audit reports and published in *Learning from Audit 2* (HEQC, 1996). It argued for a tiered quality system: internal review of programmes, in conjunction with external reviews of institutions, which was different from the CVCP alternatives based on a single quality process. According to Brown (2004), the HEQC proposals were generated in the light of self-regulation, yet with some external oversight. More specifically, the HEQC Board believed that academics should be audited in their own right rather than via their validating or accrediting university. This would mean that the faculties/departments would be responsible for the delivery of programmes, whilst the institutions would ultimately guarantee the quality and standards in relation to awards and public funding. This reflected the idea of the decentralisation of responsibility for quality, from the universities to schools or faculties and on 14 July 1995, the HEQC published the proposals.

Due to the continuing and profound disagreement, the CVCP and HEFCE established the Joint Planning Group for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (JPG). The objective of which was to develop detailed proposals for an integrated quality process as well as to create a quality agency by January 1997 for implementing the new QA system. A positive result of the collective decision-making was that the attitudes towards the QA approaches converged and according to two reports and one evaluation, the conduct of which was commissioned by HEFCE around 1996 and 1997, the assessment procedures were perceived as the process of nurturing compliance culture. Furthermore, the utility of assessment was criticised for being waning as assessment outcomes were exaggerated and often not being concerned with improvement (Brown, 2004). Similar opinions were voiced in the 1997 Dearing Report. In particular, it was observed that HE institutions knew how to achieve high ratings owing to their accumulative experience of involvement in the assessment process. In addition, there were complaints about the assessment outcomes being valued as a misuse of already scarce HE resources, because most university departments were reviewed as having a satisfactory level of quality in the 1992-1995 assessment (Dearing, 1997). Moreover, lack of consistency across
different academic programmes/subjects was put forward as another criticism. Certainly, HEFCE had introduced a number of methods for dealing with this issue, for example, setting out the six core aspects of provision in the Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA), but nonetheless, an analysis of TQA reports revealed that the grades of some aspects in the assessment results were consistently higher than others (HEQC, 1997). In particular, it was felt that there was the likelihood of inflation of the judgement scores or of institutional bias in favour of the pre-1992 universities. Such suspicion was probably caused by the government’s insistence that the assessment procedures had to provide a basis for discriminating between institutions, which they believed would be linked to funding allocation (R. Brown, 2004). Likewise, there was a common doubt about the utility and validation of the TQA. For instance, it was difficult to discern whether assessment results relating to e.g. effectiveness of lecture presentation and available resources demonstrated the improvement of genuine quality or merely its proxies.

Apart from the argument over QA approaches, there was another controversial issue: that of whether the QA system should be focused at the institutional or subject level. In particular, it was the primary agenda item at the JPG seventh meeting in July 1996. On the one side, where institution-based alternatives were advocated, it was believed, particularly by John Stoddart who was the Chair of the CDP and of HEQC, that institutional audit could cover a wider range of HE matters (e.g. off-campus provision) than subject review. Moreover, in his proposals it was recommended that all functions that were initially served by the HEQC should be taken over by the new quality agency. On the other side, Baroness Warwick (the CVCP Chief Executive), for example, argued for institutional self-managed procedures, but raised doubts about institutional review on a universal basis, claiming that this would jeopardise the autonomy of individual universities. With respect to the establishment of a new quality agency, she suggested that the HEQC role in quality enhancement could be taken forward by the CVCP outside the QA regime. Ultimately, the draft final report of the meeting, circulated to institutional heads in September 1996, included the institution-based alternatives as the consensus reached by the JPG (Brown, 2004).

Generally speaking, the arguments pervading during this period of the English HE system revolved around the policy ideas regarding which level of HE activities should be evaluated (e.g. institution-based or subject-based) and by means of which
methods (e.g. audit-based or assessment-based). Policy entrepreneurs from different backgrounds advocated different QA alternatives. For example, the HEQC favoured the proposals in which QA results would not lead to any grading. Moreover, most of the pre-1992 universities preferred modifications which allowed for a greater degree of internal/institutional involvement, whereas many post-1992 institutions favoured the alternatives which were largely inherited from those that developed under the CNAA tradition. In addition, there was a considerable gap between the funding council and the majority of vice-chancellors: the former advocating the assessment-based approaches, whilst the latter want an audit-based one (Brown, 2004).

Despite such diversity, there was some consensus reached in due course. Regarding this, the CVCP annual review highlighted the common aim of ‘establishing a single independent agency to carry out an integrated quality assurance process for undergraduate education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, leading to a more efficient and cost-effective system’ (CVCP, 1997, p. 27). That is to say, firstly, the university community envisaged the new quality scheme integrating the existing dual quality processes, being carried out by an external agency independent of the government. Secondly, self-regulation would play a fundamental role in the quality process and accordingly HE institutions would conduct their own internal assessment, with this being evaluated by external assessors. Thirdly, there would be much flexibility allowed in the QA process, where the setting (e.g. the timing of external audit and the form of QA results) could be negotiated between the individual institution and the funding council. On the whole, these features represented an intrinsic orientation, but there were some suggestions leaning towards the extrinsic side. For example, the quality agency would generate academic standards to evaluate the quality process and periodically review the effectiveness of internal quality processes. Moreover, the QA results were expected to be published in the form of graded quality profiles. However, except for those proposals aimed at ensuring comparability of QA outcomes, the fundamental parts of the policy alternatives, to a great extent, were inherited from their forerunners with intrinsic character.

5.3.4. POLICY PROGRAMMES

The change in QA programmes after moving into this episode concentrated on the assessment process, which proved much more controversial than audit. With respect to the first cycle of this implementation, which started in April 1993, a total of 15
subjects were assessed, 553 of the 972 completed units assessed were visited, and 950 assessors appointed, which informed the next phase (HEFCE, 1995). That is, drawing upon the study of Barnett, mounted by HEFCE to review the quality assessment procedures that had been implemented, an alternative quality method was formulated, Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) and was published in 1994 (HEFCE, 1994b).

5.3.4.1. **Position and boundary rules**

The procedures and arrangements for subject assessments conducted during 1995 and 1997 were different to those during the previous episode, particularly in relation to coverage. In particular, the coverage of Quality Assessment solely concerned the publicly-funded institutions that provided courses/programmes within selected subject areas decided upon by HEFCE. Take the first round of assessment visits (1993-1995), for example, when eight subject areas were involved (HEFCE, 1993, QAA, 2003), but not all departments/faculties in relation to the selected disciplines were to be visited. That is, in the process of a subject review, peer review was preceded by self-assessment, which functioned as a filter to determine whether a visit should be made by a team of assessors. The self-assessment report would be examined, in the first instance, by the assessors to ascertain whether evidence cited by institutions was sufficient to support the respective claims in the report and this determined which HE providers would receive further attention (HEQC and HEFCE, 1994). More specifically, when the assessors supported the providers’ claim for excellence after reading their reports, assessor teams would be appointed to visit these institutions. However, if the evidence attached was perceived as being insufficient to support the claim for excellence, the provision was to be re-categorised as satisfactory. In most cases, the institutions placed in the satisfactory category by either themselves or the assessors would not be visited, unless they were one of a small sample chosen to receive an assessment visit (HEFCE, 1993). By contrast, the providers claiming themselves as being unsatisfactory would all be subject to a visit. That is, in both of these cases, no judgement of excellent or unsatisfactory would be made without an assessment visit (QAA, 2003).

In contrast, in the new assessment round implemented after 1995, HEFCE was determined to extend the assessment visits to cover all subject providers. Although this appears to be a marginal adjustment, it did change the assessment purpose. More
specifically, after 1995 assessors became unnecessary for deciding which institutions required a visit and judgements by subject providers on the quality of their own provision were no longer necessary (HEFCE, 1994b). In other words, the coverage of TQA reflected a universal process of visiting HE institutions and a compulsory participation, which led the new QA scheme becoming less flexible and showing more extrinsic features.

5.3.4.2. INFORMATION RULES

The major difference between the Quality Assessment and the TQA in data judgements was related to grading scales, with those according to the latter made by assessors after their visits being categorised into two types: (1) A graded profile which was compiled from the six individual aspects of provision through the application of a four-point scale (i.e. 1 to 4, in ascending order of merit); and (2) a summative, threshold judgement, derived from the profile along with six numerical judgements. With respect to the threshold level for the overall appraisals, it would be either approved or not approved. In particular, providing none of the aspects of the provision were graded 1, the quality of provision was approved. In other words, a grade of 2 or better in an aspect of provision would mean that the attainment of the provider’s aims and objectives in the aspect could be judged as of an acceptable quality. On the other hand, the provision was not approved on condition that one or more aspects were graded 1, and consequently, it would be subject to re-assessment within a year. Similarly, the overall judgement on the re-assessment was also at the threshold level, either quality approved or unsatisfactory quality (HEFCE, 1994b).

Comparing the four-point numerical with the three-level descriptive scale (excellence, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory) that was adopted before 1995, the former shows an expectation of greater differentiation among providers, in terms of the extent to which the actual student learning experience and student achievement would attain the individual provider’s aims and objectives. In addition, the new quantifiable scale applied to the individual aspects of provision would facilitate the production of a summative judgement of each assessment unit, in that all the profile elements would be equally weighted. Most importantly, the inclusion of the overall profile along with a threshold judgement was more compatible with the change to universal visiting and these differences led to the TQA being more of an extrinsic-oriented quality programme.
Except for data judgements, the delivery of judgements and information shows a parallel development in terms of there being a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic orientation. This is evident in two notable changes in the dissemination of the assessment results. First, no confidential report would be generated during the TQA process, whether for first assessment or re-assessment. With respect to this, although opinions were divided about whether or not the institutions should be provided with confidential and/or published reports along the lines of feedback reports (HEFCE, 1994a), the funding council was determined to eradicate confidential reporting in favour of a public report following an assessment visit. Second, there was to be a subject overview report which would be compiled from the outcomes of all assessment visits within each subject area and would be published to contribute to public understanding of its quality (HEFCE, 1994b).

5.3.5. **Policy Entrepreneurs**

The policy change in this period, to a considerable extent, revolved around those QA elements in the foreground of the debate, i.e. regulations and the idea about QA functions. In turn, the two quality agencies and funding councils who actively engaged in formulating these policy elements in the previous period continued being involved in providing QA innovations during the immediate following years. With respect to this, Filippakou and Tapper (2007) claimed that the TQA underwent the policy change on behalf of the government via HEFCE and the QAC, whereas the periodic audit was developed by the HEQC under the control of the representative bodies for the institutions.

In particular, the HEQC played a fundamental role in pointing out the importance of quality enhancement, by facilitating the incorporation of internal QA purposes into the 1995-1997 QAS. In addition, this quality agency was the first to propose the eradication of external subject assessment (i.e. TQA), which was subsequently adopted in the recommendations of the Dearing Committee (R. Brown, 1998, 2004). As regards the role of HEFCE in the process, the introduction of the new version of assessment procedures, i.e. the TQA published in December 1994, was attributed to this body. More specifically, this change in the process of subject review was initiated by a HEFCE-commissioned evaluation, which was carried out by the Centre for Higher Education Studies at the Institute of Education, University of London in
late 1993 (Brown, 2004). Based on the evaluation results, HEFCE issued a consultation paper (CP 2/94) in June 1994, seeking advice and views on further development of quality assessment methods. Feedback was collected from institutions, subject associations and professional bodies, contract assessors and subject specialist assessors. Consequently, a circular report (HEFCE C33/93) was generated in October of the same year, and the methods of assessment were revised based on the responses received (HEFCE, 1994a). Consequently, there was some influence elicited from the academic community on HEFCE proposals that were submitted to the Secretary of State at the end of May 1995. For example, it managed to ensure that the ownership of the subject assessments being controlled by institutions would remain unchanged (R. Brown, 2004).

5.4. POLICY ELEMENTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM 1998 TO 2001

5.4.1. PUBLIC SENTIMENTS

As has mentioned in subsection 5.3.1, the focus of the public sentiments in the previous period became more concerned with academic standards, rather than quality definitions. In relation to this, the results of the Q-analysis (appendix b) showed that the QA idea that pervaded the HE system in 1998 to 2001 had an intrinsic orientation, as the score for statement 25 outweighed the other relevant statements 26 to 28.

As regards the extrinsic-oriented statements 27 and 28, which were related to where the government stood on the issue and this was revealed in the report, *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (Dearing, 1997), published in July 1997. The Secretary of State (Mrs Shephard) appointed Lord Ron Dearing, as the chair of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, in February 1996 to make recommendations on the needs of the British HE system for the next 20 years. Of the committee report, the proposals for the quality issue were particularly focussed in chapter ten: qualifications and standards. According to this, the committee recommended to the academic community developing threshold standards and benchmarks for main study areas and to external examiners applying benchmark information on standards to the validation of programme awards. Moreover, the creation of a national qualification framework and the provision of an approved list for selecting external examiners were perceived as a necessary approach to the
standards. Therefore, generally speaking, the government envisaged the quality of HE provision being externally monitored and regulated through the way in which the institutions would comply with a new quality framework, in conjunction with the threshold standards and benchmarks that were to be developed and collectively agreed by the academics.

On the other hand, the intrinsic-oriented statements tended to represent the perspectives of the academics. With respect to this, the university community envisaged strengthening their capacity for self-regulation by providing academic standards. More specifically, to deal with the governmental stress on academic standards, the HEQC drew upon the findings of the Quality Enhancement Group’s projects and argued that academic standards should be viewed as the institution’s business and function as a means for it to analyse and benchmark its provision. After the HEQC and the CVCP reached a consensus, the stance held by the university community on academic standards was concerned with either developing a new definition of self-regulation or providing mechanisms for assuring acceptable standards. To address this, relevant work started with the launching of a range of projects to explore the issue, including the Graduate Standards Programmes (GSP). Ultimately, a final report was generated by the GSP in December 1996 and published in 1997, suggesting that benchmarks and a number of ‘indirect’ threshold standards should be established. In addition, certain definitions were to be especially developed, such as ‘graduateness’, referring to expected qualities and attributes of graduates and ‘threshold standards’, being related to the testing of techniques for measuring such concepts (R. Brown, 1998, 2004).

5.4.2. POLICY FRAMES

According to the results of Q-analysis presented in appendix b, the dominant policy idea about QA functions during 1998 to 2001 was intrinsically-oriented, which was represented by statement 29. Therefore, it would seem that the English HE system of this period inherited the orientation regarding the QA functions from its predecessor during 1995 to 1997. However, unlike the intrinsic function that pervaded in the previous period, which related to improving performance, the idea behind statement 29 was concerned with promoting public confidence in qualification awards. This purpose was especially notable after the new quality agency, the QAA commenced involvement in QA development, against the background of the development of
international HE and the Bologna process.

5.4.3. POLICY PARADIGMS

From the outset of its being conducted, there had been widespread criticism of the dual QA system. In particular, the academic community argued that the methodologies for Quality Assessment and for Quality Audit were contradictory. More specifically, they were of the opinion that quality improvement and accountability could not be optimised in one QA system. Furthermore, there was a risk of increasing administration demands on the institutions, attributed to the duplicating of the audit and assessment procedures (Brown, 2004). Certainly, there were some actions being taken to avoid or alleviate the expected problems. For instance, in a joint statement (HEQC and HEFCE, 1994) some reciprocal arrangements between the funding council and HEQC were deliberately made. These included a number of collaborative activities between the audit and assessment processes incorporated in their QA schemes, such as (1) the assessment reports published by HEFCE being focused on subjects/disciplines in particular, whilst the reports of audit provided by the HEQC concerned institutional matters; (2) reports would be exchanged between the two councils, and the identification and dissemination of good practice in relation to the implementation at the national level would be the remit of the Division of Quality Enhancement in the HEQC; and (3) simultaneous visits would be deliberately avoided, that is, subject areas being about to be assessed or recently having been assessed would not carry out audit visits. In addition, the focus of the audit process mounted after the completion of the first cycle in August 1997 was narrowed down to the areas of institutional strategies for managing quality and standards. Despite these actions, complaints about overburdening remained even in the beginning of the 2000s. On top of this, the value offered by the TQA was perceived as gradually deteriorating, as mentioned in subsection 5.3.3, which meant the results of subject assessments were increasingly being deemed meaningless.

As has been discussed in subsection 5.3.3, an agreement on a policy alternative was very difficult to reach, even though the government and the university community realised the need to formulate a simplified version of the dual QA approach soon after the implementation of the quality system in 1992. Eventually, a policy innovation, called Academic Infrastructure, emerged after a new quality agency was
in charge of the QA implementation in 1997. The proposals and details were all announced in the *Handbook for Academic Review* (QAA, 2000) in April 2000. Basically, the QA alternative was a response to the recommendations of the Dearing Report, which included: (1) the development of common standards of awards, (2) a strengthened external examiner system as an approach to specifying and verifying the standards, (3) a lighter approach to quality assessment for supporting the standards, along with (4) national codes of practices that should be adopted by institutions. In particular, the adoption of the codes by each institution would be formally required, as being a condition of receiving public funding (Dearing, 1997).

In accordance with these, the Academic Infrastructure was completed. In regard to the proposals, the quality of HE provision would be judged against a series of reference points. (1) At the national level, qualifications frameworks linked to awards and credits (FHEQ), subject benchmarks referring to information on subject threshold standards, codes of practices for the assurance of academic standards in conjunction with quality management and institutional review, an external examiner system with registered external examiners. (2) At the institutional level, guidelines on programme specifications relating to the purposes and outcomes of each study programme that institutions would set out (QAA, 2003). (3) At the personal level, progress files including records of individual student attainments (QAA, 1998a). In addition, a stance in favour of fulfilling the stake of employers and students was emphasised in *Higher Quality 4*: the viewpoints of the external stakeholders, rather than diverse objectives suiting respective institutions, must prevail (QAA, 1998b).

Generally speaking, the QA proposals were devised on the institutional rather than subject basis, stemming from the shared belief that the responsibility for QA was best located at this level. Furthermore, the Academic Review actually maintained the previous dual form, in which institutional audit and subject reviews were carried out in parallel, despite the fact that the QAA proposals were aimed at incorporating a sharp distinction between the reviews at the two levels in the QA system.

### 5.4.4. Policy Programmes

The QA scheme conducted during the years 1998 to 2001 continued in the same way as at the previous stage, but with the exception being in relation to the position and boundary rules. In particular, in 1997 the new quality body, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was established to be in charge of a new QA system which involved
integrating the existing dual QA process.

The body was devised to be a joint body, primarily owing to the attempt to settle the political conflict over the process of amalgamating two almost opposite quality processes. That is, the institutional audit along with the system of external examiners represented a decentralised model, whereas the TQA was a centralised/state-regulated model being likened to statutory authority of the government (Filippakou and Tapper, 2007). Furthermore, the work and functions then currently undertaken by the QAC and the HEQC would be transferred to the QAA, and in turn, the latter recruited members from the two agencies. More specifically, the primary objectives of the new agency, which was devised to be responsible for promoting and maintaining the quality and standards of HE provision, would be (1) to confirm effectiveness of internal QA procedures within individual institutions; (2) to identify and promote best practice in teaching and learning; (3) to disseminate information about quality and standards; and (4) to provide advice or specified services for government (JPG, 1996). These, by and large, reflected the consensus reached by the academic community and the government after the final meeting of the Joint Planning Group.

In the light of protecting university autonomy from government intervention, the QAA would, theoretically, be an academic corporation, under collective control of the representative organisations of the HE institutions. Accordingly, the members to whom the Board was to be accountable would be nominated insiders, derived from the representative bodies of the heads of the institutions, rather than political appointees. The directors would be appointed by the board and their terms of office would be limited. None of them would be a salaried staff member or a representative of those bodies nominating directors to the board. Furthermore, the board would be comprise a CEO and 14 directors: four nominated by the representative bodies of the institutions; four by the funding councils and six “independents” representing interests of the wider community in quality and standards in HE. Generally speaking, it appeared to be difficult to categorise such position rules as internal orientation, especially considering the majority of the board were to be recruited from outside of the university community, which led the quality agency to be in close co-operation with quasi-governmental agencies (e.g. the funding councils) and the wider societal communities. This is similar to the claim made by Tapper (2007) that the QAA
exercised its responsibility for QA particularly on behalf of HEFCE/QAC.

5.4.5. Policy Entrepreneurs

At the outset of the QAA period, its chief executive played a central role in deciding which QA approach to be conducted by the new quality agency. Regarding this, instead of inheriting an alternative from the HEQC after its demise, the quality agency addressed the issues revolving around quality and academic standards through an approach diverted from its predecessors. More specifically, to accomplish the objective that the JPG and the Dearing Committee assigned the new agency, John Randall, who held the position of the QAA’s first chief executive between 1998 and 2001, claimed that “institutions that behave professionally and which promote professional standards among their staff will be treated as having earned the right to play a part in the regulation of their activities (cited in Brown, 2004: 124)”. In turn, he considered the creation of institutional academic standards and quality infrastructure as the agency’s first priority. According to these precepts and guidance included on the new QA system, the stakeholders (e.g. the individual students and the wider interested public) could specify what they should expect from HE provision. In addition, the code of professional practices would govern university teaching in the way of ‘externally controlled self-regulation’ (ibid, p. 123). Brown (2004) believed that it was Randall’s personal understanding that led to the QAA advocating this approach, i.e. Academic Infrastructure, behind which the methodology was related to the strengthening of regulations with strong emphasis on accountability. However, with respect to QA schemes and procedures, his influence appeared to be much smaller. Regarding this, Brown (2004) provides the example of the chief executive once proposing to change the grading scales in a letter to the heads of the institutions (March 1999), but this was dropped after fierce opposition from the sector.

5.5. Policy Elements of Quality Assurance from 2002 to 2005

5.5.1. Public Sentiments

The issue of academic quality and standards remained predominant in the public sentiment about high quality provision. The gradually reached consensus was not only that institutions’ self-regulation and national quality frameworks could coexist,
but also that a balance between national standards and local diversity of provision could be achieved. In other words, individual institutions would be enabled to develop and operate their own set of internal QA arrangements, which however had to conform to the national standards that were endorsed by the majority of participants and stakeholders across the HE system. However, unlike the national reference points relating to standards and qualifications in the Academic Review, the 2002 QAS emphasised that those points should by no means be referenced as a kind of detailed prescriptive blueprint that must be adopted. Instead, they would be perceived as common characteristics that could be expected in any qualification, subject and programme, and they could be met in different ways to reflect varying objectives, traditions and cultures of individual HE institutions (HEFCE et al., 2001).

In response to this, the 2003 White Paper (DfES, 2003) pointed out that the government envisaged the QA system as ensuring national professional standards for teaching, which would lead to improved teaching quality. To achieve this, firstly, they proposed that information about best practice would have to be effectively disseminated, which would assist prospective students in making informed choices about their subjects and institutions. To this end, the National Student Survey was to be launched in 2005 to determine the final-year students’ experience in their own subject and institution. Secondly, new national teaching standards were to be established and be the basis of accredited training for all teaching staff by 2006. Thirdly, external examiners were to be involved in a national training programme by the 2004/5 academic year. Fifthly, a single national body, a teaching quality academy, was to be established by 2004 to promote best practice in teaching.

Generally speaking, the governmental documentation reflected the extrinsic orientation, insofar as the paramount notion behind it was concerned with the national quality framework and customer requirements. Likewise, statement 36 in appendix b, which was perceived as the dominant policy idea about quality definitions by the participants in the Q-sorts, represented the same conception: quality as passing externally required standards.

5.5.2. POLICY FRAMES

The QA purposes that were framed in relevant official documentation after 2000 showed an increasing blur between intrinsic and extrinsic orientations. For example, an alternative to the planned 2008 RAE was developed to inform grant allocation for
research and was geared continuously to improve research quality and impacts on UK economic growth and international competitiveness (Joint Funding Councils, 2004). Despite this, being accountable to stakeholders, both internal and external, was the purpose of overriding importance, at least drawing upon the result of Q-analysis. In appendix b, statement 39, which was geared to pinning down an extrinsic-oriented QA function, had the highest aggregate score of the statements 37 to 40.

In the documentation, there was similar emphasis on accountability. For instance, the proposals for consultation (HEFCE et al., 2001) mentioned that one of the primary objectives of the 2002 QAS was to secure accountability for the use of public funds to the funding councils and to other external stakeholders. In effect, this extrinsic purpose also emphasised the importance of providing HE stakeholders with relevant information. That is, given the information was generated for students, employers and other interested parties, it was necessary to ensure that the descriptions would be useful to the different demands from a wide variety of stakeholders. Accordingly, the universities were required to publish far more information than ever before, for example, through external examiners’ reports (DfES, 2003), and in turn, the validity and reliability of the published information became crucial (QAA, 2002a).

5.5.3. Policy Paradigms

The abandoning of the attempt to launch the Academic Review

In March 2001 there was a debate in the House of Lords, in the course of which HE regulation was attacked for being over-bureaucratic (Brown, 2004) and during the same period there were powerful interest groups lobbying against the QAA proposals. In particular, the Russell Group that was made up of 19 prestigious universities, publicly claimed that they were of high quality and therefore did not need to be inspected too often; or rather, “we don't need benchmarking…we are the benchmark” (Beckett, 2001). However, there was another explanation for the lobby that was instigated by the group, which was linked to their perception of the Academic Review, that: the assessment process was flawed as some review results showed new institutions ranked above those in the group (Brown, 2004). The 1994 Group, another group of universities, joined forces with the Russell Group to put further weight behind the criticism regarding the bureaucratic burden that they believed was caused by the implementation since 1992 of the dual QA scheme composed of audit and assessment.
Apart from the continuing appeal for lessening excessive demands or managerial intrusion on institutions, ‘value for money’ was another main driver that led to the demise of the Academic Review. Regarding this, there was strong opposition to the change in the costs of the quality inspectors being transferred from the government to the universities, in that the latter already had to cover the budget gap resulting from a decrease in public funding. According to the estimate provided by Brown (2004), the annual cost of the quality processes was computed to be at least £30 million, whereas the average public expenditure on HE teaching was of £6 billion over the academic year 2001/2. As a result, there was doubt that the extent to which the introduction of assessment contributed to quality improvement or the QA outcomes was far from reflecting its costs, in terms of the money and effort that individual institutions had to make. That is, it would appear that the whole sector was sceptical about the balance between costs of accountability and effectiveness. Moreover, there was doubt about the quality of the information provided by the QA process for consumers. With respect to this, after the introduction of tuition fees and the abolition of student grants, higher education was gradually perceived as an investment and the standard of teaching increasingly became crucial for potential students. Nonetheless, as Brown (2004, p. 83) pointed out, “only 12 per cent of respondents [in a survey by the consultants Segal Quince Wicksteed of stakeholder use of the reports] considered QAA reports to be the single most important source of information about quality. The impact on employers was even more limited”. In sum, it would appear that the practical application of assessment results was seen as restrictive, because of the excessive fine-grained information about quality and standards of provision.

**Institution-based QAS**

Envisaging the subject review being abandoned, the chief executive of the QAA proposed creating another QA system, where the role of the quality agency would be reduced to that of a technical adviser (R. Brown, 2010). Subsequently, the proposals for an advanced version of the QA framework were collectively endorsed by HEFCE, the QAA, Universities UK (UUK) and SCOP and were depicted in the 01/45 Consultation Paper issued in July 2001. The QA system was approved by the government in March 2002 (HEFCE et al., 2001). Operational details of the QAS
were contained in the *Operational Description* in March 2002, following further negotiations between HEFCE, the QAA and the representative bodies of HE institutions (QAA, 2002b). The required methods were set out in the *Handbook for Institutional Audit* published in August of the same year (QAA, 2002a). After the completion of the TQA/subject review in December 2001, the newly revised QAS was implemented for a three year transitional phase (2002-2005). The so-called *Quality Assurance Framework* was underpinned by *Academic Infrastructure*, which was inherited from the recommendations of the JPG and Dearing Committee and was subsequently developed by the QAA from 1998 onwards (HEFCE et al., 2005).

In effect, the 2002 QAS could be differentiated from all its predecessors developed since 1992 by its unified approach and this change was driven by the will to reduce the burden resulting from conducting QA activities on the universities, coupled with the intention of having a ‘light touch’ regime. Some consensus had been reached before the establishment of the QAA was adopted in the 2002 Institutional Audit, except for the parts: the review cycle and the coverage of institutions (HEFCE et al., 2001). For example, to address the issue of costs, it was suggested that the QAS was to include an institution-wide review, along with fewer subject reviews after aggregation. More specifically, each institution would be subject to an eight-year review cycle, instead of the existing the six-year one, and all arrangements for assuring academic quality and standards would be reviewed on the basis of the institution as a whole. It was also proposed that all subject areas and programmes in the institution would participate in the institution-based quality process, however funded and delivered (JPG, 1996). After the transitional period (2002-2005), the full cycle of the audit process would to be a six years cycle, rather than the five years in the case of the Academic Review (QAA, 2002a, 2002b).

Consequently, the 2002 QAS relied more heavily on institutions’ own internal audit, and focused on quality management processes rather than directly on teaching and learning experiences. The QA procedures were composed of: (1) the periodic internal review of institutions, which were to be carried out by independent external reviewers, aimed at identifying weaknesses and ensuring prompt action to address them, (2) external audits, which would be conducted by audit teams, and (3) subject reviews, as follow-ups, which only a small number of providers who had been identified as having failings or seriously weak quality would be required to undertake
HEFCE et al., 2001).

Before launching formal institutional audits, the audit teams were to conduct briefing visits. The visit would be set up for gathering additional information, which was required by the audit teams and would focus on the aspect of institutional management. Afterwards, the audit team would review both the institutional and discipline levels (QAA, 2002a). As regards the subject review, it was to be a highly selective inspection, externally conducted to scrutinise some subject areas where deemed necessary, thus only having a subsidiary function, consequently, meaning that the 2002 QAS was not another dual approach (QAA, 2002b). Despite dissimilarities, this scheme closely resembled its predecessors in certain regards. First, the methods in the 2000 QAA Handbook for Academic Review would be applied to conduct the subject review. Second, review results would be connected with HEFCE funding: the institutions that achieved satisfactory outcomes would receive block teaching grant. Third, the information about the quality and standards of individual institutions would be published so as to assist stakeholders, particularly students, to make informed decisions. In sum, by and large, the 2002 Institutional Audit had an intrinsic orientation.

5.5.4. POLICY PROGRAMMES

5.5.4.1. POSITION AND BOUNDARY RULES

Audit teams and external examiners were two fundamental actors in the policy-making arena regarding QA. As regards the membership of the audit teams, their roles, selection, recruitment and training, all of these were regulated in the Operation Description (QAA, 2002b) and to a great extent were similar to those rules relating to the assessors and auditors required since 1992. By contrast, the method for deciding who would be eligible as external examiners and how they should operate in the QA procedures was changed, becoming more explicit and intrinsically-oriented. Firstly, the external examiners would carry out a critical role in providing students, parents and employers with access to the information about the standards achieved by individual institutions. Secondly, before being perceived as being competent as external examiners, prospective candidates were statutorily required to attend a national training programme. Thirdly, once registered, they were to perform their duties under a national quality framework, which was geared to enable the whole sector to recognise or compare quality and academic standards in relation to either
individual institutions or programmes in a more systematic and informed way. According to the 2003 White Paper, to equip external examiners with the capacity to be ‘guardians of the public purse and of the reputation of UK higher education’, a national system of accredited external examiners and a new national body were envisaged being completed and inducted into the QAS by the beginning of the academic year 2004-2005 (DfES, 2003, p. 50).

In sum, the position and boundary rules reflected an extrinsic orientation, due to the constitution of the quality agency QAA, which has been explained in subsection 5.4.4, and the nature of the external examiner system.

5.5.4.2. Information rules

The information rules were categorised as being of mixed orientations in general, whereas the part relating to data collection, in particular, was intrinsic in nature. Requirements in relation to data collection were inherited from the predecessors without too much difference. Therefore, this subsection is especially concerned with the other two aspects (viz. data judgements and reporting) both of which were of mixed orientation.

Judgements, according to the new quality procedures, were required to be made particularly in relation to the levels of confidence and reliance that could be placed on the information (QAA, 2002b). Therefore, the nature of enquiry in the Institutional Audit referred to the verification of claims and the validity and reliability of the evidence and information that were provided by individual institutions. This was different to other many other QASs in which assessors directly examined institutional documentation so as to evaluate the levels of teaching and learning performance. In addition, audit teams would make informed decisions about an institution’s capacity to manage effectively quality and standards. In particular, the information would be judged against the Academic Infrastructure developed by the QAA, including the Code of practice, the Subject benchmark statements, the Framework for higher education qualifications, and the Guidelines on programme specifications. Furthermore, judgements made by audit teams would never be dichotomous, such as confidence/no confidence. For example, audit teams were required to indicate what areas they had doubts about and whether these would place the institution at risk (QAA, 2002b).
Nonetheless, there were some differences in relation to data judgements between the 2002 Institutional Audit and 1991 Academic Audit, which account for the reason why the former was categorised as having mixed orientation. According to Williams (2009), there were no recommendations made in the 1991 Audit, only points for further consideration. In other words, there was no tendency to extrapolate general judgements in the earlier system whereas that was the case in the later version. Furthermore, the audit reports in accordance with the 1991 rules merely offered a conclusion, rather than making summative judgements.

As regards the reporting in the Institutional Audit, at the end of the external audit visit, there would be no oral report, just a letter from the audit team to the institution. The letter, including findings at both the institutional and discipline levels and likely recommendations, would be sent to the head of the institution within two weeks of the visit (QAA, 2002a). Moreover, the QAA would publish a final report of each audit visit, including audit findings, the audit team’s judgement and comment on the institution’s arrangements for managing quality and standards at both the institutional and discipline levels as well as a brief statement provided by the institution as an appendix to the report. Judgements would be provided as one of three expressions of the level of confidence in the soundness of the institution’s quality management: ‘broad confidence’, ‘limited confidence’ or ‘no confidence’. Likewise, recommendations for consideration by the institution would be prioritised through three categories: 'essential', 'advisable' and 'desirable'. The report would also highlight features of good practice and identify the areas, if any, the audit team deemed as needing to have a follow-up subject review (QAA, 2002a).

5.5.4.3 PAYOFF AND SCOPE RULES

In relation to this type of rules, the 2002 QAS was parallel to its predecessors in terms of retaining an intrinsic orientation. However, there were some extra features which were not included until the commencement of the Institutional Audit. Firstly, unlike either the TQA conducted by the QAC or the QAA alternative (Academic Review), the 2002 QAS entailed a subject review as a possible subsequent activity, rather than a fundamental one. That is, the implementation of subject review would be on a highly selective basis, only for those areas which were judged by the audit teams as having negative aspects (i.e. being of concern or showing weakness) or that
had to meet certain requirements in relation to accreditation (HEFCE et al., 2001). Secondly, the institution receiving a statement of limited confidence or even worse, no confidence, in its audit report, would be expected to implement an action plan drawn up by the institution itself. Subsequently, within 18 months, the QAA would determine, based on a progress report by the institution, whether it required a further visit by them or could complete the whole audit process. Thirdly, the subject review in the 2002 Institutional Audit was linked with public funding. More specifically, an institution receiving a recommendation from its audit team for a subject review within one of its disciplines for exhibiting weaknesses (i.e. a judgement of ‘limited confidence’ in academic standards) could find its funding for teaching at risk (QAA, 2002a).

5.5.5. Policy Entrepreneurs

Regarding the abandoning of the launch of the Academic Review and not proceeding with the 2002 Institutional Audit, Brown (2004) believed that it was not under the control of the QAA. More specifically, among those academic policy actors who were eligible to determine or influence HE policy decisions, the Russell Group was especially significant. For instance, against the background where the QA procedures had incurred excessive cost to the individual universities, they appealed for permission to charge their students extra so as to maintain their outstanding quality. However, the plan for top-up tuition fees was ruled out by the Labour government in February 2001. Subsequently, on 21 March 2001 the Secretary of State, David Blunkett, announced that there would be a 40 per cent reduction in the volume of departments statutorily participating in subject reviews and this would particularly take place in the universities that had achieved good overall scores. This decision was perceived as a swop for the rejection of top-up fees and if anything, was related to the coming election. In regard to this, Beckett (2001) claimed that it was ironic that the Russell Group universities, where the matter of research took precedence over teaching, most of the time, blocked the QAA’s way to conducting the Academic Review of the teaching and learning. In addition, a couple of reasons for their success were put forward in the same news report. Firstly, they mounted effective public propaganda, together with the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, against the QAA. Secondly, the intervention of the Prime Minister (Tony Blair) to which the group directly launched their appeal, over the heads of education ministers, was also
beneficial, as the minister responsible for HE (Baroness Blackstone) had aligned herself with the QAA.

Meanwhile, the involvement of the QAA was perceived as being in the role of advisor and its chief executive (John Randall) resigned in August 2001. Eventually, the Institutional Audit, coupled with the subject review being on a highly selective basis, was jointly issued by HEFCE, the QAA, the UUK (i.e. the successor of the CVCP since being renamed in December 2000) and the SCOP. The above narrative shows that some prestigious universities, the representative bodies for the institutions and the funding councils were crucial policy decision makers, who all fully participated in the development of the QA system. In other words, the introduction of the Institution Audit was a product of a collective decision-making process, involving the above actors. Nevertheless, as regards policy entrepreneurs in relation to the QA scheme rather than the QA approach, the QAA was the policy actor playing the role of advocating the QA arrangements that would be conducted in the 2002 QA process. As explained in subsection 5.5.3, the Institutional Audit, to a considerable extent, was inherited from the Academic Infrastructure, which was completed during the first four years of the QAA period.

5.6. SUMMARY

Table 5-1 is compiled from the information about the major policy elements and policy entrepreneurs during the period under investigation. As revealed in the table, there was a shift from an intrinsic to an extrinsic orientation, in relation to the regulative policy elements (i.e. the position and boundary rules, information rules) and the normative QA idea for the quality definitions. With respect to the cognitive policy idea about the QA approach, all the episodes showed that the intrinsic orientation remained unchanged over the focal period. In contrast, the other normative policy idea about the QA functions fluctuated between intrinsic and extrinsic orientations. Furthermore, it emerged that the quality agencies, the representative bodies for the HE institutions and the funding councils, were the key policy actors in the policy development of QA, whereas those quality agencies actively engaged in the role of policy entrepreneurs, were especially involved the QA schemes and quality procedures.
Table 5-1: Summary of policy change in English QA systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>EN1</th>
<th>EN2</th>
<th>EN3</th>
<th>EN4</th>
<th>EN5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA schemes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Position rules:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managing agency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsible for the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA system and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>providing general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formats and procedure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guidelines was as</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>orientation</strong></td>
<td>AAU</td>
<td>HEQC Audit</td>
<td>HEQC Audit</td>
<td>QAA</td>
<td>QAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation:</strong></td>
<td>AAU</td>
<td>HEQC Audit</td>
<td>HEQC Audit</td>
<td>QAA</td>
<td>QAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government. (Its remit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>included monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and commenting on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>institutional quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extrinsic orientation:</strong></td>
<td>HEFCE/Q AC Assessment</td>
<td>HEFCE/Q AC Assessment</td>
<td>QAA</td>
<td>QAA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being tied closely to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the governmental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services (e.g. quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control, funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allocation, programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approves and award</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Boundary rules:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>membership of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managing agency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owned:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>orientation</strong></td>
<td>AAU</td>
<td>HEQC Audit</td>
<td>HEQC Audit</td>
<td>QAA</td>
<td>QAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation:</strong></td>
<td>AAU</td>
<td>HEQC Audit</td>
<td>HEQC Audit</td>
<td>QAA</td>
<td>QAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by the universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Universities assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assuring the quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they offered)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extrinsic orientation:</strong></td>
<td>HEFCE/Q AC Assessment</td>
<td>HEFCE/Q AC Assessment</td>
<td>QAA</td>
<td>QAA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by the government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or collectively by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community and the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government (or funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>councils)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Information rules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. Data collection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: self-evaluation; produce institutional documents;</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation: information for judgements is merely collected by outside actors (including employers, alumni)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Data judgements, or who determined quality criteria</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Auditors</td>
<td>Auditors; assessors</td>
<td>Auditors; assessors</td>
<td>Auditors; assessors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: peer review mainly by academic experts independent of the visited unit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic orientation: peer review is conducted merely by external actors (e.g. professional bodies, employers’ organisations, industry)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. Reporting</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: the visited unit had the opportunity to comment on a draft report of the visit team and allow to formulate counter arguments if necessary</td>
<td>✓ Visited units can have confidentiality</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic orientation: published final reports, i.e. the conclusion of visit teams</td>
<td>✓ Confidential oral reports to institutions in assessment</td>
<td>✓ No confidential reports in assessment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Payoff and scope rules</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: QA outcomes were not or indirectly linked with governmental decisions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Subject reviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Extrinsic orientation:
QA outcomes were linked with governmental decisions (e.g. funding allocation, programme registration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QA schemes</th>
<th>Intrinsic orientation</th>
<th>Intrinsic orientation</th>
<th>Mixture orientation</th>
<th>Mixture orientation</th>
<th>Mixture orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QA approaches</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA functions</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality definitions</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policy entrepreneurs

| QA approaches | CVCP | Department of Education | * | * | HEFCE; QAA; UUK; SCOP |
| QA schemes    | AAU  | HEQC; HEFCE/QAC         | HEQC; HEFCE/QAC | * | QAA |
CH6. POLICY CHANGE IN DUTCH QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

6.1. POLICY ELEMENTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM 1985 AND 1992

6.1.1. PUBLIC SENTIMENTS

Since the 19th century most governments in continental Europe have possessed complete power over their HE provision. Generally speaking, such systems have featured a strong role of state regulation and a comparable power of faculties, whereas central administrators and the board or executive body at the institutional level have been granted relatively little control over university matters. In other words, HE foundations in these countries were normally set by centralised planning and administrative laws with detailed regulations, because governments wished to have tight control over: policy objectives, the establishment of new programmes, degree structure and standards and curricular processes on the whole; whilst faculties were permitted independent space to operate within these boundaries (Kells, 1992). The Netherlands typified this continental European tradition of the relationship between the state and universities (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993), whereby in accordance with the constitution, the government assumed sovereignty over HE. More specifically, governmental requirements covered the whole process of HE delivery, ranging between input into the system (e.g. student enrolments and entrance exams, university budgets and the appointment of academic staff), the educational process (e.g. approval of study programmes and detailed prescription of examinations and curricula) and the output of HE (e.g. criteria for graduates and exams for national degrees). The fulfilment of such wide ranging requirements came under the notion ex ante approval. And as a consequence, it was assumed that HE institutions within the same category would to be homogeneous, and that they should be equal in terms of quality (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993).

The traditional quality control mechanisms, involving detailed governmental requirements and academic peer review, were forced to change from the 1960s onwards. That is, against the background encountered by most Western European countries, HE experienced the expansion of student numbers and subsequently had to make budget cutbacks in the 1970s. On top of that, the student dropout rate in universities was perceived as being too high, and the average length of study too long.
Consequently, at the outset of the 1980s, the government aimed to be more efficient through reforming the relationship between the Dutch government and the universities, by reducing historically strong state control, thereby heading towards deregulation and decentralisation (Teichler, 1989). Moreover, cooperation between the government and the university community was expected to guarantee the quality of universities, albeit that governmental influence would normally outweigh that of the academics. In sum, the Dutch HE system, unlike its counterparts in continental Europe, was governed by academic self-regulation alongside state regulation (Westerheijden et al., 2009) and this corporatist approach underpinned policymaking during the period in question (Theisens, 2004).

Until the 1980s, quality assessment for teaching and learning was voluntarily conducted either by internal faculties and individual lecturers or by external academics in the form of peer review. In those days systematic procedures of external quality evaluation were limited in the university sector (Westerheijden, 1990). The Academic Council, an advisory body and also the predecessor of the Association of Cooperating Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), was involved in the process of the introduction of new study programmes. Proposals for a new programme had to be approved by the Academic Council, before the Minister of Education and Science made decisions about adding programmes to the Academic Statute. This was a governmental regulation containing a list of approved programmes and a description of the requirements for a degree qualification. The approval of the Council was based on the fulfilment of certain governmental requirements, such as programme objectives, the content of examination subjects and the relation with other study programmes (Huisman and Jenniskens, 1994). Moreover, apart from the transfer of part of sovereignty over HE matters from the government to the universities, during this period some ex ante measures were replaced by ex post evaluations. The application of ex post procedures rested on the following assumption: the primary responsibility for maintaining quality was with the universities. For instance, the introduction of the system of conditional funding for university research (CF) in 1983 was a case of conducting ex post quality procedures as a means of (re)allocating research budgets amongst the universities. This replaced the traditional approach mainly based on student enrolments, whereby the shares of the budget within respective disciplines were determined beforehand (Huisman, 2003a), a matter returned to below.
There was a shift in responsibility for safeguarding HE quality, from state sovereignty to university autonomy. The White Paper entitled *Higher Education: Autonomy and Quality* (HOAK), published in 1985, is widely perceived as a watershed in Dutch governance. Regarding this, Gornitzka and Maassen (2000) argued that the steering model in the Netherlands was categorised as the sovereign state model before this legislation, whereas afterwards, the institutional model became more noticeable. The detailed regulations that traditionally conditioned the institutions were restructured so as to allow for HE matters to be decided upon by the universities. Maassen and van Vught (1989) identified a change in the interaction between the government and universities, looking at the extent to which five aspects of the latter were managed by the: state, central administrations of institutions and the faculties and they found that after 1987, the state no longer dominated any HE matters. In particular, quality control of institutional processes was completely held by the institutions and faculties. In fact, the responsibility for assuring the quality of HE provision shifted towards the universities and the Inspectorate for Higher Education. Within the new relationship, the government was conceived of as a guardian of education, setting ‘boundary conditions’, whilst the faculties assumed more responsibility for maintaining and ensuring the quality of their programmes (Vroeijenstijn and Acherman, 1990, p. 82).

Due to the new governance model, the traditional approach to defining qualified institutions, i.e. viewing fulfilment of governmental requirements as a guarantee of quality, was no longer deemed appropriate. Moreover, the academics became more actively involved in shaping evaluation criteria. Taking the CF system as an example, quality requirements for those competing for the state budget were set by research councils, who also nominated the academic peers conducting the *ex post* assessments (Westerheijden, 1990). Further, as regards to what actions must be taken by participants, i.e. in relation to information rules and authority rules, academic professionals had more say than the government (Huisman, 2003a). In sum, in the absence of widely accepted criteria for good practice within the period, the dominant perception of quality was determined by the university community. The Dutch Q-sort analysis presented in appendix a (statements 1 to 4), illustrates that public sentiments about quality definitions are in accord with this intrinsically-oriented perception. That is, those in the HE system were inclined to believe that the academics knew
better than the government the proper quality standards and the way to attain them (Acherman, 1990).

6.1.2. POLICY FRAMES

Although the reform of deregulation/decentralisation, to a certain extent, pervaded the 1980s European HE systems that shared the continental tradition, the degree to which the Dutch system experienced this was more profound than its counterparts. It is evident in the provision of more university autonomy over the appointment of professors and the establishing of new study programmes, as well as in the reduced proportion of earmarked university budget (Teichler, 1989). By means of promising the universities more freedom, the government envisaged the universities being able to respond to societal demands more effectively. In particular in their view, HE resources would be utilised more efficiently, and university competence would be strengthened and more flexible for meeting increasingly changing societal and economic conditions.

The Minister of Education and Science restructured the HE policy framework with a coherent set of initiatives. That is, in addition to the 1985 HOAK, there were the Higher Education and Research Plan (HOOP) and the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) (Goedegebuure et al., 1990). Quality assurance, against this background, was conceived of as a vehicle to compensate for the potential damage to quality that could be caused by deregulation. In particular, after the establishment of new study programmes became the responsibility of universities, the government insisted on a new quality system to manage programme recognition and with aim of stimulating competition between HE providers, the linkage of assessment results with student enrolments and funding was proposed. That is, the government was of the opinion that QA outcomes should have direct consequences for the institutions: positive assessment results would represent quality guarantees, which in turn, would lead to the study programmes being eligible for government funding and their students receiving study grants. This form of accountability, particularly in terms of value for money, was incorporated into the CF system launched in 1983, where the allocation of research funding was based on results. As mentioned above, the previous budget mechanism had been that the amount of research resources received by the universities was dependent on student enrolments.
Turning to internal functions, external quality procedures were in principle geared towards stimulating the improvement of HE quality, after governmental interference was reduced (Acherman, 1990). This emphasis on the internal purpose of the QA implementation reflected the results of negotiations between the Minister of Education and the two umbrella bodies of HE institutions in 1986. Regarding these, the university community remained opposed to the association between quality judgements and budgets for teaching, which led to the withdrawal of government proposals linking poor assessment results with a decrease in funding (Maassen and Weusthof, 1989). The university community believed that improvement had to be the fundamental function of the quality procedures. Moreover, through the feedback and recommendations generated in the QA procedures, essential quality awareness would be nurtured throughout the institution, at the degree programme, faculty and department levels (Vroeijenstijn and Acherman, 1990).

According to the Q-sort results presented in appendix a, the orientation of the QA functions was a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic frames. That is, quality improvement/enhancement and quality control appear to have been the dominant policy frame during this period. More specifically, the external stakeholders’ perspective pertaining to Factor A as represented by statement 8, which was concerned with external quality control, whilst the internal stakeholders, whose perspective was captured as Factor B, were inclined to agree with statement 5, which is parallel with the improvement function. Generally speaking, the results of the present study are consistent with the findings of Westerheijden et al. (2007a), who claimed that accountability and quality improvement were the two fundamental sets of discourse pervading the Dutch HE sector at that time.

6.1.3. POLICY PARADIGMS

The policy instruments for quality control initially announced in the HOAK included both internal and external quality procedures. That is, according to the government proposals, the internal quality process would be set up by individual institutions, in the light of their increased responsibility for the quality of HE provision. By contrast, the imposition of peer reviews and the involvement of the Higher Education Inspectorate represented external quality control. Moreover, in the new system of quality assurance, with the role of the government becoming more limited, the institutions established the Deregulation Committee to translate the principles into
practical details. Their report, Variety and Quality, was published in January 1986 and based on this, negotiations were held between the umbrella organisations of the institutions (i.e. the VSNU and the HBO-raad), the Inspectorate for Higher Education and the government. A consensus was reached in April 1986 and was incorporated in the draft HOOP in 1987 (Huisman, 2003a).

As a result of the collective decision-making, the institutions assumed primary responsibility for the quality of HE provision, with their umbrella organisation, the VSNU, being responsible for coordinating the establishment of an external system of quality assurance as well as its implementation. With respect to the Inspectorate for Higher Education, its remit was defined as the role of meta-evaluator, overseeing the methods of external quality assessments, the effectiveness of conducting the external quality process and follow-ups to assessment results (Acherman, 1990, van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993). In addition, the QA schemes would be conducted at the faculty/department level. That is, in line with the governmental intention of developing comprehensive quality control, disciplinary fields were designed to be the object of the teaching assessment, instead of the university as a whole. Moreover, all university programmes in the given subject areas had to implement self-evaluation and be assessed by the visitation committee every six years (Maassen and Weusthof, 1989). In the course of the policy making, other alternatives, for example, those having the object of assessment at the institutional level were hardly mentioned.

During the academic year 1987/88, a pilot project was conducted by the VSNU and a report on 26 trial visits was presented in September 1988, involving four disciplines (i.e. history, physics and astronomy, mechanical engineering and marine technology, and psychology). Without any substantial changes, the formal QA system was instigated in the next academic year (Acherman, 1990, van der Weiden, 1995). As to the non-university sector, the Association of hogescholen (i.e. HBO-raad or HBO Council) operated another quality process starting in 1990. However, the two QA systems were derived from the same principles and therefore were essentially similar in two respects (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993).

(1) Internal quality assessment, as a means of self-regulation, was aimed at stimulating insiders’ awareness of quality improvement, which would ultimately enhance the quality of provision. The internal process was perceived as being crucial.
for identifying internal reflection on the programme’s strengths and weaknesses, in relation to institutional quality management (e.g. internal quality control) as well as pedagogy (e.g. the contents of the programme). Moreover, this internal quality process served as a preparation for subsequent visitation committee attendance, in that the self-assessment report generated from it would provide background information for them (Zijderveld, 1997).

(2) Periodical peer review served as a complementary process to the internal quality assessment and site visits were stipulated as the primary approach to assessing the faculties’ performances. Regarding these, the visitation committees consisted of external academic peers, who would make judgements based on both the university’s report on self-evaluation and their own personal observations. Moreover, there would be the opportunity for the visitation committee and the visited faculty to exchange ideas during the visitation. Such an academic dialogue was conceived of as the process for detecting possible problems and further facilitating quality improvement (Acherman, 1990, Vroeijenstijn and Acherman, 1990).

On the whole, the QA approach included a set of periodic procedures, which would guide the self-evaluation implemented by the universities and the peer reviews conducted by external visitation committees, albeit some procedures in the QA approach were conditioned by the government. For instance, assessment was required to be conducted on a regular, cooperative basis and the quality process was subject to the monitoring of the Inspectorate for Higher Education. In spite of this, it was evident that the set of quality procedures represented the internal features of QA approaches.

6.1.4. POLICY PROGRAMMES

6.1.4.1. POSITION AND BOUNDARY RULES
Regarding the development and carrying out of the new external quality procedures, the visitation committees, with academic backgrounds, and the Inspectorate for Higher Education, on behalf of the government, were both involved.

Visitation committees
During the implementation of the first round of the quality procedures (1988-1994), there were 27 visitation committees in charge of visiting study programmes
(Zijderveld, 1997). Initially, HOAK dictated that the Inspectorate for Higher Education would set up the visiting committees, comprising, representatives from government, the universities and experts coming from the given professional fields/subject areas (Huisman, 2003a, Maassen and Weusthof, 1989). Nonetheless, the governmental proposals for the establishment of the committees were significantly changed after the negotiations between the academic community and the government. Consequently, in accordance with the 1987 HOOP, the Inspectorate would not be involved in the constitution of the visitation committees nor participate in the assessment process (Maassen and Weusthof, 1989).

The members of a visitation committee, according to the protocol provided by the VSNU, were to come merely from within professional fields. More specifically, there would be approximately seven members on one, including at least one chairperson working in none of the visited faculties; one foreign expert familiar with the Dutch language and HE system, or working outside the Netherlands; two from non-university organisations, representing the employers of graduates; and one with expertise in education science (VSNU, 1990). Moreover, from the academic year 1991/92 onwards each committee was required to have a student representative (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993). Deans of the participating faculties were invited to nominate the membership of the visitation committee in their own discipline, and the membership would be appointed by the governing board of the VSNU, which consisted of members from the executive boards of the universities. Moreover, care was taken to ensure a balanced distribution across the different subject areas within a particular discipline. In order to ensure impartiality members were discouraged from participating in the visits to their own faculties (Acherman, 1990, van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993, Vroeijenstijn and Acherman, 1990).

**The Inspectorate for Higher Education**

The Inspectorate for Education was traditionally conceived of as an intermediary between secondary schools and the Ministry of Education and Science. That is, its establishment was to provide the information that the minister required as well as solving practical problems encountered by schools. In accordance with the 1986 Act on University Education, an inspectorate for university education was set up, especially charged to strengthen the external system of quality assurance. The new unit, in conjunction with the existing inspectorates for higher professional education...
and for teaching training, were merged into the new Inspectorate for Higher Education. At the outset, there were two inspectors working for the university sector, seven for the higher professional category and five for teacher training (Bresters and Kalkwijk, 1990).

Based on the agreement reached between the government and the institutions on 10th April 1986, the Inspectorate was instigated to supervise the external QA system, maintain regulations of quality procedures and to offer information and advice to the government (Bresters and Kalkwijk, 1990). Its remit in relation to the quality procedures, i.e. meta-evaluation, became operational in January 1987 (Zijderveld, 1997). It included the supervision of visitation committees’ composition and the evaluation of their performance, particularly in relation to the implementation of quality procedures and whether their reports were made on the basis of valid information. Owing to this responsibility, the Inspectorate had to address the frame of reference against which the reports of the visiting committees would be evaluated. Its preferences for such as a uniform format of final reports, which drew on quantitative measures where available, were instrumental in the whole quality process (Maassen, 1998, Maassen and Weusthof, 1989).

In practice, the obligatory nature of this agency’s policy proposals could cause serious consequences, albeit without having direct executive power in evaluation (Zijderveld, 1997). For example, a programme that had a negative assessment would lose public funding, if its follow-up action was perceived as unsatisfactory by the inspectorate. In addition, the Inspectorate, although having the freedom to determine the methods for meta-evaluation, was seen as acting on behalf of the Minister of Education and Science. For example, Palmer (1995, p. 11) found that some university personnel perceived it as ‘the meddlesome mouthpiece of the government’.

6.1.4.2. INFORMATION RULES
There were three types of information rules in the QA schemes, regarding data collection, data judgements and the dissemination of assessment results. The lattermost is a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations, whereas the other two are concerned solely with intrinsic orientation.

As regards data collection, the involvement of a considerable number of internal
stakeholders meant that there was an intrinsic orientation of the quality procedures. First of all, the faculty of the programme would produce a report of internal quality assessment (i.e. self-analysis or self-study), which would then be sent to the visitation committee one month before the committee made its first visit (Acherman, 1990). Moreover, some master’s theses, which were perceived as a significant source of information, would be incorporated in the documents that the committee was to review (Zijderveld, 1997). Furthermore, although the VSNU required that certain information (e.g. aims, students and staff, structure and contents) had to be in the compiled report, the self-evaluation report was by no means fixed. That is, the faculty was allowed to stress what was pivotal for their programme (Maassen, 1998).

Second, during the (normally) two-day visit, the visitation committee would have discussions with representatives of the study programme, in particular those in charge of the internal quality process, the faculty board responsible for managing the programme, the current and graduated students and academic staff (Zijderveld, 1997). Generally speaking, the data utilised for the quality process featured an intrinsic form with normative information.

The intrinsic feature also showed in the aspect of data judgements. More specifically, the frame of reference against which the visitation committee was to evaluate the study programmes would be determined a few weeks before the first visit of the committee. It was required to focus on the mission of the programme, which could be either externally driven (e.g. demand derived from society and the labour market) or internally oriented (e.g. the requirements posed by the profession field and the expectation of the graduates) (Zijderveld, 1997), but the formulation of the criteria was solely internally oriented. That is, the determination of the frame of reference was dominated by the visitation committee, the membership of which was mainly academics. Aligned with the intrinsic feature, the committee’s report was required not to involve single, summary judgements, but was to cover various dimensions of the nature of quality (Maassen, 1998).

At the end of each visit, the chair of the visitation committee would make an oral presentation of the preliminary conclusions and after a few weeks, the committee would send the remarks to the programme in the form of a programme report, which would be finalised after including comments from the programme. After all visits in the particular discipline had been made, the committee would write a draft report in
conjunction with the comparative analysis of all the visited faculties across disciplines and subsequently, send the compilation to all the reviewed programmes. Finally, a general statement on the whole discipline, coupled with the comparative analysis, would be published as a final report (Acherman, 1990, VSNU, 1990). With respect to the reporting, in the pilot phases (the academic year 1987/88) self-assessment reports on individual programmes and final reports were kept confidential. However, after the QA scheme was formally conducted the final visitation reports were required to be published. Moreover, although the public final report of the visitation committee was geared towards contributing to accountability to society, the process of formulating the report functioned as a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations. That is, it encompassed not only the committee’s recommendations and judgements but also the responses in each programme report, thus including internal and external stakeholders and facilitating a dialogue between the two.

6.1.4.3. Payoff and Scope rules

Given the aim of stimulating quality improvement, the consensus reached in 1986 was that no financial consequences would be directly connected to the results of external quality procedures. However, the cyclical implementation (van der Weiden, 1995), involved programme deliverers having to respond to the recommendations of the visitation committees so as to satisfy them in the next round. Nonetheless, generally speaking there were no strict rules about follow-ups and departments and faculties had much leeway in determining their response to the visitation committee findings (Acherman, 1990, Zijderveld, 1997).

6.1.5. Policy Entrepreneurs

Although the new QA system was collectively determined by the government and the universities, their influences on the matter were quite distinct. With respect to the university community, the pivotal role of the umbrella organisation of the universities was particularly evident in the course of transferring to the collective policymaking. More specifically, the VSNU was established for proposing collective solutions to the financial reductions since the academic year 1982/1983 (Teichler, 1989). Compared with its predecessors, the Academic Council, which was abolished on 1 January 1986, the VSNU stressed much more ex post evaluation rather than ex ante quality procedures.
The VSNU was jointly owned and financed by the fourteen universities. This umbrella organisation, on the one hand, represented the university community in negotiations with external actors, such as the government and interest groups (e.g. labour unions). On the other hand, it internally served as a platform for discussion and consultation among the universities (Zijderveld, 1997). Given the collective responsibility for HE quality, the organisation assumed the task of establishing the external QA system and schemes. More specifically, the major remit of the umbrella body in the QA system was: the coordination of establishing both internal and external procedures; the constitution of visitation committees; and the publication of the final report, this being part of the agreement reached by the Ministry of Education and Science and the institutions on 10 April in 1986 (Bresters and Kalkwijk, 1990). In accordance with the consensus, the VSNU, drawing upon the experience of the historical conduct of peer review in North America, determined to adopt self-assessment in conjunction with such reviews as the QA approach. Also, a protocol for the external system of quality assurance was developed. That is, it generated guidelines for internal quality procedures, plus a checklist of the information required in a programme self-evaluation report, which was geared to ensuring nationwide comparability in a given discipline (Zijderveld, 1997). The guidelines and checklist pictured how the university community conceived of quality. In other words, the perspective of the VSNU echoed the public sentiment about how quality should be defined in the Dutch HE sector.

On the whole, after the government raised the issue of quality and announced the demand for quality control, the university community took leadership in defining it conceptually and also in determining the QA approaches and detailed quality procedures. Of course, one could argue that it was the government that initiated the reform from *ex ante* to *ex post*, but the VSNU was the primary policy entrepreneur in relation to the formulation and implementation of QA approach and schemes.

**6.2. Policy Elements of Quality Assurance from 1993 and 2001**

**6.2.1. Public Sentiments**

When the government launched the reform of replacing sovereign state governance
with a model of steering from a distance, increasing university autonomy and accountability, in particular for public funding, was envisaged in place of the conformity to detailed, centralised regulations (van Vught, 1997). Against this backdrop, the Dutch HE system continued experiencing intrinsic orientation to defining quality during this second stage. That is, it emerges in this study that high quality universities were conceived of as passing internally required standards. As regards objective criteria of evaluation, for instance, the Minister of Education and Science advocated the introduction of ‘performance indicators’ in the 1990 draft Higher Education and Research Plan (Vroeijenstijn and Acherman, 1990, p. 97), but the academic community remained in opposition to the sense that quality could be transformed into numbers. During the first half of the 1990s, the university sector retained hostility towards the involvement of ‘outsiders’, e.g. the assessments of the Inspectorate and the judgements of external evaluators and committee members, preferring to be assessed by the subjective judgements made by academic peers. This inclination was reflected in the Q-sort analysis. In appendix a, statement 9, which refers to the superiority of subjective judgments by programme deliverers, was sorted with the highest score in both Factor A and Factor B, among the statements (9-12) set for testing the public sentiment in this period. This implies that both extrinsic and intrinsic stakeholders significantly agreed with the statement as the dominant definition of quality from 1993 to 2001.

6.2.2. Policy Frames
Drawing upon the results of Q-sort analysis, albeit internal and external stakeholders expressed different preferences (statement 13 and statement 14 respectively, in appendix a), the dominant statements about policy frames during this period were all categorised as intrinsic QA policy ideas, with quality improvement remaining central. Nonetheless, some doubt was expressed as to whether some universities had learnt tricks after their first or second round of receiving the external visits. Regarding this, certain quality procedures, such as the incorporation of exchanging ideas between the faculties and the visitation committee into the scheme, was expected to prevent quality improvement from being eroded (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004).

As regards the extrinsic QA function of quality control (see statement 15 in appendix a), it would appear that this diminished in importance when compared to intrinsic purposes. That is, the conception of QA schemes as policy instruments for
governmental control over the supply of study programmes during the first stage (1988-1992) was not as noticeable as during the second (1993-2001). During the earlier period the universities were only entitled to issue degree certification, if study programmes had approval in the form of registration in the Central Register of Programmes in Higher Education (CROHO). Nevertheless, in spite of this greater intrinsic orientation in the latter period, after the announcement of the WHW Act in 1993, the Committee for Education Provision (ACO) was installed to make judgements on universities’ proposals for creating new study programmes, on the basis of whether the proposal would jeopardise the principle of macro-efficiency in HE. Moreover, five of the ACO members were appointed by the minister to provide relevant advice (Huisman and Jenniskens, 1994). Thus, it appears that the government reflected on the increased autonomy and thought it was necessary to step into the process of programme registration. Positive QA reports were incorporated as a sufficient condition for final approval of the minister to have the programmes registered in the CROHO.

6.2.3. Policy Paradigms

Drawing upon a six-year experience of implementing the quality procedures, the QA approach adopted in the academic year 1993/94 inherited to a considerable extent policy elements from its predecessor launched in 1989. That is, in accordance with the 1993 WHW Act, the assessment process was based on external peer review of visitation committees, preceded by internal self-evaluation. More specifically, in the visitation process, which was based on the principles of self-regulation, the VSNU was in charge of the implementation and the experts involved were independent of the assessed units. After the visitation committee’s review, the Inspectorate for Higher Education was responsible for meta-evaluation and follow-up regarding whether the recommendations had been addressed, on behalf of the government (Zijderveld, 1997).

As regards the coverage of the quality procedures, the second round of implementing the QA process was modified in two respects so that the visitation committees could pay a reasonable amount of attention to contents of the assessed programmes. First, the adapted procedures deliberately avoided clustering too many small disciplines within one visit review, following a reflection of the Inspectorate’s meta-evaluation (Zijderveld, 1997). Second, some quality procedures relating to research and
pedagogy were merged from 1994 onwards (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993). An amendment to the QA system was devised to avoid overloading the peer review committees with work. However, although the conduct of the assessment process for teaching was synchronised with the quality procedures for research, in practice the two sets of QA systems remained separated.

On the whole, both the first and second rounds of conducting the QA system were constituted by two components: the process of assessment itself and the follow-up, but the second round seemed to give more weight to the latter. Moreover, the features of the QA approaches adopted for the two periods were intrinsically oriented. The universities retained the primarily responsibility for the quality of their provision, with self-assessment at the department and faculty level remaining as the cornerstone of the whole quality process. Also, the quality procedures were geared to assisting study programmes with identifying their respective weaknesses in the first instance, and to transforming the weak points, thus improving quality in the course of time.

6.2.4. Policy Programmes

Similar to the situation in the arena of policy paradigm, the policy programmes in the second round were implemented with minor revision, with the differences being primarily in relation to the scope rules relating to follow-ups. That is, after the 1993 WHW Act and subsequent negotiations between the government and the institutions, the latter assumed more autonomy over their institutional arrangements and were expected to shoulder the additional responsibility of organising follow-ups. To facilitate this process, the Inspectorate had to conduct a mid-term review to ensure that the programme had taken sufficient actions to comply with the requirements in the visitation committee’s report (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004, van Bruggen et al., 1999). In addition, the visitation committee would, in the second round, check self-assessment reports to see whether the institutions had addressed the recommendations from the previous round.

More specifically, if a programme received negative assessment from the visitation committee, the Minister of Education would issue it with a ‘yellow card’, a warning about its low quality. Within six months after the publication of the final report, the universities receiving a card were required to write an action plan, containing the arrangements for addressing the highlighted failings. Afterwards, the Inspectorate
would visit the universities and evaluate the institution’s follow-up arrangements against their action plans, within four months. Then, according to the findings about whether the universities had adequately reacted to the recommendations of the visitation committee, the minister would receive the Inspectorate’s advice about subsequent governmental action (Zijderveld, 1997). The worse-case scenario would be that an institution with ‘yellow card’ status failed to convince the Inspectorate that adequate and immediate improvement of the programme had been achieved. The programme would receive a ‘red card’ from the minister and recognition of the programme would be suspended. That is, the programme would be struck off from the programme register (CROHO), and funding and grants for students would no longer be available (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004, Maassen, 1998).

During the first round, there had been the lack of a link between assessment outcomes and governmental decision-making, particularly about funding allocation. This was mainly attributed to the consensus reached by HE institutions and the Ministry of Education and Science in 1986. There was concern that direct consequences for funding would turn the QA system into a power game and thus undermine trust in its procedures. Therefore, the policy actors agreed that no governmental decisions on funding for programmes would be made in the short term (Maassen, 1998). Nevertheless, the linkage between financial consequences and assessment judgements in the second round of QA implementation remained indirect, insofar as there was a time frame between the issuing of yellow and red cards, i.e. between the quality judgement and the impact of negative outcomes on the university’s funding.

6.2.5. **Policy Entrepreneurs**

Comparing the QA systems for the two periods, there was no significant difference, except for the policy ideas in relation QA functions, which can be attributed to the VSNU retaining its position as the dominant policy entrepreneur in the policy arena. Nonetheless, it does not mean that the structural configuration of the HE system during the period (1993-2001) was identical to that of the previous time frame (1985-1992). Since the government had followed the steering philosophy of an evaluative state in the 1980s and institutionalised it in the 1990s, more external stakeholders were ushered into the QA system. This manifested itself in *ex post* evaluations and changes in university governance. This increasing external involvement could be
perceived as an alternative means of overseeing the universities so as to prevent their quality being jeopardised. In addition, due to some international considerations (e.g. attraction and competitiveness on the global market), external intervention became a significant component in the QA policy making process. Moreover, not only was there an increase in the involvement of external constituencies, for more emphasis was placed on managerial techniques and strategies.

Generally speaking, extrinsic intervention concerns both policy actors outside academia and outside the Netherlands. More specifically, through the 1992 Higher Education Bill and the subsequent WHW Act, the government intention of continuing ‘steering from a distance’ was reaffirmed, yet with some adjustment, with, ‘selective intervention’ being the most significant. As a result, the remit of the Inspectorate for Higher Education in relation to meta-evaluation was extended, with an additional task being assigned in the second cycle of QA implementation. In the years 1988-1993 the Inspectorate focused on assuring the validity of visitation committee reports, thereby supervising the quality of the external QA procedures. In addition to this, the Inspectorate advised the Minister of Education and Science about the performance of institutional follow-ups. An annual report on the implementation of the QA system, in general, would eventually be produced after the Inspectorate’s meta-evaluation (Boezerooy, 2003). In other words, internal QA processes of individual universities and their follow-up arrangements were checked by the Inspectorate, on behalf of the government.

In addition to increased governmental intervention in the QA system, as a result of extending the Inspectorate’s involvement, there was an increasing influence of non-academics and external stakeholders in university governance. That is, these people became more influential in determining quality issues on the policy agenda. Despite the emphasis on university autonomy in the 1985 HOAK as well as the appeal for stronger institutional management in the 1997 University Government Modernisation Bill (MUB), external participation in university daily practices became even more significant (Huisman, 2003a) and the perception of universities as entrepreneurial organisations rather than professional bureaucracy began to emerge (Maassen, 1998).

The university administrative staff at the central level gradually came to outweigh professors in terms of the determination of the overall mission. In addition, all
members of the crucial governing bodies (e.g. the supervisory body, the central executive board and the dean) were appointed, instead of being democratically elected from the academic staff and students. Moreover, in the 2000 HOOP document the minister indicated that the relationship between the government and the HE institutions would shift towards a contractual, performance-based arrangement. This signified that the traditional continental mode of collegial decision-making (academic self-regulation) had lost ground and was being mixed with the model of coordination (or termed managerial self-regulation) by the end of the 1990s (Westerheijden et al., 2009). Sovereignty over daily university practices became shared with external stakeholders, such as: employers of graduates, local and regional politicians, and industry leaders.

Apart from domestic external stakeholders, the involvement of international and supranational actors in the QA policy arena became increasingly evident. Regarding this, prior to the mid-1990s, in Europe, HE policy used to be treated as a domestic issue, with EU institutions having no formal power to intervene in individual HE sectors in member states (Alexiadou, 2007). That is, in those days the diversity of HE systems was highly respected in the European context. This stance changed in the second half of the 1990s as with greater European integration a more intimate connection between HE and other policy agendas emerged. Attributed to economic considerations as well as the appeal for social coherence, the role played by the EU in the domestic HE policy domain also became gradually noticeable (Huisman and van Vught, 2009). After the Sorbonne Declaration of 1998, the impact of European-level policy on domestic HE systems became more significant. Further, in the subsequent Bologna Declaration of 1999, the necessity of converging diverse HE systems in Europe through the adoption of some shared goals was highlighted, for example, to construct a European Higher Education Area, to increase ‘the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education’ and to promote mobility within Europe. Whilst the concept of HE quality was hardly dealt with, the text referred to ‘promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies’ (Bologna Declaration, 1999). This reference had an influence especially on normative policy ideas (e.g. the QA functions) in the Netherlands.
6.3. POLICY ELEMENTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM 2002 AND 2005

6.3.1. PUBLIC SENTIMENTS

Westerheijden (1990) argued that the concept of quality in the Dutch HE system should be defined and measured on the basis of multi-dimensional goals, because actors hold different perspectives. The results of the Q-sort analysis (appendix a) are consistent with this contention. That is, statement 18, which represents the perspective of internal stakeholders, was opted for by the Factor B respondents. This is concerned with an intrinsic orientation, that is, the quality of study programmes being related to their educational goals and the measures taken to attain the objectives. Also, the quality of ‘product’ can be guaranteed after the educational ‘input’ and ‘process’ is proved adequate. Therefore, under this lens, high quality refers to those institutions capable of conducting the necessary measures to fulfil the objectives and goals that they set for themselves.

On the other hand, external stakeholders held different views. For example, the self-assessment results were criticised for being unconvincing. Those QA outcomes produced by the universities themselves or the focus on educational input and process were deemed to be the reason for the QA system providing subjective and insufficient information about study programmes (Acherman, 1990). Likewise, recommendations in the reports of visitation committees contributed by academic peers, their judgements were criticised for a lack of objectiveness and transparency, for instance “the quality assurance scheme was too ‘soft’, too much a matter of mutually back-scratching academics” (Westerheijden et al., 2007a, p. 301). In particular, employers of college graduates preferred greater independent, transparent quality judgements that would more clearly indicate which programmes were ‘above threshold quality’ (de Boer et al., 2007, p. 105). Moreover, the government perceived that efficient institutional management was pivotal, in the light of making universities more accountable to society as a whole as well as being accountable for the way tax money was spent. Also, the capacities of graduates were conceived of as crucial quality criteria, because they indicated prospects of future careers and hence this linked the QA process with the macro-economic effect of HE. Generally speaking, external stakeholders valued the quality information more closely connected with quality outputs rather than inputs and process. Moreover, external stakeholders expected a new QA system, which would generate outcomes capable of
indicating the degree to which a programme would satisfy the defined quality requirements. In other words, they preferred to utilise, for example, objective quality checks or pre-defined standards as reference points, and were inclined to argue that the programmes conforming to required standards should be accredited owing to their satisfactory quality. These perspectives led to the emphasis on quality control over HE outputs, which was revealed in the Q-sort results. That is, Factor A, representing an external standpoint, shows a significant agreement for statement 19 (in appendix a).

Public sentiments became more dynamic due to international influences on Dutch HE activities. Regarding this, so as to accommodate more extrinsic involvement, the Inspectorate for Higher Education, from the middle of the 1990s onwards, encouraged cross-border initiatives in the HE field. Stemming from this, the Netherlands increased international cooperation with its neighbour Belgium (Flanders) in the sharing of human resources and in mutual access (e.g. joint programmes and degrees), aiming to be more responsive to regional demands in the labour market and economic development. Meanwhile, there were certain international initiatives in relation to QA. The establishment of the INQAAHE for sharing information between the bodies responsible for QA was one instance of the endeavour to enhance international cooperation. Moreover, professional recognition of foreign credentials and qualifications became more important. Professional organisations, for instance European Federation of National Engineering Associations (FEANI), developed a common set of quality standards against which it awarded the title of European Engineer (van der Wende, 1999).

Against this background, the conception of the quality of HE provision was no longer merely conditioned by the immediate domestic context, but was required to be defined more on an international basis. In other words, the appeals of external stakeholders were more than for objective quality judgements or for delegating the implementation of quality procedures to the quality agencies independent of universities. Under the Bologna process there was an expectation of developing comparable criteria and methodologies (Bologna Declaration, 1999). That is, quality was accordingly conceived of as something that should be judged against a common set of descriptors or comparable standards with an international benchmark in the European HE area. In particular, quality output (e.g. the capacities of graduates)
became the focus of QA initiatives and international standards. This approach was adopted for bachelor and master’s degrees, for it was seen as being beneficial for labour market mobility across European countries as a whole.

After the Bologna ministerial follow-up conference in Berlin in 2003, the issue of quality standards in Europe came even more to the fore. As a result of this conference, first, there was the creation of a register of QA agencies, each of which would have to be peer-reviewed before being granted entry and given membership of the ENQA. Subsequently, the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) were developed by the ENQA and were accepted by the European Higher Education ministers in 2005 (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). Generally speaking, the ESG functions as an example of the open method of coordination (OMC). At the 2000 Lisbon European Council Meeting, direct reference was made to the application of the OMC in the education field, which was perceived as a ‘soft’ approach to resolving the contradiction between the respect for national diversity and the achievement of the EU’s common objectives for cooperation and integration (Alexiadou, 2007). In other words, the ESG was geared towards setting common European standards and guidelines for quality assurance, aiming for mutual recognition of national HE systems in Europe, whilst simultaneously ensuring that the fundamental principles of national HE systems would still remain. Against this background, the quality agencies and quality standards in the Dutch HE system would be influenced by the EU governance in at least two ways. First, the ESG would contribute to achieving consensus on good practice regarding QA procedures, and second, quality agencies’ full membership of the ENQA would rely on the fulfilment of the ESG. In sum, it appears that there was significant European influence on the Dutch QA system.

6.3.2. **Policy Frames**

Echoing the public sentiments described in the preceding section, there was a similar mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations that led the policy change in QA functions. Regarding these, the Q-sort findings (appendix a) reveal that both intrinsic and extrinsic stakeholders were inclined to agree with statement 22 as the dominant policy idea. The result is parallel to the perception collected by the Dutch-Flemish accreditation organisation, where the respondents, especially lecturers and students at the institutional level, conceived quality improvement as the most preferred outcome
of the accreditation system (Wijnen, 2007). Furthermore, the existing QA system rooted in assessment was perceived as losing its effectiveness, because after two rounds of implementing the existing procedures for over ten years, it was believed that the universities had learnt some tricks in relation to internal quality procedures and the external visitation. Therefore, the introduction of new quality procedures was aimed at preventing the value of conducting QA from being eroded and these had the goal of not just improving quality, but also enhancing quality awareness (Dittrich et al., 2004). From a long-term perspective, this was concerned with the notion of quality improvement as an ultimate QA purpose. That is, quality was to be related to continuous improvement that would be ultimately achieved by the means of either enhancing internal quality management or by fulfilling institutional accountability to external stakeholders (including the taxpayer).

In contrast to the intrinsic QA function, the results of the Q-sort analysis shown in appendix a reveal that statement 23, pertaining to public information, was perceived by both internal and external stakeholders as a pivotal purpose for setting up a QA system. There had been a decrease in government intervention and an increase in the involvement of external stakeholders, which stimulated the application of market mechanisms (Huisman, 2003a). Under such financial or market considerations, disseminating sufficient information was perceived as being pivotal for international HE. For example, after the per-student budget was significantly cut, increasing cross-border HE activities were expected to bring more foreign and non-EU students, along with more funds, into the university sector. From the viewpoint of the universities, the better the international recognition, the better the mobility of students (especially those paying full tuition fees) and graduates would be (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004).

Moreover, the Bologna process extended the issue of transparency from a domestic topic to the international level. Those tasked with the establishment of QA systems envisaged providing comparable information about the programmes and institutions, whereby students, employers, and the public would be able to make informed decisions. The importance of transparency and comparability for realising the European Higher Education Area was highlighted in the Bologna Declaration, where the availability of such information was expected to facilitate international benchmarking and increase student mobility in Europe (Wijnen, 2007). Afterwards,
ENQA (created in 1999) served the purpose of exchanging information and experiences by assembling QA agencies across European countries. From the perspective of customer protection, information about QA results would give an assurance that the quality of provision had achieved at least a minimum threshold, which would contribute to validation (Faber and Huisman, 2003). In spite of this, the provision of information through the QA process would appear to have had more use value for the Dutch government than the students. Regarding this, Westerheijden (2001) claimed that traditionally Dutch secondary school pupils perceived the travelling distance from their parental home to the institution as an important factor in determining their university and programme, rather than the institution’s quality and profile. Westerheijden et al. (2009) explained that before the mid-1990s, variety in the quality of teaching and research was relatively small in Dutch society. That is, equality was the norm until the stratification of quality in the HE sector became an issue.

Due to further meetings being held for processing the Bologna Declaration, the European influence on the Dutch HE system became more pronounced. In particular, the external QA scheme was to a certain extent perceived as a vehicle for the compliance with European ministerial agreements, or for realising coherence in the European Higher Education Area (Dittrich and Klaassen, 2007). More specifically, the 2001 follow-up conference in Prague was viewed as the first milestone in the Bologna process in that some new aspects were brought onto the agenda. Firstly, the Prague Declaration emphasised the role of QA. Apart from ensuring quality standards, the main purpose of QA systems was geared to facilitating the comparability of degree qualifications throughout the European HE area. Secondly, in order to enhance mutual trust in and acceptance of the QA systems in different European countries, the ministers of education linked the issue of recognition with QA and envisaged closer cooperation between recognition of qualifications and QA networks (Prague Communiqué, 2001). In accordance with the Prague Declaration, the QA systems were expected to inform either external stakeholders (e.g. those in labour market) or internal ones (e.g. universities) about the quality of degrees. In addition, due to the requirements relating to the introduction of the bachelor-master degree structure and the European qualification system, the setting of minimum quality standards as well as comparable quality standards became an important consideration (van der Wende and Westerheijden, 2001).
6.3.3. Policy Paradigms

To be in line with the common objectives in European HE systems rooted in the Bologna Declaration, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science decided to take action. After consulting with the major stakeholders, such as the umbrella bodies of the institutions (i.e. the VSNU and the HBO-raad) and student organisations in 2000, the government incorporated accreditation in the subsequent policy initiative sent to the Parliament: Accreditation in Dutch Higher Education (Keur aan Kwaliteit). In the regional context, the Dutch government considered an accreditation system a promising policy initiative for greater mobility, comparability and transparency with the neighbouring Flemish speaking Belgians, particularly in relation to the establishment of a bachelor-master degree structure.

The adaptation of the QA system was in the form of accreditation to enhance mutual international recognition and to have a comparable degree structure. More specifically, accreditation was applied to the programmes waiting for approval as well as to those that had already been registered in the CROHO. All programmes that wanted to award degrees recognised by the Dutch government would be subject to the QA scheme, no matter whether their institutions were government-funded or government-approved/non-government funded (Eurydice, 2005). The accreditation process was perceived as a promising approach to guaranteeing a certain threshold of quality (or the minimum quality standards set up in advance) and sufficient information about the quality of degree programmes. These would benefit international transparency and consumer protection in relation to the quality of bachelor and master’s programmes across European HE systems, particularly in the light of student mobility (Dittrich et al., 2004). Moreover, the accreditation approach was expected to benefit the deinstitutionalisation of the binary HE system, in that the institutions were allowed to deliver professional and academic programmes so long as they fulfilled the prerequisites for their accreditation (Dittrich, 2003).

The accreditation system was different from the first generation that was conducted in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Wall in that it encompassed various external quality bodies (Westerheijden, 2001). More specifically, each external quality agency would develop a specific format of profiles which would demonstrate the programme’s details in some respects (e.g. subject, facets and
criteria). Moreover, in the multiple-accreditation system, the programme deliverers would be allowed to choose those preferred quality agencies whose assessment formats and quality criteria could reflect the programme’s specific profile. That is, by means of selecting one from a multitude of suppliers of accreditation, the QA arrangements were envisaged as accommodating a variety of evaluation processes. According to Wijnen (2007), this would improve the diversity of HE provision, because the quality agencies would define their own quality standards and assessment procedures, attuned to the demand of their constituency, e.g. employers, students and professions. Moreover, this would benefit the HE system because it could engage with a wide range of actors and stakeholders participating in cross-border HE activities at the regional or global level.

In practice, the accreditation system was established in conjunction with a set of assessment procedures, including the process of self-assessment, peer review by expert panels and published reporting. These components were similar to those of the previous QA system, but were different in terms of conducting peer review. Moreover, in accordance with the new assessment procedures, degree programmes were to be assessed by an external committee, composed of independent experts, whose constitution and operations were under the supervision of a quality assessment agency. Each quality agency would develop its own assessment protocol, which had to conform to the frameworks formulated by the national accreditation organisation. By evaluating the programme’s self-assessment report and site visits, the committee would assess the programme’s performance and complete a report based on the protocol set out by the quality agency. The report would then be sent back to the institution that wanted to submit a request for accreditation to the national accreditation organisation. After receiving the request, the accreditation body would verify and validate the report and accordingly make its decision within three months. This decision would be binary (either pass or fail), published, valid within one year (Dittrich et al., 2004, NVAO, 2003) and be valid for six years.

6.3.4. POLICY PROGRAMMES

In the new QA procedures, the universities would take the initiative by submitting applications for accreditation and selecting an external quality agency (i.e. a Visiting and Assessing Body, VBI). It by no means meant that the QA system had an intrinsic orientation, for the quality agencies were extrinsically constituted. In addition, the
institutions were obligated to participate in the QA system in order to receive funding.

6.3.4.1. POSITION AND BOUNDARY RULES

In 2002, an amendment to the Higher Education and Research Act not only put the introduction of the bachelors-masters structure into effect, but also led to the establishment of the Netherlands Accreditation Organisation (NAO) in June (Eurydice, 2005). The NAO was responsible for most of the costs for accreditation, and the fee that paid by the programme was small insofar as each application cost only 2,500 Euros (Dittrich, 2003). In addition, the national accreditation body was responsible for verifying and validating external assessment as well as granting accreditation for existing programmes and licensing new programmes. More specifically, the assessment of existing programmes would be conducted by external quality agencies, but that for new programmes would be completed by the NAO. NAO members were to be appointed by the minister and comprised experts from the HE field, professional practice and quality assessment (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004). In particular, the NAO Board consisted of: three fulltime members who were former university presidents and four part-time members: one former minister, two from industry and one from the public sector (Dittrich, 2003).

The external assessment was to be conducted by a panel that was appointed by a registered quality assessment agency, after a programme deliverer requested the external quality agency to do so. This quality process was different from the previous QA scheme, whereby visitation committees implemented peer-review practice and visited all the programmes of a given subject. Criteria to the composition and goals of the VBIs were included in the system of mutual recognition and QA procedures after the 2003 ministerial conference in Berlin. That is, the conclusions of the meeting were crucial for clearly defining the criteria. Moreover, the VBIs would be independent of the universities and registered with the NAO (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004). This shows that the main responsibility of QA was taken away from the university community in order to be more accountable to both internal and external stakeholders. The external quality agencies, such as the Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities (QANU) and the Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA), were members of the ENQA (Eurydice, 2005). The national accreditation organisation was responsible for evaluating their quality as well as being tasked with compiling an annual list of qualified quality agencies that met the quality prerequisites for carrying
out the external assessments (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004).

After a treaty was signed by the Netherlands and Flemish Community of Belgium in 2003, the NAO was transformed into a bi-national organisation, named the Dutch-Flemish Accrediting Organisation (NVAO), which commenced work in 2004. The members of the Executive Board and the General Board were appointed by the respective governments, after consultation with the academic communities. The remit of the NVAO, inherited from the protocol that had been implemented by the NAO, was to process the applications of Dutch and Flemish study programmes for accreditation. In addition, the task of overseeing the external assessments, which had been held by the Inspectorate for Higher Education as a meta-evaluation, was also transferred to the NVAO (Eurydice, 2005).

By the end of 2007, the bi-national organisation was involved in the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), aimed at mutual recognition of accreditation decisions in conjunction with other QA agencies in Europe (Bologna Process, 2005). Moreover, the NVAO developed an accreditation framework which would lead to VBIs formulating their own framework of reference, which was focused on six aspects of quality: aims and objectives, curriculum, staff, facilities, internal quality assurance and conditions for continuity/results. Each aspect encompassed several standards, each of which had corresponding criteria and to be accredited a study programme had to receive satisfactory scores for all aspects. National and international benchmarking of the programme against other comparable programmes would be available. The reference framework, which stated the requirements for the national/international level needed to be adapted to fit with a specific subject/discipline area. Further, the relevant expertise regarding the programme would be included and this would be defined by an external panel appointed by a registered VBI. In addition to these aspects, the institution could request the VBI to assess specific quality or features of a programme, which would be annotated in the accreditation report, but would not have a bearing on the accreditation outcome. The room left by the NVAO to the VBI was to allow for the periodic adaptation to the latest development of the subject/discipline to be encompassed into its specific framework of reference (NVAO, 2003).

On the whole, it was the NVAO determining which aspects the VBI should assess, as
well as whether or not the quality of the programme would be sufficient for accreditation based on the assessment results provided from the latter. Moreover, the criteria and requirements adopted in each external assessment would be discipline-relevant and dependent on the VBI’s protocol. Given this, Perellon (2005) claimed that the NVAO was to act as a policymaker as well as a meta-evaluator and as a consequence, the VSNU, to a great extent, was lost its relative monopoly in the implementation of quality procedures and accreditation decisions. Also, the role of the Inspectorate for Higher Education was to be less important.

6.3.4.2. INFORMATION RULES

Regarding data collection, the QA scheme can be categorised as a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations. As regards the intrinsic aspect, it refers to the procedures for self-assessments, which were conducted by the institution applying for accreditation at the outset of the quality process. After the internal assessment, the institution generated a report, which was only disclosed to the assessment panel of a VBI. Improvement can be perceived as the core value of this stage, given that the responsibility for implementation was with the institution itself and the unpublished nature of the report. However, extrinsic features were also included in that an outside panel visited the programme to verify the information and conclusions compiled in the self-assessment report produced by the institution. According to Dittrich (2003), the membership of a panel was at least four, with one student and international representatives, who had expertise in the specific discipline, education, audit, and/or in the professional field and were responsible for evaluating the quality of the self-assessment.

With respect to data judgments, the relevant procedures reflect an extrinsic orientation. Given that the yes-or-no decisions made by the NVAO imply financial consequences, it was deemed that the accreditation framework and criteria for judgements should have explicit, objective definitions. In addition, ad hoc comparisons of programmes were to be reduced, and the quality aspects of assessment would be focused on the information in relation to outputs rather than the teaching/learning process (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004). Moreover, in accordance with the NVAO quality assessment protocol, it was the external quality agency, the VBI, that would judge whether the programme fulfilled the minimum requirements and then, would score programme performance on a four-point
assessment scale, viz: excellent, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Furthermore, the points of reference formulated by the VBI would be under international influence. For example, the QANU protocol stated that to judge a degree programme in an international setting, its panels would draw upon the self-assessment report and could utilise other sources of information. With respect to the international sources, the applications included, for example, the benchmark standards of the QAA in the UK and those of the European Tuning project (QANU, 2004).

Finally, the external assessment report, including a score and supporting evidence, would be disclosed to the programme and the NVAO. Based on this VBI report which would include a profile, a financial overview and a staff description of the programme, the NVAO would check whether it was compatible with the accreditation framework and could request additional information if necessary. An eligible programme for accreditation was one with no quality aspects receiving negative judgements, i.e. unsatisfactory. Subsequently, an accreditation decision about the programme would be made in a binary (i.e. yes or no) way and then published (NVAO, 2003). Generally speaking, the reporting stage involved intrinsically-oriented procedures, such as the provision of a self-assessment report, along with extrinsic-oriented ones, pertaining to the judgements made by external actors, the publicised assessment results and the decisions on awarding accreditation.

6.3.4.3. Payoff and Scope Rules
As pointed out above, accreditation was crucial, for once approved it would last six years and failure to achieve could lead to loss of funding. Regarding this, the students enrolled on a programme would usually have financial support for study (e.g. government grants and loans)(NVAO, 2003) and hence, abrupt closure of the programme mean that this support had been wasted as well as the time they had spent working towards degree certification. Therefore, it was decided that when there was a negative decision on accreditation the institution would be given two years to improve the quality of the programme (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004).

6.3.5. Policy Entrepreneurs
The policy actors involved in the QA issues during this period can be distinguished from those in previous times by their extrinsic features. With regard to these,
international influences, for instance, the cooperation with other European countries (especially Belgium) in cross-border activities and information sharing within international networks (e.g. INQAAHE) were significant. With respect to the development of normative policy ideas, the QA agencies in foreign HE systems (e.g. members of the ECA and the ENQA) and regional professional organisations (e.g. FEANI) participated, to a great extent, in defining HE quality and determining the fundamental QA purposes. In relation to cognitive QA ideas, European influences were noticeable, in, for instance, an Accreditation Project that was launched by the European Rectors Conference (CRE; now the Association of European Universities, EUA) in 2000 to explore an accreditation approach across national borders in Europe. Drawing on the results of this, a European initiative was proposed which envisaged the accreditation system as a vehicle for providing European-wide information (Faber and Huisman, 2003). Furthermore, Jeliazkova and Westerheijden (2004) acknowledged the influence of the German experience on the development of the Dutch national accreditation organisation brought about through discussions between the representatives of the NAO and the German Accreditation Council.

Despite these significant influences that emanated from abroad, the policy entrepreneurs crucial in providing the QA approaches that would be adopted by the Dutch HE system were usually positioned within the Netherlands. Firstly, the HBO-raad was actively involved in advocating accreditation-based projects. Due to the operation of the Scale-enlargement, Task-reallocation and Concentration (STC) in the 1980s, the HBO sector experienced intensive mergers of institutions and as a consequence, the higher vocational institutions, which paid more attention to public demand and labour market needs vis-à-vis the universities, gradually became a powerful influence in relation to the university sector (Goedegebuure et al., 1990).

After the HBO-raad launched the first set of quality procedures in 1990 a binary Dutch QA system emerged. However, the differences between those implemented by the universities and the HBO-raad were considered to be marginal (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993). After the effects of the Bologna Declaration reached the Dutch HE system, the HBO institutions lobbied the minister for permission to offer professional master programmes (Huisman and van Vught, 2009). In other words, the Bologna agendas opened the policy window of opportunity for the HBO-raad not only to advocate the two-cycle degree structure but also to launch the pilot project for programme accreditation (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004, Westerheijden et
al., 2007a). The stakeholders external to the universities tended to believe that an accreditation system conducted by external quality agencies held the promise for HE provision of more objective outcomes and the dissemination of more transparent information about programmes. Prompted by the discussions around the Bologna process as well as these expectations, the HBO-raad subsequently initiated a pilot project on accreditation in 1998, involving 40 degree programmes across two domains. Drawing upon the experience of the accreditation pilot, ideas were generated regarding the possibility of incorporating an accreditation scheme into the existing assessment process and substituting programme accreditation for the existing QA system and subsequently, in 2001, the new QA system for the Netherlands was instigated (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004).

Secondly, the Minister of Education and Science was influential in the determination of accreditation as the new QA approach. In the document Higher Education in An International Context that the Education Council submitted to the minister in May 1999, the Council advocated the introduction of the bachelor-master degree structure and advised that the government should establish an independent accreditation body to assess the quality of the degree programmes. In favour of accreditation, the ministry dispatched a group, composed of government officials and the representatives of HE institutions, to the USA to learn about the accreditation system. In July 2000, the minister introduced an accreditation system in the document, Choice of Quality. A committee was subsequently appointed by the minister chaired by Jan Franssen, a parliamentary educational specialist. Drawing on the study of international experience and on consultations with major policy stakeholders in the Dutch HE sector, the Franssen Committee issued a report, Activate, Achieve and Advance, in September 2001. During the course of producing the report, the umbrella organisation of the institutions (e.g. VSNU, HBO-raad) and student organisations (e.g. ISO and LSVb) were consulted about the outline of the accreditation system and accordingly, the minister proposed the policy initiatives, regarding the introduction of the two-cycle degree structure, in conjunction with the establishment of an accreditation system that would be conducted by a body independent of them. In the following legislative process in June 2002, the bills were accepted by an overwhelmingly majority in parliament and the acts were enacted later the same year (Boezerooy, 2003, Dittrich et al., 2004).
Thirdly, the national quality agency was the policy actor responsible for shaping the accreditation system in detail. The NAO in the first instance formulated the official quality frameworks: one for the existing programmes and the other for new programmes waiting to be licensed, which were endorsed by parliament in May 2003. Afterwards, the NVAO, the ‘state-controlled’ Dutch-Flemish quality organisation (Westerheijden et al., 2004, p. 378), set out the accreditation scheme in fine detail and began operating the quality procedures in the autumn of 2004 (Dittrich et al., 2004). This contributed to the accreditation frameworks, in accordance with which external quality agencies arranged their external quality assessments of programmes. Generally speaking, the national quality organisation (NVAO) and the representative body of higher professional institutions (i.e. HBO-raad) were two significant policy entrepreneurs pushing the accreditation system onto the policy agenda. More specifically, the HBO-raad was the entrepreneur responsible for launching the QA approach of accreditation, whilst the NVAO was tasked with formulating the QA scheme in detail. With respect to the government, the Minister of Education and Science was, rather than an entrepreneur, the policy-maker who decided to abandon the evaluation system in favour of the switch to accreditation. As regards the international and European influences, these were noticeable during this period against the backdrop of the Bologna process as well as growing European coordination and cooperation. Nonetheless, these influences primarily impacted normative policy ideas. In relation to cognitive policy elements, such as the QA approaches and schemes, domestic policy actors were particularly influential. That is, sovereignty over HE initiatives and policy implementation in relation to QA, remained situated within the Netherlands.

**6.4. SUMMARY**

In table 6-1 policy changes in QA elements and the policy entrepreneurs in relation to the QA approach and schemes in the Netherlands, in the period between 1985 and 2005 are summarised. As can be seen, the QA systems in period 1 and period 2 are similar with regards to most of the QA elements, except for the policy element of QA functions. It should be noted that there was a shift in relation to cognitive policy ideas after 2002, with a move from an intrinsic to an extrinsic orientation. Furthermore, the acceptance of QA innovations with an extrinsic orientation, to a considerable extent, was due the stakeholders external to the university community becoming involved. For instance, the policy initiatives for the accreditation system
were advocated by the HBO-raad in the first instance and were accepted by the government.

Table 6-1: Policy change in Dutch QA systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Periods</th>
<th>NL1</th>
<th>NL2</th>
<th>NL3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA schemes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Position rules: managing agency responsible for the QA system and providing general formats and procedure guidelines was as</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: a coordinator independent of the government. (Its remit included monitoring and commenting on institutional quality control)</td>
<td>VSNU</td>
<td>VSNU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic orientation: being tied closely to the governmental services (e.g. quality control, funding allocation, programme approves and award)</td>
<td>Inspectorate for Higher Education</td>
<td>Inspectorate for Higher Education</td>
<td>NVAO;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Boundary rules: membership of the managing agency owned:</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: by the universities (Universities assumed responsibility for assuring the quality of the programmes they offered)</td>
<td>VSNU</td>
<td>VSNU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic orientation: by the government or collectively by the university community and the government (or funding councils)</td>
<td>Inspectorate for Higher Education</td>
<td>Inspectorate for Higher Education</td>
<td>NVAO;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Information rules</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. Data collection</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Mixture orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: self-evaluation; produce institutional documents;</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic orientation: information for judgements is merely collected by outside actors (including employers, alumni)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Data judgements, or who determined quality criteria</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: peer review mainly by academic experts independent of the visited unit</td>
<td>Visitation committees</td>
<td>Visitation committees</td>
<td>VBI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extrinsic orientation: peer review is conducted merely by external actors (e.g. professional bodies, employers’ organisations, industry)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mixture orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mixture orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mixture orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.3. Reporting</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: the visited unit had the opportunity to comment on a draft report of the visit team and allow to formulate counter arguments if necessary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic orientation: published final reports, i.e. the conclusion of visit teams</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Payoff and scope rules</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Extrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation: QA outcomes were not or indirectly linked with governmental decisions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ Legal status for awarding degrees, state funding, student financing support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic orientation: QA outcomes were linked with governmental decisions (e.g. funding allocation, programme registration)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA schemes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Extrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA approaches</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Extrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA functions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mixture orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mixture orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality definitions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mixture orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy entrepreneurs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA approaches</td>
<td>VSNU</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>HBO-raad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA schemes</td>
<td>VSNU</td>
<td>VSNU</td>
<td>NVAO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

195
CH7 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The preceding two chapters reported the eight episodes of the policy change occurring in the English and Dutch HE systems. This chapter details the comparisons and analyses drawing on the empirical findings presented in chapter five and chapter six. Also, this chapter is to estimate and interpret the variables identified in figure 4-3, whereby the five propositions and three subsidiary research questions that were proposed in section 4.1 are addressed.

In the first section of the chapter, the pattern of policy change in QA is determined, by looking at the two dependent variables: the emergence of policy change and the degree of policy change. This is followed by two sections, which detail the cross-case comparisons revolving around two underlying properties of HE systems (viz. policy consistency of QA elements and the position of policy entrepreneurs in the system), and accordingly the first two subsidiary research questions are answered, respectively. The final section, drawing upon the outcomes obtained in sections 7.2 and 7.3, is to address the last main research question, which probes the plausible interconnections between the variables in the light of Campbell’s theory, particularly in terms of institutional constellation, structural constraint, institutional innovation and the process of bricolage and translation.

7.1. THE PATTERN AND DIRECTION OF POLICY CHANGE

This section is aimed at identifying the pattern that best characterises the policy change in the empirical case periods, in terms of whether they represent revolutionary change, punctuated equilibrium or evolutionary change. Firstly, the eight episodes of QA schemes are summarised. Following this, the extent to which the eight QA schemes changed respectively is displayed. Unlike the first subsection that merely focuses on QA rules, the aim of the second is to identify the similarities and differences between all the four QA elements. That is, by so doing, the degrees of policy change in terms of the four QA elements, viz. QA schemes, QA approaches, QA functions and quality definitions, are revealed. Lastly, by incorporating the two series of data demonstrated in the first and second parts, in the final subsection the pattern of the policy change elicited for each of the focal countries is presented and analysed.
7.1.1. Emergence of Policy Change in QA Schemes

The QA schemes that emerged in England and the Netherlands during the years under investigation are detailed in table 7-1, in conjunction with the orientation of the individual QA rules and the years when they were adopted or were changed, or rather the duration of each scheme. As can be seen from the comparison of these QA schemes, five in England and three in the Netherlands, there is a general trend in QA orientations moving from the intrinsic towards the extrinsic side. The difference between EN2 and EN3 is taken as an example. The determination of academic standards was to be incorporated in the remit of external review teams, and accordingly reviewers were allowed to form their judgements in different ways, such as: drawing on findings of external examiners; and seeking feedback from students, staff and/or employers. However, the amended QA procedures involved more negotiation between HE insiders and outsiders. These changes are attributed here to an increasing external intervention in the development of the QA scheme. This actually is reflected in what Kogan and Hanney (2000) observed. Information on academic performance was advocated to be measured quantitatively, in order to make the participation of non-academic managers in data judgement possible. Also, due to more significant involvement of the government and external stakeholders, it was more acceptable that non-academic managers would be eligible to measure and compare academic performance. This change led to the position and boundary rules in EN4 deviating further from the intrinsic orientation.

A notable similarity across the countries is that the way in which the information rules changed over the studied period was identical to the aggregated rule change for the QA schemes. As regards payoff and scope rules, not until 2000 did both countries adopt intrinsic orientations, which means that the HE institutions with negative QA results did not experience any significant consequences. Furthermore, through the analysis of these payoff and scope rules, it is found that those in the Dutch and English HE systems tended to be associated with different HE policies. QA results in the Netherlands were somewhat related to degree-awarding regulations. After the 1993 WHW was passed, the introduction of new study programmes was connected with assessment results. This law led to the Dutch QA system having a more direct linkage with the curriculum, degree structure and programme accreditation than its counterpart in England. On the other hand, the development of English QA schemes
was more frequently connected with or influenced by financial issues, such as public funding allocation for teaching, tuition fees and the cost of implementing quality procedures.

As regards the differences between the two countries, the English schemes, particularly in relation to position and boundary rules (e.g. structure arrangements and ownership or who should control the QA procedures), changed more frequently than in the Dutch case. However with respect to the information rules and payoff and scope rules (e.g. evaluation procedures), the Netherlands after moving into the third stage reveals more noticeable change than that for England. Certainly, there are some divergent points not included in table 7-1, as they cannot be classified in terms of either the intrinsic or extrinsic sides. The issue of whether the object of QA procedures was the institutions, subjects and/or qualification of programme degree is an example of such exclusion. With respect to this, the next subsection does cover this aspect. However, generally speaking, the English QA schemes were more intrinsically-oriented than those adopted in the Netherlands. Also, the degree to which the Netherlands deviated from the intrinsic to extrinsic orientation was higher than in England.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>England episodes</th>
<th>EN2</th>
<th>EN3</th>
<th>EN4</th>
<th>EN5</th>
<th>Orientation of individual rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergence of new QA schemes (Years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991 Academic Audit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 Quality Audit and Quality Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 Quality Audit and Teaching Quality Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 Quality Audit and Teaching Quality Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 Institutional Audit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position and Boundary rules</th>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information rules</th>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payoff and scope rules</th>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregated QA scheme</th>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (19**)</th>
<th>88</th>
<th>89</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>91</th>
<th>92</th>
<th>93</th>
<th>94</th>
<th>95</th>
<th>96</th>
<th>97</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>99</th>
<th>00</th>
<th>01</th>
<th>02</th>
<th>03</th>
<th>04</th>
<th>05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch episodes</td>
<td>NL1</td>
<td>NL2</td>
<td>NL3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergence of new QA schemes (Years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position and Boundary rules</th>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information rules</th>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payoff and scope rules</th>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregated QA scheme</th>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

199
### 7.1.2. Degree of Policy Change in QA Systems

The orientations in relation to the four policy dimensions observed in the eight cases and the extent to which each policy element changed across any two stages are compiled in table 7-2.

Table 7- 2: Degrees of policy change in QA elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>E1</th>
<th>EN2</th>
<th>EN3</th>
<th>EN4</th>
<th>EN5</th>
<th>NL1</th>
<th>NL2</th>
<th>NL3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position and Boundary Rules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mixed-</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Level</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Rules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mixed-</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Level</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payoff and Scope Rules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mixed-</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Level</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA schemes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mixed-</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Level</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA Approaches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mixed-</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Level</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA Functions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mixed-</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Level</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Definitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mixed-</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Level</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mixed-</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Level</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from comparisons between the first periods (EN1 and NL1) and the last ones (EN5 and NL3), the direction of policy change in the majority of the QA elements detected is from the intrinsic side towards the extrinsic.

At the commencement of implementing their QA systems, both countries developed intrinsically-oriented procedures. This appears to be a policy convergence, where a peer review and a self-evaluation process were normally conducted in the first instance in both countries. Regarding peer review, site visits were conducted by teams with appropriate experience and expertise from the outside of the evaluated institution or faculty. Either the assessment or the audit teams would first review the self-evaluation documentation and then they would interview staff and students during visit. Their judgement, therefore, would draw upon the institutional self-evaluation reports. Finally, a report was published depending on whether it was in the QA requirements.

There are, however, some exceptions in terms of the trend towards the extrinsic orientation. First, payoff and scope rules and QA approaches in England remain steady, along with the intrinsic orientation, during the whole period under investigation. In spite of this, some notable changes regarding this are illustrated in the table.

For example, comparing the cases of EN1 and EN2, in relation to QA approaches, the most significant difference was that EN2 involved the setting up of the dual QA schemes, combining Quality Assessment and Quality Audit. The rationale emanated from the intrinsic premise pervading the HE sector: academic standards were a matter for the academic community and therefore should be free of external regulation. Based on this, the audit process was collectively carried out on behalf of the academic community and included all the HE institutions and their representative bodies. Moreover, although the subject assessments were carried out on behalf of the funding council, along with the guidance of the education department, consultation with the institutional representatives was unquestioned when determining the key features of the QA process.

Second, QA functions fluctuated in terms of the direction of policy change. This
suggests that this was the most controversial policy idea in both case countries. For instance, in the EN3 period, policy entrepreneurs were inclined to frame their QA alternatives by emphasising intrinsic purposes. That is, facilitating quality improvement through the sharing of good practice, according to research results, was the dominant QA function pervading during this period. However, it was also found that the quality process emphasised the importance of providing sufficient information for: institutions, potential students and employers. That is, the assessment and audit procedures in the EN3 case were geared to enhancing the extent of transparency in relation to the quality of HE provision and also to facilitating funding allocation. Although both intrinsically- and extrinsically-oriented purposes of conducting quality procedures were identified in EN3, the Q-sort analysis revealed that the former, were the major drivers for QA innovation at this stage. Furthermore, although the two QA innovations were both framed in an extrinsically-oriented way, there were differences. For instance, at the outset of the QA developments, the extrinsic function was derived from accountability for tax money in England, whereas it was more concerned with external quality control in the Netherlands.

Third and last, the two policy developments in the two countries, although heading in parallel direction, ended up by adopting opposite QA approaches. That is, in England the Institutional Audit was adopted in 2002, which was preceded by the Quality Audit and Teaching Quality Assessment; whilst the Netherlands chose an extrinsic approach, with accreditation of programmes in the early 2000, following programme assessment.

Comparing the QA ideas and schemes, drawing upon Campbell’s typology, normative QA ideas (i.e. QA functions and quality definitions) in England emerged as the category of having the highest degree of policy change, rather than cognitive ideas (i.e. QA approaches) and regulative ideas (i.e. QA schemes). Taking EN4 and EN5 as the example, the Institutional Audit was proposed as the policy alternative to its predecessor, the Academic Review and according to an official statement (HEFCE et al., 2001), it was a substantial revision. Certainly, there were some obvious differences between these two QA systems. The conduct of subject assessments became much more selective under the Institutional Audit, for prior to that the review procedures covered all main subject areas in all HE institutions in England. In addition, some QA elements that were implemented after 2002 were
more diverse, particularly in relation to information rules and scope rules. Regarding the former, these were changed mainly in relation to data collection procedures and the approach to data judgments, whilst the latter encompassed more follow-ups, including the subject reviews. Nonetheless, these differences are not significant enough to represent a change in their previous orientation in relation to QA schemes in general. In addition, EN4 and EN5 share the same components of QA approaches: institutional audit and subject assessment. By contrast, the extent to which the regulative and cognitive ideas in the Dutch QA systems changed is more significant than the degree of change that occurred in the normative ideas.

7.1.3. Summary
Figure 7-1 is set out to identify the aforementioned patterns of QA change by aggregating the data on new QA schemes being adopted and their duration (from table 7-1) with those regarding the degree of policy change in QA systems (from table 7-2). The top left hand corner refers to the QA systems with the lowest degree of change as well as the longest period of persistence, which in other words, represents the model of evolutionary change. Conversely, the bottom right hand corner gathers those cases that are conceived of as changing in a revolutionary way.

As revealed in figure 7-1, both case countries present the third type, punctuated equilibrium, in that the estimated policy changes nearly all fall outside of the two corners representing the alternative interpretations. Furthermore, all the policy changes experienced in the Netherlands are more stable with longer durations than their counterparts in England. In sum, it is posited that policy change in the QA systems takes place under the change pattern of punctuated equilibrium, albeit the frequency of change is different from country to country.
As regards the direction of policy change in the QA systems of European HE, table 7-3 shows a marked deviation from the intrinsic side, although the extent of change is more significant regarding the Dutch episodes than for England. In particular, there is a policy convergence of the position and boundary rules. Based on the results, the QA systems are shifting towards an extrinsic orientation. Also, the longer the QA schemes were implemented, the more similar in terms of the quality agencies’ ownership and remit set by different European countries would be. In other words, the variations decreased.
## Table 7-3: Deviation from the intrinsic to the extrinsic orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position and boundary rules</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information rules</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payoff and scope rules</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA scheme</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA approach</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA functions</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality definitions</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed orientation</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position and boundary rules</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information rules</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payoff and scope rules</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA scheme</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA approach</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA functions</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality definitions</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic orientation</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position and boundary rules</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information rules</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payoff and scope rules</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA scheme</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA approach</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA functions</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality definitions</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2. CONSISTENCY OF POLICY ELEMENTS AND THE PATTERN OF POLICY CHANGE

The following two sections have the objective to discern the mechanisms that can account for these policy phenomena, by means of analysing certain propositions emanating from the theoretical lens of Campbell’s new institutionalism (2004). This section, in the first instance, focuses on one of the two independent variables, that is, the consistency in QA elements.

7.2.1. CONSISTENCY OF QA ELEMENTS

The variable consistency of policy elements represents one of the properties in relation to the European HE systems which, in accordance with the theoretical framework of the present study (see figure 4-3), would hypothetically affect the pattern of policy change. In practice, this variable comprises two subsidiary aspects: (1) the consistency between the newly-adopted QA scheme and the previous QA system; and (2) the consistency between the policy elements of the existing QA system. Based on table 4-1 (i.e. the typology of QA ideas and schemes), as well as those operational definitions subsequently presented in subsection 4.2.3, table 7-4 and table 7-5 are the results of translating the data of table 7-2.

Table 7-4: Orientation of the four QA elements for the eight episodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>EN1</th>
<th>EN2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreground</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>QA schemes-</td>
<td>QA approaches-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>QA functions-</td>
<td>Quality definitions-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL1</td>
<td>NL2</td>
<td>NL3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7-5: Consistency of policy elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EN1</th>
<th>EN2</th>
<th>EN3</th>
<th>EN4</th>
<th>EN5</th>
<th>NL1</th>
<th>NL2</th>
<th>NL3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Consistency of new QA schemes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Consistency of QA elements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.2. **Relation between the consistency of the QA elements and the emergence of policy change in the QA schemes**

The analysis of the subsection is concerned with proposition one and proposition two provided in this thesis. The assumptions behind the propositions were explained in subsection 4.1.2.

Proposition one: If policy innovations in QA schemes are more consistent with the currently existing QA system, they are more likely to be adopted as new QA elements in the process of policy formulation.

Combining the data presented in table 7-5, in particular, on the consistency between the newly-adopted QA scheme and the previous QA system, and the information in table 7-1 about how many years the policy innovation persisted, figure 7-2 reveals the empirical relation between the two concepts. Proposition one can be verified by the relevant episodes appearing in the top left hand corner and the bottom right hand corner. As can been seen in the figure, the Dutch episodes, by and large, confirm proposition one, whilst the majority of the English episodes, except for those that
happened at the outset of the policy development, speak against the assumption that lies behind proposition one.

Proposition two: If QA schemes are more consistent with the currently existing QA system, they are more likely to be sustained over time in the process of policy implementation.

Proposition two concerns the extent to which they persisted over time once they were implemented, before being changed. Likewise, figure 7-3 summarises the two sets of data derived from table 7-1 and table 7-5. However, different to the previous figure, the top right hand corner and the bottom left hand corner in this figure would constitute compelling episodes in relation to proposition two. As is revealed, the Dutch episodes echo the proposition, but the English episodes are not in line with the theoretical assumption.

Considering the findings demonstrated in figure 7-2 and figure 7-3, only the QA schemes that emerged in the Dutch HE system support proposition one and proposition two. In other words, in this case the QA development, to a considerable extent, represents the process of policy translation, in which the QA innovations that were translated from outside of the local context and subsequently adopted were the
policy alternatives that fitted best into the current HE systems than other alternatives to the existing scheme.

Figure 7-3: Consistency in the QA systems and the duration of changes

7.2.3. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE CONSISTENCY OF QA ELEMENTS AND THE DEGREE OF POLICY CHANGE IN QA SYSTEMS

The third proposition covers the relation between the fitness of QA innovations for the current system and the extent to which the policy change of the QA system is stimulated by the newly-adopted QA innovations. Accordingly, the data derived from table 7-5 (about the consistency of new QA schemes in the existing QA system, i.e. the categories A, B and C) and from table 7-2 (about the level of policy change in QA system) yield figure 7-4.

Proposition three: If policy innovations in QA schemes are more consistent with the currently existing QA system, then they are likely to lead to a lower degree of QA change.

According to the proposition, an innovative QA scheme that diffuses from outside the system is more likely to be translated into practice with a lesser degree of policy change, if it is compatible with the existing system. This implies that episodes
appearing in either the top left hand corner or the bottom right hand one of figure 7-4 support proposition 3. The results show that the two new QA schemes adopted by the Dutch HE system in NL2 and NL3 are in line with the proposition. Conversely, the majority of the English episodes cannot be explained by the proposition, with the exception of EN2.

![Figure 7-4: Consistency in the QA systems and the degree of policy change](Image)

### 7.2.4. SUMMARY

The last subsection draws on the outcomes in this section to address research question one, as follows:

Research question one: Does the level of consistency of the policy innovation in QA schemes with other policy elements in the current QA system, influence the pattern of policy change in QA systems?

Based on the results presented in figure 7-2, figure 7-3 and figure 7-4, the three propositions in relation to the consistency of QA elements have more explanatory power in the Dutch HE system than in the English. Since these propositions are all supported by the Dutch QA change, it stands to reason that for the Dutch system the answer to the research question should be affirmative. In contrast, the English instances were found to be rather inexplicable in terms of the relationship between
policy consistency and whether policy change would be revolutionary or evolutionary. In sum, policy change in the QA system observed in the Netherlands provides positive empirical evidence in support of the research question.
7.3. Locations of Policy Entrepreneurs and the Pattern of Policy Change

In this section the task is to address research question two on the relation between where policy entrepreneurs are located in the HE structural configuration and the pattern of policy change. Firstly, the structural configurations of the HE policy subsystems in England and the Netherlands are pictured in 7.3.1 and 7.3.2. Following this, empirical data are compared in the third and fourth subsections so as to address proposition four and proposition five, respectively. Based on these analyses, the research question is addressed in the last part by combining all of the outcomes elicited in the section.

7.3.1. Locations of Policy Actors in the English HE System

The structural configuration of the English HE policy subsystem is divided into three parts, based on the categories provided by Kogan and Hanney (2000). First, internal academic self-governance is a policymaking system rooted in academic autonomy, which involves the representative bodies for institutions and “the invisible colleges of academics” (ibid, p. 203). Second, external governmental control is the process of policymaking dominated by central governmental bodies, coupled with an economic ideology (notably after the 1970s). The third system connects the academics and the government and is concerned with the allocation of public funding. With respect to this, representatives of academics and non-academics are co-opted into buffer organisations and there has been an increase since the 1970s. The three-part configuration is demonstrated in figure 7-5 and is explained in detail below.
THE ENGLISH UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY
HE governance in England was conventionally dominated by the actors internal to the university community and consequently policies were principally determined under professional control. That is, the representative body of the universities used to be located at the central place of the subsystem and operated in close tandem with the government, particularly the Treasury and the Department of Education and Science. In the academic-dominated model, policymaking consisted of two processes. One was bottom-up in which policy was dictated from below, i.e. through the umbrella organisation of the universities, with Whitehall and the public treating the CVCP with excessive respect and deference. Conversely, the other determination was from top-down, i.e. from the UGC, which assumed responsibility for allocating public funding to the universities. The two bodies represented opposite approaches, with the CVCP being an expert body which was composed of the university community and as such, was granted a comparatively high status than the UGC (Shattock, 2006).
More specifically, the UGC had been losing power to the government ever since the Treasury transferred its responsibility for the UGC to the Department of Education and Science in 1964. More power was lost after the Select Committee on Science and Technology urged the Department to take a more directive approach in its relationship with the UGC in 1976. Around the middle of the 1980s, the UGC was, under pressure from the Treasury, forced to link the distribution of recurrent funding to universities’ activities. The creation of the RAE was put forward by the chairman of the UGC (Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer), along with the chairmen of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (Sir David Phillips) and the National Advisory Body (Christopher Ball). The government immediately accepted the initiative and relevant mathematical formula, whereby funds would be redistributed from the less research active universities to research-intensive universities (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). Generally speaking, the UGC’s decreased influence in the policy formulation is related to its position in the structural configuration, which had been gradually moving towards the side of government in the course of changing HE governance.

Certainly, the establishment of the RAE represented a decisive move in relation to funding formula, from an undifferentiated model (i.e. the research premium was linked to student numbers of individual institutions) towards selective distribution (i.e. research funding was allocated on the basis of assessment results) (Tapper, 2007). This mechanism would appear to reflect an emphasis on accountability. Nonetheless, academic self-governance still remained in the 1980s. For instance, the 22/85 Circular from the chairman of the UGC to the universities stated that “there are few indicators of teaching performance that would enable a systemic external assessment of teaching quality, [If universities know how to do it] the committee would be glad to be told how to do it” (Kogan and Hanney, 2000, p. 104). In addition, Shattock (2006, pp. 137-8) claimed that the commencement of the RAE was an ‘insider response’, initiated by ‘a group of key academic policy makers’.

After the implementation of the RAE, the university community worried that the absence of teaching assessment would lead to limited attention to teaching, compared with the research area. Partially driven by this, the development of the QA system for teaching was proposed (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). The process was dominated by the academics and therefore, institutional autonomy was taken into account and even especially emphasised. The universities were consequently allowed to develop their
own management strategies, either for winning the block grants for research or for teaching quality. However, the dominance of the universities was challenged when the 1992 FHE Act fundamentally reformed the structure of the system, by incorporating the public sector institutions into their community. This influx of the polytechnics, given their different orientations regarding education matters, meant that their representative bodies did not speak with one voice. Taking advantage of the newly-combined HE sector not having a consensus on quality procedures, the government took the initiative and proposed a dual QA system composed of Quality Audit and Quality Assessment, which was eventually endorsed by the university community. Generally speaking, the academic acceptance of the QA system for teaching was attributed to the sense of competition between the different areas (i.e. research vs. teaching) and amongst the institutions (e.g. pre- and post-1992 universities).

**INCREASE IN GOVERNMENTAL INTERVENTION**

Against the background of the academic-dominated model, the English government used to be outside of HE governance. Parliament, in particular, played a marginal role in the process of policymaking when compared with its counterpart in the Dutch political system and owing to strong party discipline, parliamentary committees in the UK were inclined to accept and pass the proposals emanating from the relevant departments. In Parliament, enquiries or debates on HE issues were hardly related to policy practices or programme details, merely reflecting the general policy climate. For instance, there had been an economic or so-called manpower ideology pervading the Select Committee on Education and Science and the Select Committee on Science and Technology since the 1970s. This policy climate progressively stimulated governmental expectation that the public sector needed to be subjected to the national economy and be managed under relatively tight control, such as in relation to the money supply (Kogan and Hanney, 2000).

Influenced by popular sentiment, the academic autonomy, especially over quality control, encountered governmental attack. From the viewpoint of the government, the HE institutions that were financed by public funding were conceived of as a branch of public services rather than professions. As such, they should be accountable for their expenditure and be envisaged as contributing to social welfare as well as improving economic performance. Shattock (2008) described the years
during which the government operated market mechanisms or adopted the policy strategies in accordance with economic principles of NPM. Distrust of professional governance and university autonomy was highlighted, particularly, under the Thatcher government. The Treasury and the Cabinet Office started requiring more identifiable outcomes of provision and civil servants gradually increasingly interfered in HE operations.

Parallel with the NPM reform, HE quality and cost-effective expansion were pushed onto the national agenda. In order to address these issues, as Shattock (2008) explained, the government aimed to create greater internal competition for funds and students. As a policy strategy for this, the Secretary for Education and Science (Kenneth Clarke) determined to extend the scope of the HE market. In accordance with the 1992 FHE Act, education authority over the polytechnics and colleges was transferred from local governance to the Department of Education and Science. As stated above, under this act the barriers between the polytechnics and the universities would be broken. Coupled with this, a dual QA system was proposed by the government and assessment results were to be linked to HE resources allocation.

With respect to governmental influence on the issue of quality, that of the Department for Education was noticeable. After the abolition of the binary line between the universities and the polytechnics, the secretary of state (John Patten MP) faced questions about whether academic standards had been compromised when visiting Singapore and Malaysia in January 1994. As a response to the scepticism, he made an announcement in April at the HEFCE Annual Conference that the government would stress the importance of broad comparability of standards between institutions. Also, in a letter to the chair of CVCP, his successor (Gillian Shephard MP) stated that the government contemplated a new QA system, which would not primarily rely on the universities to control the quality of provision (R. Brown, 2004). As a response to the governmental announcements, the CVCP produced an 11-point plan, which implied an intention to develop threshold standards, and subsequently, a Graduate Standards Programme was established by the HEQC (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). Moreover, the issue of threshold standards was especially emphasised by the new subject assessment (TQA) that was implemented in April 1995 (HEFCE, 1993, 1994b). These proposals for the QA system, to some extent, reflected a government preference for performance indicators, which was
Another instance of governmental intervention in the formulation of the QA schemes occurred when an announcement made by the Secretary of State for Education (David Blunkett) in 2001 caused the reduction in scope of subject reviews. As a consequence, the QAA proposals for the conduct of the Academic Review due in the academic year 2001/02 were immediately affected. That is, the ministerial decision stopped the subject reviews being held on a comprehensive basis, which in turn, led to the suspension of Academic Review after 2002 (Brown, 2004). In sum, in the course of the QA developments, governmental involvement is increasingly evident, with ministerial intervention becoming especially significant in the 2000s and consequently, academic self-regulation was eroded.

INTERFACE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Due to the tradition of university autonomy and a large degree of trust being put on the academics, the government delegated the allocation of public funding for the English universities to certain funding bodies that operated at a university-state interface with a minimal level of external accountability. In addition, the funding council in the university sector tended to play a consultative role in the funding allocation system, and only suggestions on future academic development would be made through visiting subject subcommittees. Stemming from this, the universities had no strong urge to follow government suggestions, such as reviewing their operations (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). After the legislation of the 1988 Education Reform Act, the UGC was suspended and a new funding council, the UFC, was established to allocate funding based on university performance. However, unlike its predecessor, the UFC became directly answerable to the secretary of state, so as to improve the accountability of the universities to the general public. Also, to create a student number-based financial market, the universities had to achieve specific enrolment targets, otherwise they could suffer a ‘claw back’ of grant when falling short (Shattock, 2008).

Apart from the ministerial influence, the Treasury also played a role in shaping HE policy by insisting upon more national statutory regulations. In addition to controlling student numbers at individual institutions, thereby controlling the rate of participation in HE, the Treasury also imposed its will on some arrangements, such
as resource allocation. For instance, under pressure for improving the transparency of public funding distribution, the chairman of the buffer body UGC (Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer) initiated formula to defend resource allocation. In 1984, the UGC published *A Strategy for Higher Education into the 1990s*, which not only emphasised the necessity of focusing more on effective institutional management, but also proposed a more selective approach to the allocation of research resources. Afterwards, a method of grant allocation was spelled out and research assessment and departmental rankings became the components of the 1985 UGC Circular (22/85). From then on, the funding methodology shifted towards being more accountable to the public and being more objective, i.e. formula-driven. There was also an increase in the frequency of periodic inspections. In spite of this, the successor UFC exercised no detailed control over the universities once the block grants were offered. In contrast to the university sector, the PCFC played a relatively active role with regards to the polytechnics. That is, unlike the universities who doubted the appropriateness of linking assessment information to funding allocation, PCFC funding was connected with quality assessment of teaching and by so doing, the polytechnics and colleges could expect to possess greater autonomy and more flexible forms of validation (Kogan and Hanney, 2000).

Rooted in the assumption that concentrating resources for selected units would stimulate competition for public funding and further progress in specialisation, research funding was allocated based on assessment results. Following the establishment of such a mechanism, subject funding was to be allocated according to student numbers. The 1991 White Paper made a direct connection between QA and teaching funding, insofar as it demonstrated that the purpose of developing quality procedures was to inform the funding decisions of the funding councils (DES, 1991). On the whole, not until the UFC and PCFC amalgamated in 1992, were the funding councils directly involved in QA arrangements. For the academic year 1992/3 and beyond, the HEFCE would have to inform the CVCP about the additional student numbers determined on a competitive basis. Moreover, after 1994, the funding councils were required to set the number of funded students as well as to notify institutions of their limits on them and if any shortfall of student numbers was encountered, support grants would be withheld. From then on university performance in recruiting students was related to the criterion for the allocation of teaching funding (Kogan and Hanney, 2000).
7.3.2. **Locations of Policy Actors in the Dutch HE System**

Turning to the Dutch HE policy subsystem, the structural configuration is distinguishable from that of the English in terms of the relationship between the government and the university community. Traditionally, governmental power in the Netherlands was extensive when compared with England, in particular. In fact, Goedegebuure and Westerheijden (1991) conceived of the relationship between the minister and the Dutch universities as mutual dependency. On the one hand, the academic institutions provided educational and research ‘goods’ and possessed the resource of information. Therefore, in the process of formulating policy proposals, the government had to take university preferences into consideration.

On the other hand, the Minister of Education (Culture) and Science was the chief funder of the Dutch universities and controlled university budget, approximately 90% of which came from the taxpayer. Due to its power over financial resources and legitimising regulations, the Ministry of Education and Science was the most pivotal policymaker during most of the episodes. More specifically, in the Dutch government the most influential actor in HE matters was the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition, parliament might be considered as being a powerful governmental organisation in the policy arena of HE, because its consent was pivotal in the Dutch political system. Notwithstanding this, members of parliament were inclined to set out general guidelines, preferring to avoid direct intervention in policy details. This is one of the reasons why interest groups normally focused on the minister and civil servants of the ministry rather than parliament itself (Huisman, 2003b). The structure of Dutch HE governance is shown in figure 7-6.
THE DUTCH UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

The Dutch university community is made up of universities. That is, unlike the 1992 FHE Act in the UK, which led to the combination of the universities and polytechnics, in the Netherland the 1993 WHW Act maintained the separate composition of the HE system, consisting of the institutions responsible for university academic education (WO) and for higher professional education (HBO). A binary system was set up (WHW, art. 1.3), because it was recognised that the two sectors had distinct aims. This contributed substantially to a less complex arena of policymaking in terms of the participation of actors. For instance, in the English system the university community consisted of the actors originally from the university sector (e.g. CVCP) and those from the polytechnics (e.g. CDP), whilst the VSNU, the representative body of the Dutch universities was the policy actor dominating the process of decision-making in relation to university matters. Furthermore, the role of the HBO sector was quite different from that of its corresponding part in the UK (Huisman and van Vught, 2009). The English segment of non-universities had around 20% of the students in the HE system, whilst the HBO sector represented 60%. In particular, the HBO-raad played a noticeable role in advocating the new QA system of accreditation in the late 1990s. Generally speaking,
the influence of non-universities on the university sector was more significant in the Netherlands than in England.

As regards the role of the representative bodies for universities, the VSNU was different from its counterpart in England in the following aspects. Firstly, the composition of the Dutch representative body reflected the traditionally political nature of corporatism, that is, there were different bodies and interest groups involved in the policymaking process, e.g. educational and professional bodies, advisory organisations and ad hoc committees. In addition, the government depended on the cooperation of the VSNU and their views on academic education (Huisman, 2003a). Consequently, they decided that it should be institutionalised on the basis of a corporatist model, with the members being appointed by parliament. Such a composition, under the political will for societal diversity, meant that unlike its Dutch counterpart the British representative body had a purely academic constitution. Secondly, van Vught (1997) claimed that professors, who were subject to governmental control over budgets and being appointed by governing administrators, were civil servants. Nonetheless, the universities were allowed to make their own operational decisions. That is, the academics had considerable leeway, at the operational level, in particular, in relation to research and teaching content. Huisman (2003b) claimed that the mix of corporatist and hierarchical natures in policymaking in the Dutch HE system, in conjunction with the structured and ad hoc approach to governance, remained visible until the middle of the 1980s. This feature, to a certain extent, accounted for the difference of the remit of the VSNU in the Netherlands to that of the CVCP in the UK.

**ROLE OF THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT**

There were two roles that the Dutch government played in the development of the QA system: ‘frame-setter’ and ‘watch-dog’ (Teichler, 1989, p. 173). With respect to the first, the Minister for Education and Science determined the direction of policy reform and accordingly was conceived of as the frame-setter. Regarding this, quality assurance was raised as part of the governmental endeavour, along with other policy instruments, such as the 1982 and 1986 budget cuts, closures and mergers of degree programmes and departments, reduction of the curriculum years spent on programmes, and the permission for the universities starting new programmes. In particular, the government document 1985 HOAK attracted public attention to the
issue of HE quality. As regards the role of watch-dog, the government supervised the collective decisions made by the universities, with the intention to leave the institutions more leeway in exchange for more accountability to the external stakeholders. More specifically, the Inspectorate for Higher Education assumed the responsibility for supervising the quality of the external QA system. That is, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, the Inspectorate oversaw the quality of HE provision and exercised extrinsic quality control. Accordingly, assessment results made by the visitation committee could be challenged or refused if, for example, the Inspectorate had their doubts about the conducting of the assessment. In other words, the Inspectorate was entitled to make independent judgement and provide corresponding public reports (Bologna Process, 2005). Although the Inspectorate was devised for monitoring HE quality and the implementation of QA schemes independently, its connection with the Ministry of Education was close. For instance it adopted the terms of reference provided by the ministry and this is why Huisman (2003b) described the body as a quasi non-governmental organisation.

7.3.3. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE LOCATION OF POLICY ENTREPRENEURS AND THE EMERGENCE OF POLICY CHANGE IN THE QA SCHEMES

This subsection is concerned with proposition four of this thesis, which is inherited from the assumption: the emergence of policy change in QA is affected by the locations of the policy entrepreneurs.

Proposition four: If policy entrepreneurs are located at the interstices, their policy alternatives to QA schemes are more likely to be adopted as new QA elements and sustained over time.

In order to address the proposition, two sets of findings compiled from previous chapters are drawn upon. With respect to the locations of the policy entrepreneurs, those policy actors who have been conceived of as significant in chapter five and chapter six, in terms of advocating QA innovations, are positioned in the structural configurations for England (see figure 7-5) and the Netherlands (see figure 7-6), respectively. As regards to the likelihood of the QA innovation being sustained, the data on emergence of new QA schemes (year) collected in table 7-1 are incorporated in figure 7-7 and figure 7-8, in conjunction with the policy entrepreneurs for each
Figure 7: English policy entrepreneurs and the duration of their policy innovations

Figure 7-7 illustrates where the policy entrepreneurs were located in the English governing structure and how long their QA innovations persisted after being adopted into the system. The findings show a notable trend in the entrepreneurs’ positions, moving towards the middle. Throughout the process, it is noticeable that the scope of participation in the decision-making was increasingly extended. On the one hand, there was an increase in extrinsic involvement in QA policy formulation. In particular, after 1992 HEFCE and some policy actors from outside the university community (e.g. the Department for Education) had the opportunity to participate in QA formulation. In the English university community, on the other hand, the institutions involved became more diverse, because both pre- and post-1992 universities had collective QA ownership in the course of its development. In
addition, with the trend in the participation becoming more diverse, the QA innovations that were endorsed and implemented became more sustainable. For example, the QAA was positioned at the interstices connecting the university community, the funding councils and the government. This multi-composition led to its QA innovation(s) having the longest duration of policy implementation when compared with the other English innovations. It appears that the more inclusive in relation to stakeholders when deciding QA policy, the greater the longevity of any change.

The Dutch HE governance structure is demonstrated in figure 7-8 and unlike its counterpart in England, the government in the Netherlands had been actively involved in the development of the QA schemes. That is, both the government and the umbrella organisations of the universities were the two pivotal types of policy actors, albeit the QA elements that they advocated were distinguishable. The government was relatively influential in the quality regime of normative policy ideas, especially the purposes of the QA procedures, whilst the university community predominated in the cognitive policy ideas. In the 1985 HOAK, for example, the government proposed that the Inspectorate for Higher Education would be in charge of the development of quality mechanisms and participate in the evaluation process on behalf of the government. Also, performance indicators were encouraged to be utilised in the universities’ internal evaluations. Nonetheless, after the negotiations between the government and the university community in 1986 and 1987, the quality procedures that were actually taken up were different from the original government intentions. Moreover, at the outset of the Bologna process, the HBO-raad advocated the accreditation system against the backdrop described in subsection 6.3.5. Also, after the NVAO was established as a bi-national quality agency in 2004, the policy entrepreneur for the new QA scheme was positioned at the Dutch-Flemish boundary. This shows a similar trend with the English case, in that the entrepreneur locations became connected with more diverse policy networks. However, at least according to the years under investigation (1985-2005), it is difficult to reach a conclusion as to whether or not the duration of the QA innovations being replaced became significantly longer after the NVAO replaced the VSNU as the national QA agency.
7.3.4. **The relation between the location of policy entrepreneurs and the degree of policy change in the QA systems**

The discussion in this subsection revolves around the assumption that the policy entrepreneurs who are located at the interstices of more networks and organisations are more likely to access innovative ideas about how to combine QA elements. In turn, they are more likely to contribute to higher levels of policy change.

Proposition five: If policy entrepreneurs are located at the interstices, they are likely to precipitate a higher degree of QA change.

The results illustrated in figure 7-9 support proposition five, insofar as the degree of policy change that the QAA contributed to is the highest amongst the episodes. That is, as explained in the previous subsection, the QAA is the policy entrepreneur positioned at the interstice with the most connections to other policy networks.
Conversely, the episodes of QA change that occurred in the Netherlands challenge proposition five. As demonstrated in figure 7-10, the VSNU was the predominant policy actor who provided QA alternatives in the first and second periods of the development of the QA schemes. Moreover, although the same policy entrepreneurs featured in NL1 and NL2 and during NL2 and NL3, the degrees of QA policy change increased from a low to a high level over that period.

Figure 7-9: English policy entrepreneurs and the degrees of policy change
7.3.5 **SUMMARY**

According to the findings from the discussion about proposition four and proposition five, more explanatory power in relation to where policy entrepreneurs are positioned in the structural configuration is found in the English HE system than in that of the Dutch.

Research question two: Do the locations of policy entrepreneurs in a HE system influence the pattern of policy change in QA systems?

The pattern of policy change in the Dutch QA systems, either in relation to the emergence of change or the degree of change, cannot be fully explained by the entrepreneurs’ positions in the HE system. In contrast, it emerges that the English policy entrepreneurs having more connections to other policy networks stimulated policy change in QA systems at a relatively high level. Also, their policy innovations to QA schemes adopted into the system as the QA alternatives persisted for relatively long periods of time.
7.4. EXPLANATIONS FOR POLICY CHANGE IN QA IN THE EUROPEAN HE CONTEXT

After the comparisons in section 7.1, it was elicited that England and the Netherlands have had similar experiences in the pattern of QA policy change, that of punctuated equilibrium. Nonetheless, the extent to which the two influencing factors contributed to the pattern observed in the two case countries, according to the discussions in section 7.2 and section 7.3, is diverse. In the Netherlands, consistency of QA elements, showed relatively significant power for explaining the development of QA policy, whilst for England the issue was more predictable if the other factor, the location of policy entrepreneurs, was considered. This reflects the difference in the relation between the HE system and the policy change occurring within. The two factors are derived from Campbell’s theory: structural constraints and institutional innovation, which have been expounded on in subsections 3.2.2 to 3.2.4 and 4.1.2. In this section, the distinguishable features of the policy change processes happening in the two countries are identified in the first instance. Subsequently, by means of linking these with Campbell’s theory (2004) about the mechanisms for explaining the process of incremental change, research question three is addressed.

7.4.1. DIFFERENCE IN STRUCTURAL CONFIGURATIONS

The HE policy networks in the UK and the Netherlands, according to Theisens (2004), basically mirror the majoritarian and the consensus types, respectively. However, governmental involvement in the Dutch HE policy was more significant than for that of the English. In the Netherlands, the Department of Education and, to some extent, the parliament were actively involved in the discussion and determination of the QA schemes. On the other hand, the English government tended to participate in the development of QA via buffer bodies, in particular the funding councils. Before the polytechnics merged with the universities in 1992, the minister and the funding councils showed a reluctance to be involved in university practices. Consequently, during this period, the university community was in charge of the formulation of quality criteria and sovereignty over audit arrangements was left to the CVCP and the AAU, the representative body of the universities and the quality agency, in the form of a dialogue.

Shattock (2006) claimed that in recent decades there has been a shift in HE
governance from the inside to the outside model. Previously, HE policy was mainly determined by people inside the system, such as the experts and academics in the UGC and the CVCP. When the Conservative Thatcher government came into power, the HE sector was gradually subject to government intervention (i.e. outside-in governance). That is, some of the policy agenda was imposed by actors outside the HE system, such as ministers, the officials from the DfES, the Cabinet Office, and the chief executive of HEFCE. Moreover, after the UFC and the PCFC gave way to the funding councils, government intervention in the implementation of quality assessment became more obvious and in particular, the remit of the councils now included determination of assessment procedures. Further, HEFCE had to establish its corresponding quality agency (i.e. QAC) that would be responsible for organising quality assessment and for providing it with relevant information for funding allocation.

Given this change involving HEFCE assuming obligations for ensuring the provision of quality assessment, Williams (2009) perceived its role as the government’s proxy. Likewise, Tapper (2007) conceived of the council as a governmental agent implementing the projects predetermined by the government, rather than a buffer body. The 1992 Act represented a significant step in relation to departing from a hands-off style of governance, for afterwards extrinsic involvement became increasingly noticeable. HEFCE became more subject to the guidance issued by the secretaries of state. For instance, in the secretary of state’s letter of 22nd January 2003 to HEFCE, the Cabinet Office Delivery Unit overrode its advice on how to reward departments that had achieved 5* in both the 1996 and 2001 RAEs. In keeping with this, Shattock (2008) contended that the government (including the Cabinet Office, the Treasury and the DfES) held superior power over HEFCE.

Nonetheless, there are some other perceptions. For example, Kogan and Hanney (2000) described such increasing external control over HE as a shift from delegation (i.e. quality judgements being delegated to “hands-off” governmental agencies) to legislation (i.e. quality requirements being imposed by law). Jackson (1997a) deemed this shift as being from self-regulation towards a collective regulatory model. In addition, Brown (2004) asserted that by the time of his writing (May 2003), academic self-regulation remained as the predominant mode in the British HE system. The findings of the present study support the second bundle of statements. That is,
although during the years under investigation there was an increase in governmental intervention in English QA ownership, it is by no means paralleled by the elimination of the predominant academic control over QA development. Taking the constitution of the funding council as an example, although there were 15 members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education, they comprised both academics and non-academics. Also, at the beginning of the QA development, the department had expected to incorporate 30-50 HMIs into the new quality control agency. However, HEFCE resisted recruiting as many as the government had planned and eventually only a handful were transferred from the HMI to the QAC (R. Brown, 2004). Considering these example, it appears to be more appropriate to perceive HEFCE as a non-governmental organisation, at least at the outset of its existence. Certainly, the body was legally answerable to the secretary of state in relation to allocating public funds for teaching and research, but such governmental intervention was primarily against the backdrop of policy formulation. Moreover, the relation between the funding council and the government seems to have differed depending on who was its chief executive.

Generally speaking, the external-control approach remained in the Dutch governance. The battle over QA was between the universities (as a collective) and external stakeholders, such as the government as well as the HBO institutions in the other sector of the system. In contrast, the English QA development maintained the academic self-control model. Consequently, conflicts arising in the course of QA development were to a considerable extent within the university community. In spite of such a difference between the two countries, the key people involved in the process of advocating QA innovation or maintaining HE quality control on behalf of either the government or the academics, were the same. In addition, a process of collective decision-making is revealed in both case countries, albeit this approach to policy formulation in the English and Dutch HE systems can be further differentiated.

In the process of collective policymaking, both countries became more dynamic in terms of the constitution of the policy entrepreneurs. On the one hand, from 2000 onwards foreign stakeholders, along with the government, became the fundamental policy actors in charge of the QA procedures in the Netherlands. On the other hand, the English increase in involvement of external stakeholders took place within the university community. That is, after the HEQC replaced the AAU, the new quality
agency created for conducting quality procedures became answerable to all HE institutions, which included the universities and the polytechnics. The QA decision-making was no longer dominated by the CVCP. Moreover, other players, such as the CDP and SCOP became directly involved in the policy arena. The establishment of the QAA in 1997 further pushed the extension of diversity in participation. In regard to this, according to the instructions of the JPG, the responsibility for assuring quality or academic standards was to be shared by the representative bodies of academics (e.g. CVCP, COSHEP, SCOP), the single quality agency and by the funding councils (i.e. HEFCE, HEFCW, SHEFC). Similarly, the subsequent Dearing Report recommended the coordination of institutions with the quality agency and degree-awarding institutions. Since then, the academics that traditionally predominated in HE decision-making were increasingly challenged by government intervention in the form of negotiations and the involvement of the funding council.

7.4.2. STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINT

Due to their distinct structural configurations, the Dutch and English HE systems had diverse preferences for QA alternatives and hence, devised the role of QA agencies in different ways. Drawing upon Campbell’s theory (2004, p. 86), this is because the choices of policy entrepreneurs depend on ‘an inherited repertoire of principles and practices’. In other words, policy actors are inclined to choose specific policy innovations, accounted for by the structural constraints emanating from their respective local contexts.

The issue of the determination of the focus of QA schemes is taken as an example. Individual academics in both countries showed a preference for subject assessments or other QA approaches focusing on subjects, while institutional managers preferred the quality procedures focusing at the institutional level such as university audits. More specifically, in the English university community the institutions carried more weight than individual academics in relation to decision-making. With an increasing emphasis on the perspectives of external stakeholders, the managerial power that vice-chancellors assumed was further extended, with individual academics being required to be more accountable and enjoying less freedom in terms of teaching and research (N. Jackson, 1997a, 1997b). In contrast to the considerably compromised professional autonomy at the institutional level, Dutch academics have had more influence than their counterparts in England, albeit university governance added a bit
of extra weight to institutional managers’ power after the 1997 MUB was introduced. In addition, the Dutch universities tended to be perceived as being equal in terms of quality, due to governmental control over most of the criteria of input, output and process (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1993). Influenced by this, the competition that was raised in the policymaking process was between individual departments and faculties, instead of between institutions. The QA procedures advocated by policy entrepreneurs were therefore primarily concerned with subject- rather than institution-related alternatives. This is contrary to the actions of the English actors, who preferred institutional QA approaches.

Apart from the normative and cognitive influence, HE regulations had had a considerable effect on policy actors’ determination of QA elements. For example, given that the Dutch government provided 90% of the total university budget, the VSNU could not avoid yielding to or seriously considering the government’s expectations when developing the national, external QA schemes (e.g. accountability to the public) (Westerheijden, 1990). This influence was also evident at the institutional level, as individual universities were forced to add more weight to internal quality control and devote themselves to some governmental-prioritised purposes when implementing quality procedures.

Not only do preferences regarding QA elements influence the determination of QA agencies, i.e. QA settings in relation to position and boundary rules, but so too do national regulations. In the Dutch HE system, where external governance was the norm, the role of meta-evaluation, particularly in scrutinising internal and external QA schemes, was shouldered on the Inspectorate for Higher Education. On the other hand, the umbrella organisation of universities (i.e. VSNU) was in direct charge of the implementation of quality procedures. Such an external-control model remained in the new QA scheme launched in 2002, when the NVAO was established as the external QA agency and extrinsically-oriented accreditation was chosen. That is, the national quality agency was devised to be an independent body of the universities and hence, the latter were not responsible for overseeing either meta-evaluation or accreditation procedures. Moreover, after the Dutch HE system opened the market of external quality assessment agencies in the beginning of the 2000s, administrative bodies of the universities had no say in the appointment of the quality bodies’ membership (Dittrich et al., 2004). Under such circumstances, the VSNU was
perceived as an interest group of the universities, but one distanced from both the role of regulating and implementing quality processes. Around 2004, one division, the QANU was split from the VSNU, which meant that the latter became one of the external quality bodies and in turn lost its somewhat monopolist position in the QA process.

The ownership of QA in England was to a considerable extent concentrated in the hands of academics and universities. The representative bodies of universities were always involved in the establishment of the quality bodies, which were not only delegated to formulate and implement QA schemes, but also assigned the task of meta-evaluation in the quality process. In addition, although the British quality agencies were created with the emphasis on their being independent of the universities, there remained a much more intimate connection between the two parties than in the Dutch case. That is, the quality bodies, such as the HEQC and the QAA, fundamentally relied on funding from the CVCP/UUK and HEFCE. However, in order to create some distance between the QA agencies and the universities, the former were deliberately not devised as subordinate organisations to the representative bodies of the institutions. Unlike the English QA schemes implemented by the quality agencies under the auspices of the university organisations and the funding councils, the Dutch quality procedures were directly conducted by the umbrella organisations. This explains why in the latter case the role of meta-evaluation was assigned to the body external to the university community.

7.4.3. INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

Drawing upon the findings of the present study, most of the instances of QA change were the results of a collective policymaking process. However, the outcomes of the process were different, which has been attributed to the distinctive constitutions of the policy actor configurations involved. Whereas the last subsection focused on the perception of institutional constellations as a filter, generating constraints, this one is concerned with the second part of the findings, in conjunction with one of Campbell’s (2004) assumptions regarding institutional arrangements allowing individual actors to innovate. With respect to this, it was found that the QA agencies acted as brokers in the QA development and that their position in the HE system influences the opportunity and the degree of QA policy change. Theoretically, if they are located at the place with better liaison with other policy actors, more new ideas
would be encompassed through the processes of bricolage or translation and under such circumstances, either the opportunity to stimulate policy change or the level of change would be higher.

Generally speaking, the QA agencies played an essential role of establishing links, not only inside the university community among individual institutions, but also between the university community and external stakeholders, such as the government. Taking the HEQC as an example, its involvement in the process of policy development was mainly by means of providing QA alternatives or developing communication between the relevant participants. With respect to the first approach, the QA ideas that the HEQC advocated, to a certain extent, were generated through research projects. For instance, the emphasis on accountability and on the rationalisation of documentation requirements as well as the incorporation of some new quality arrangements (e.g. follow-ups and the publicity for audit reports) were derived from the conclusions of the commissioned review undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand in 1993. In addition, *Strengthening External Examining* published in 1996 was the result of another project which was influential in formulating the HEQC’s stance on the issue of academic standards. The project report recommended that the remit of external examiners should include the verification of appropriate standards for awards and that they should assist in the comparison of academic standards of institutions (Brown, 2004). The last, but not least instance of generating QA ideas, concerns the production of guidelines on good practices. *Guidelines on Quality Assurance* published in 1994 was aimed at integrating the guidelines that were inherited from the CNAA and the CVCP and these suggestions were incorporated into the QA revision that was provided by the HEQC in 1996 so as to address quality issues in a more detailed and practical way (HEQC, 1997). As regards the creation of links, the HEQC under the auspices of the representative bodies (i.e. CVCP, CDP and SCOP) supported cooperation between universities, external bodies (e.g. professional bodies) and relevant regulators in different areas (e.g. NHS). By means of which common ground (e.g. a quality specification that was produced as a quality instrument for sharing evidence and judgements in relation to the quality of HE provision) was to be explored in order to merge different QA schemes that were sometimes competing and even conflicting.

There are some other factors relating to the QA agencies that had an influence on the
pattern of QA policy change. Firstly, the body’s composition was pivotal to its capacity for communication. The QAC, for instance, was under the auspices of the funding council and there was some overlap between the members of the latter and those in the CVCP, which helped to stimulate the dissemination of policy ideas. Similarly, the majority of the members on the board of the QAA were appointed by the representative bodies and the funding councils. Therefore, the establishment of such quality agencies benefited negotiations between the university community and the government. In addition, different compositions would lead to QA agencies having different policy preferences. For instance, those policy elements in relation to QA schemes and quality definitions, according to the findings, displayed more extrinsic features in EN4 and EN5 than EN1 and EN2 (see table 7-2). The movement of QA alternatives towards the extrinsic side is probably accounted for by the increase in the external intervention in QA ownership and the decrease in academic autonomy. Moreover, there was increasing attention to external supervision and a preference for setting minimum standards of achievement in the JPG Report and the recommendations in the Dearing Report. These trends are reflected in the policy alternatives made by the QAA, such as the ‘standard-based’ thresholds and benchmarks (Salter and Tapper, 2000, p. 81) and the form of ‘institutional accreditation’ (Brown, 2004, p. 129).

Secondly, the personal factor of who was in charge of the QA agency counts. That is, it is opined that the first and the second chief executives of the QAA built completely different relationships with the other significant policy actors in the English HE system (Brown, 2004). Thirdly, one result of the comparison between the English and Dutch cases showed that if a quality agency was located in the HE system featuring a more hierarchical, diverse academic community, the policy change created by the body would emerge more frequently and the degree of policy change would be smaller. The theory behind the finding, according to Campbell (2004), is that different groups of universities with diverse backgrounds would have different preferences for QA approaches and methods. Moreover, if competition is launched by the introduction of a QA system, a hierarchical HE system would stimulate fierce political conflict over the various QA alternatives, which would cause the frequency of policy change to be relatively significant. Further, the degree of policy change would be small in such circumstances. As it is never easy to determine a quality process that is compatible with various different types of institutions with various
institutional quality processes, any compromise in the QA initiatives is more likely to resemble its predecessor than were it otherwise.

With respect to the degree of hierarchy in the university community, Huisman and van Vught (2009) have claimed that the diversity of English universities is higher than that in the Netherlands. In England, the most important actors, to a considerable extent, held different perspectives and preferred different QA schemes owing to their different background and resources. In particular, as discussed in chapter five, the pre- and post-1992 universities tended to define quality differently and advocated competing QA alternatives owing to their different institutional backgrounds. That is, prestigious universities had superior resources and good performance particularly in research and so they were inclined to support those QA alternatives that would give individual universities much leeway and paid more attention to internal QA arrangements. On the other hand, the post-1992 universities were inclined to support subject assessment, owing to their experience of implementing external quality control that the local authorities and the CNAA had exercised until 1988. Also, external quality procedures were perceived as measures of quality (re)assurance, which would offer comfort to their current students, and add attraction to their prospective students, if their results revealed their excellence in teaching and learning. In other words, the outcomes of subject assessments would be more likely to demonstrate their superiority in teaching. Accounted for by this difference in QA preferences, the first QA system introduced into the British university sector was audit-oriented. However, after the amalgamation of the university and polytechnic segments, the increasing diversity in the institutions and wide range of the stakeholders involved made it hard to reach a consensus in the QA schemes. The major blocks of the institutions included the Russell Group, the 1994 Group, the Consortium of Modern Universities as well as other alliances. Conversely, conflict among Dutch HE institutions was less significant than that in England, where the universities and HBO-institutions were set in two segments of the HE system, subject to two sets of regulations. This separation seems to be an explanation for the lower degree of competition among the Dutch institutions than their English counterparts and for the greater simplicity involved in former’s collective decision-making process.
7.4.4. **THE PROCESS OF BRICOLAGE AND TRANSLATION**

Campbell (2004) claimed that bricolage and translation are two underlying mechanisms accounting for the process of institutional change. Based on the results of the present study, the episodes observed in the two countries are divided into three groups, depending on the mechanisms by which QA policy change resulted: substantive bricolage, symbolic bricolage and translation.

EN1 and EN2 represent the instances of substantive bricolage, as defined by Campbell (2004, p. 69). This is because, the CVCP and the government followed the logic of instrumentality (emanating from rational choice instrumentalism and placing the emphasis on addressing the problems faced), searching for policy innovations in QA approaches that diffused into the university community across different policy arenas. Consequently, institutional audit and the dual QA system were adopted in the two periods, respectively. In particular, the new QA approach proposed in the 1991 White Paper was the amalgamation of two policy elements, which had already existed in the UGC and the PCFC sectors, respectively: the university audits that were inherited from the local sector; and the assessment process emanating from the polytechnics and colleges in the public sector. The government combined the two locally accepted QA schemes, as they envisaged the QA innovation as being able to eliminate the binary line, where the universities and the polytechnics had been subject to different QA approaches for decades.

The other type of bricolage, symbolic bricolage, seems to fit the occurrences in EN3, EN4, EN5 and NL2. During these periods, the integrity of the QA system and its consistency with local regulations and the dominant policy ideas was still waiting to be improved. Taking EN3 as an example: at the outset of implementing the Quality Assessment, quantifiable outcomes (e.g. performance indicators and calculations of added value) and external judgements were produced through the QAC and linked to funding (DES, 1991). On the other hand, the Quality Audit that was inherited from the Academic Audit was operated by the Quality Assurance Group of the HEQC and was aimed at providing reassurance that internal quality control procedures were adequate for supporting a university’s key teaching missions. Therefore, obvious differences were apparent between Quality Assessment and Quality Audit, for example, in their normative QA ideas.
According to Campbell’s theory, the process of symbolic bricolage involving the combination of local policy elements is based on the logic of appropriateness, which emanates from organisational instrumentalism and emphasises consistency with the local ideas and context. In light of this, after the dual QA procedures were introduced in 1992, according to Brown (2004) there had been a duality in ownership until the establishment of the QAA in 1997. On the one hand, Quality Assessment was carried out on behalf of the funding council, in consultation with the university sector and with governmental guidance. On the other hand, Quality Audit was conducted on behalf of the academic community. During the episodes EN3, EN4 and EN5, the policy actors appeared to be concerned with the matter of ownership rather than choosing a policy alternative that tackled the problems of the extant QA system. The QA scheme formulated by the HEQC in 1995 was rejected by the funding council in EN3. This resembled the Institutional Audit endorsed in EN5 as well as the Academic Audit developed by the university community in EN1. In other words, these QA alternatives were, by and large, similar to each other and thus this reflects a conflict over ownership of quality procedures. With respect to UK developments, Filippakou and Tapper (2010) have argued that the abolition of the initial QA alternative provided by the QAA, which occurred in EN5, was the result of a bargaining strategy. That is, the government accepted the light-touch or lighter light-touch QA schemes (i.e. abandonment of subject reviews) for having the universities’ acquiescence on variable tuition fees in return. According to Tapper (2007), the development of QA was accounted for by a consensus model, which reflected an accommodation of all the dominant institutional interests, in particular, the state and the pre-1992 universities.

NL1 and NL3 reveal the feature of the innovative process of translation. Both of these episodes relate to the process of incorporating certain QA elements that diffused from outside the Dutch HE system. More specifically, the VSNU, drawing upon foreign experiences, devised the first Dutch quality process in the form of programme assessments that observe HE provision in relation to teaching and learning on the basis of subject areas. Likewise, the adoption of accreditation in 2002 was due to the need for recognition and international compatibility relating to the universities and programmes in the European HE area (Westerheijden, 2001). In the Bologna process, the ministerial communiqués had put some pressure on the Dutch
HE system, forcing it to conform to, for example, the ESG and the ENQA requirements. As a result, the Netherlands rapidly replaced its original degree structure and restructured its QA system, soon after the Bologna process was initiated. This change was aimed at adjusting the existing HE policies to fit neatly with, or at least being compatible with, the consensuses reached in the ministerial communiqués of the process (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004). Therefore, to some extent, the Dutch accreditation system can be conceived of as a vehicle for compatibility and compliance with other European HE initiatives and policies. This is quite different from the reason for the adoption of ‘the first generation accreditation’ in the years 1990-1993 (Westerheijden, 2001, p. 65).

Moreover, Campbell (2004) emphasised that diffusion is never a one-step process. With respect to this, the QA innovation that diffused from outside had to be adopted with some modification, in particular to fit in with the local context. In the Netherlands, before the creation of a Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation, there had been some cooperation projects, either signed by the respective ministers of education or, conducted by the umbrella organisations of the universities belonging to the Flemish and Dutch HE systems (Dittrich et al., 2004). The experience of the GENT (Geheel Nederlands Taalgebied) agreements and cooperation actually provided a basis for the initiative to conduct a cross-board QA system. In other words, the sense of fitness for the existing HE system was a significant factor of policymaking, for the politicians in charge of the Dutch-speaking region in Belgium and the Netherlands. Thus it appears that the logic of appropriateness is a feasible explanation for the policy change of translation.

7.4.5. **Summary**

The aim of the discussion above has been to amass evidence for addressing research question three. The relevant findings are compiled in figure 7-11 in order to clarify the relationships between the different episodes and their interpretation. The figure, an amendment to figure 7-1, illustrates the patterns of policy change in relation to the episodes, in conjunction with information about the two independent variables and also shown are the three mechanisms that accounted for the QA change.

Research question three: How do both the highlighted properties in relation to QA systems and policy entrepreneurs affect the pattern of policy change in QA in
European HE systems?

In the two focal countries, collective policymaking has been the common approach to formulating an external QA system. This accounts, to some extent, for the pattern of path-dependent incremental change, categorised as punctuated equilibrium. The universities and the government were the two crucial policy entrepreneurs in both cases. Even in the high self-governance English HE system, ministerial decisions were significant in stimulating policy change in the QA approaches. The governmental intervention observed in the 1991 White Paper and the 2001 suspension of wider-spread subject assessments are two clear examples. However, each of these political actions involved different policy settings in relation to: the characteristics of the university community; and the extent of external stakeholder involvement, e.g. the relationship between internal stakeholders (primarily referring to the university community) and external stakeholders (e.g. the government and other types of HE institutions). In the light of these two features, subsection 7.4.1 discussed the relation between policy actors in the HE system. These were different from country to country and also from period to period and it is posited that this variation provides strong support in favour of research question three.
For example, (1y, High, AAU) = EN12 (duration year, consistency level of new QA schemes, location of policy entrepreneurs)

Figure 7-11: Consistency in QA elements and the pattern of policy change in QA
As can be seen in figure 7-11, all the episodes of QA change are located in the area representing the model of punctuated equilibrium. Notwithstanding this, although both case countries experienced identical patterns of QA change, they engaged in two different approaches. Firstly, all the episodes can be divided into three groups: substantive bricolage, symbolic bricolage and translation. Secondly, the conclusions drawn in section 7.1 to section 7.3, were that the independent variable, the consistency of the level of a policy innovation for a QA system, has more explanatory power in relation to the pattern of QA change observed in the Netherlands. Conversely, the other independent variable, the location of the policy entrepreneurs, more reflects what has been happening in England. The difference between the two countries reflects what was found in subsections 7.4.2 and 7.4.3. That is, structural constraint fits better with the relationship between policy entrepreneurs and the Dutch HE system, whilst institutional innovation is more feasible as an explanation for what happened in the English context. More specifically, the Dutch episodes are scattered across the top side of the figures, whilst the English are gathered around the bottom left hand corner. Therefore, these outcomes provide support for Campbell’s (2004) contention that policy change tends to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary due to the preference for policy alternatives that are compatible with the existing HE context. Based on this assumption, the cases closer to the top left hand corner (i.e. those of evolutionary change) in figure 7-11 involve more actors in the system taking policy fitness into consideration than those in the bottom right hand corner.

In the Netherlands, external stakeholders have been actively involved in QA development, which suggests that Dutch policy entrepreneurs were expected to advocate policy innovations that were diffused from outside of the HE system, because these QA alternatives were conceived of as better fitting into the existing HE arrangements. However, Dutch policymakers were inclined to adopt those external QA alternatives that would be more possible to translate into the local context as they would be more likely to be sustained after being implemented. From this case, it emerges that the degree of policy change is dependent upon the gap between the original policy and the innovation diffused from outside the local system. Moreover, when the deviation is not significant or the innovation is consistent with the existing system, the newly-adopted QA scheme tends to persist for relatively longer periods of time. On the other hand, English internal stakeholders played a pivotal role in the
course of QA change. Consequently, policy entrepreneurs were inclined to advocate policy innovation containing components inherited from the existed system, based on the logic of instrumentality. Moreover, these policymakers were inclined to adopt those QA alternatives that would lead to positive consequences for them. Further, as the newly-adopted QA scheme, to a certain extent, resembled its predecessor, policy change appears to have occurred at a relatively low level, yet frequently. Finally, within the respective historical contexts, the policy actors acted differently, the Dutch episodes revealing that the emphasis was on structural constraints, such as policy compatibility, whereas English development has taken place in a climate of institutional innovations.
CH8. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

In the previous chapter, the results of the study were summarised by addressing the five propositions and three research questions. This chapter is to conclude the significance of the findings, thereby providing insights into and reflections on the overarching research question: how does the HE system influence the pattern of policy change regarding QA schemes particularly in the European context?

8.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Around the end of the 1970s, rapid expansion of institutions, increasing diversity of provision and the tightening of public expenditure were entwined in the HE systems of Western Europe. In the UK, there was an over 40 per cent reduction in the unit numbers of capital funding between 1976 and 1996 (Dearing, 1997). Severe cutbacks in public funding resulted in progressive reduction in HE resources. As a consequence, worries emerged particularly about the university sector’s competence regarding quality maintenance. Facing such difficulty, governments searched for policy solutions, which on the one hand would control or maintain the quality of provision when the numbers of institutions and student population were increasing, and on the other hand would be compatible with their respective HE system along with the arrangements, standards and demands that had been in place. The question is whether different countries have initiated similar QA strategies for dealing with quite similar policy problems and hence, shown convergence, as being envisaged by the Bologna process? If not, then what accounts for the difference in policy adoption? Is it the degree of institutionalisation regarding the previous QA scheme, the power of the policy entrepreneurs or the strength of the bond with European HE policy?

8.1.1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL QA IN EUROPEAN HE

At the outset of introducing national QA systems, both England and the Netherlands showed a parallel adoption, opting for process-based schemes. It is true that there were some differences. For instance, England embraced institutional audit whereas the Netherlands preferred programme assessment. Nonetheless, the two countries were, to a considerable extent, consistent with each other in adopting an intrinsic-oriented approach in the first place. That is, internal self-evaluations and on-site visits conducted by external expert peers were instigated. Following that, final
reports, either formal or informal, were produced by peer groups and submitted to the respective representative bodies of universities.

After the first QA scheme was commenced, the direction in which the English and Dutch QA systems were heading was parallel with an extrinsic forward move in relation to the position and boundary rules, information rules and the definition of HE quality. In contrast to these instances of policy convergence, certain QA elements presented sizeable divergence in the process of policy change. In relation to the payoff and scope rules, England remained with intrinsic orientation while the Netherlands switched from an intrinsic to an extrinsic orientation in 2002. In addition, in the same year the intrinsic-oriented Dutch QA approach was replaced by extrinsic-oriented programme accreditation, whereas its counterpart in England retained their intrinsic tradition. Apart from policy convergence and divergence, there was a third trend. That is, QA functions fluctuated between the intrinsic and extrinsic orientations.

Comparing the changes experienced by each QA element in each episode, the payoff and scope rules and QA approaches that emerged in the Netherlands changed more frequently than their counterparts in England, whereas the position and boundary rules and QA functions in England showed higher frequency of change than those in the Netherlands. Similarly, the Dutch information rules and the payoff and scope rules along with the QA approach demonstrated a higher degree of change than the English, while the English QA functions and quality definitions changed more significantly than their counterparts in the other country. Generally speaking, it was found that the Dutch QA regulations and cognitive ideas, especially in relation to the payoff and scope rules and QA approaches, appeared relatively significant in terms of the degree and frequency of change. In contrast, the English normative QA ideas, particularly in relation to QA functions, changed more frequently and also the extent of these changes were higher than for the Dutch cases.

8.1.2. EXPLANATIONS FOR THE HE POLICY CHANGE IN EUROPEAN QA

The study examined five propositions that were derived from those offered by Campbell (2004), thereby ascertaining whether the two independent variables, viz. the consistency of QA elements and the position of policy entrepreneurs, accounted for the pattern of policy change that emerged in the two countries. The results
showed that the episodes observed in the Netherlands provide positive empirical evidence in support of propositions 1 to 3 regarding the first variable, whereas propositions four and five in relation to the second variable had more explanatory power in the English HE system than in the Dutch.

In general, the initial assumption emanating from new institutionalism that the HE system comprising actors and ideas accounts for policy change was confirmed. Although it is not possible to pin down the causal relationship between the system and the process of QA change in more detail, figure 8-1 expounds on the relationship between policy entrepreneurs and the policy ideas they convey in the HE system, which is determined by the nature of the HE structural configuration (e.g. institutional innovation and structural constraint) and influences the pattern of policy change in QA.
From these findings it was inferred that the reason why the two independent
variables presented different explanatory power in the two focal countries is related to the difference between the English and Dutch HE structure configurations. That is, structural constraint is featured in the relationship between Dutch policy entrepreneurs and the HE system they belong to, whereas institutional innovation fits better with that in England. Where the nature of structural constraint is evident, it seems feasible to conceive of the consistency of QA elements as the predominant variable influential in what happened in terms of the pattern of the policy change. In the case where the feature of institutional innovation is significant, the position of policy entrepreneurs is of paramount importance in explaining what happens in the HE context in relation to policy change.

Furthermore, it was posited that in a HE system dominated by the nature of institutional innovation, policy entrepreneurs are inclined to inherit their QA innovations from the existing system and bring about change through the process of substantive bricolage or symbolic bricolage. In turn, the QA alternatives that are subsequently accepted by the policymakers tend to have an intrinsic orientation. As a result, the form of policy change emerging in this type of system tends to be evolutionary. On the other hand, in a system characterised by structural constraint, the QA alternatives that reach the statute book tend to be formulated through the process of translation or symbolic bricolage with an extrinsically-oriented quality. The explanation behind this is that if the stakeholders external to the university community are actively involved in QA development, the policy alternatives that diffuse from outside the sector will be more likely to be advocated by policy entrepreneurs and subsequently more likely to be accepted by policymakers. Therefore, the policy change that can be attributed to the extrinsic innovations is expected to be higher than that in other HE configurations.

Drawing upon the findings in relation to the direction and degree of change, the eight episodes revealed that the English QA regulations were more intrinsically-oriented than those adopted in the Netherlands. Moreover, the Dutch episodes were normally of longer duration than the English, and the degree to which the Netherlands deviated from the intrinsic to extrinsic orientation was higher than in England. In sum, despite these differences between the two countries, both of the case countries presented the same pattern of policy change, punctuated equilibrium.
8.2. CONTRIBUTIONS

8.2.1. CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPEAN HE POLICY

Against the background of the Bologna process, national QA procedures increasingly have to meet the requirements derived from the relevant policy documents at the European level. One of the most recognisable QA elements is that of the object of QA schemes. In accordance with the Prague communiqué of 2001, domestic QA systems should be geared towards informing stakeholders about the quality of degree programmes, thereby ensuring that HE institutions are meeting the demands of students and the labour market. This perspective was in line with the notion of comparability in the Bologna process and would eventually lead to similar degrees being standardised with and across countries. Consequently, most European countries have tended to consider degree qualifications as a key focus when designing or amending their own national QA schemes. In addition, a common framework of European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) was built, including predefined quality criteria and procedures. Another European influence relates particularly to QA approaches and albeit there has been no explicit enforcement, accreditation is considered by most European countries as a significant policy alternative to their initial domestic quality procedures. Likewise, the approach is expected to be instrumental in reporting summarised statements and quantitative data. In general, in the light of consumer protection, the accreditation process is geared to facilitating the dissemination of information and best practice to stakeholders across all the countries taking part in the Bologna process (Westerheijden, 2007a, Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, Westerheijden et al., 2007b).

There are different views on how these European QA requirements have impacted on domestic quality schemes. For instance, Voegtle et al. (2010) observed a considerable policy convergence among the Bologna signatory states, whereas Stensaker et al. (2010) found isomorphism (i.e. an increase in cross-national similarity), isonymism (i.e. different QA procedures yet with an identical label) and isopraxism (i.e. similar QA procedures with different labels) in relation to the impact of the ESG on agencies’ evaluations. With respect to the discrepancy between the two studies, the outcomes of the present study can make a contribution to the question whether the Bologna process is having a significant European influence on national HE policies towards convergence.
Based on the conceptual framework in figure 8-1, it is posited that policy change in the QA systems of European HE would take place under the pattern of punctuated equilibrium, and more specifically, it is proposed that the frequency, degree and the direction of policy change might differ from country to country. In particular, it is proposed that although policy convergence might be increasingly evident in European QA systems, in the meantime there is significant variation in relation to policy change for the different QA elements. In other words, the longer the European QA systems are in place, the less diversity in terms of QA regulations and ideas there might be.

Drawing upon the QA development described in subsection 7.1, the study does not support the idea of there being a strict policy convergence between the European QA schemes in the two countries, albeit there was a similar deviation from the intrinsic to the extrinsic side. In fact, by 2005, the two case countries had ended up adopting different QA approaches, i.e. institutional audit in England and programme accreditation in the Netherlands. In addition, some policy elements appeared to be convergent yet others divergent or fluctuated. This means that the episodes in relation to the English and Dutch QA development did not offer confirmation of ‘the decrease in variation of domestic policies’ or of a decrease of ‘the distance of policies towards an exemplary model’ (Heichel et al., 2005, pp. 831-3).

These findings differ from the outcomes of the studies by Voegtle et al. (2010) and this discrepancy reminds researchers who are interested in QA development about a crucial issue in relation to methodology. Campbell (2004) emphasised the concept of multidimensional institutions, and it is imperative to identify which HE policy dimensions should be seen as the dependent variable under scrutiny. Voegtle et al. probed national QA requirements that made reference to the Bologna process, such as the inclusion of internal and external review, the involvement of students in the process of evaluation, the need to publish evaluation results and to embrace international participation in peer reviews. These variables can be categorised, according to Campbell’s (2004) work, as policy programmes. In this research, not only QA schemes were measured but also policy ideas, relating to QA approaches, purposes and quality definitions.
Likewise, the issue of the dependent variable can partially explain the findings of Stensaker et al. (2010). The present study has shown that it is pivotal for the researchers to apply an approach beneficial in ascertaining the policy dimensions relating to beliefs and values, for example policy problems and purposes. Isomorphism, isonymism and isopraxism may be understood differently if the researchers define QA procedures by including different QA elements, for instance, position and information rules. In addition, changes in policy ideas are normally hard to detect through questionnaires or large-N comparative methods, owing to the difficulty of obtaining fruitful information on actors’ subjective perspectives. Although different research methods might reach different conclusions especially in relation to the level of conceptual abstraction (Landman, 2007), it was demonstrated by the present study that Q-methodology is instrumental in analysing the subjective beliefs and values that policy actors advocate or convey in the policymaking process.

8.2.2. Contribution to the theory of policy change

Regarding the causes of policy development in European HE, studies such as Huisman and Kaiser (2002) and Westerheijden (2007a) have applied certain typologies to explain the issue. Nonetheless, with the policy environment being getting complicated, the dichotomy of exogenous and endogenous drivers would appear restrictive in terms of analysing policy change, if the study crosses critical spatial and temporal boundaries. For instance, Shatlock (2008) claimed that the drivers changing British HE policies used to be internal to the university sector, yet became influenced by exogenous factors, e.g. the intrusion of the government. However, the finding raises a potential problem for investigations focusing on British university polices, against the background of the 1992 FHE Act, representing a watershed in British HE, when polytechnics were incorporated into the university sector. That is: should the interaction between the pre-1992 and post-1992 universities be conceived of as an internal or external influence? In other words, there is a need to reconsider the approach to explaining the process of HE policymaking, as the dividing line between intrinsic and extrinsic features may be different if the question involves different HE configurations.

Moreover, HE power structure has been perceived as a paramount factor for determining the nature of diversity and change in the adaptation of QA alternatives (Maassen, 1997, Neave, 1994, van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994, Westerheijden,
The Netherlands represents the continental HE system, where government power has been predominant and not only is the input of HE controlled by the state, but also the educational process and output. In contrast, the British tradition has been to allow the academic community and universities to have more autonomy over staff and students (i.e. input), the development of curricula and the establishment of study programmes (i.e. process), and over degree awards (i.e. output). Also, funding allocation in the mid-1980s was still through the University Grants Committee and the system of external examiners was in the hands of the English academics. Nonetheless, the present study found that the different power distributions of the HE systems, i.e. the self-control model in England and external control in the Netherlands, have led to a parallel pattern of QA change, viz. punctuated equilibrium. That is, power structures do not seem to fully explain the findings.

In relation to the research gaps highlighted above, the theoretical framework demonstrated in figure 8-1, to a great extent, has provided useful insights on what triggers policy change. The results suggest that the relationship between policy entrepreneurs and the policy ideas they convey in the HE system is the key to filling these gaps. More specifically, it is put forward that the characteristics of the university community and the extent of external stakeholder involvement are two important aspects of ascertaining this relationship. That is, the former is concerned with the interaction between internal actors/ideas e.g. the level of the hierarchy of the universities, whereas the latter refers to the relationship between internal and external actors/ideas e.g. the extent of government involvement.

Regarding the characteristics of the university community, firstly, it was found that the internal relationship accounts for the determination of QA alternatives. In the Netherlands, there was a strict line distinguishing the academic from the professional degrees, offered by two different types of HE institutions. As a consequence, the QA schemes, either assessment or accreditation process, for the two subsectors have been quite identical but separated. Such a separation was not in place in the UK, where the interest competition between the universities was significant and complex. Moreover, due to the diversity in the character of the English university community, policy compromise in relation to QA was more difficult to reach in England, unless their policy entrepreneurs offered the policy alternatives that only represented minor adjustments. In other words, it has emerged that in a binary HE system, policy
change tends to happen less frequently whereas the extent of change for each time tends to be greater.

Secondly, the extent of external stakeholder involvement concerns the interaction between internal and external arenas. With respect to this, the discussion on the relationship between the government and the universities is not a novel idea. For instance, this relationship in the Netherlands is inherited from the continental governance model featuring state regulation, which has been covered extensively in the literature. However, the historical context should not be the only consideration, for rational-choice institutionalism has shed light on actors and their interest-based strategies and goal-oriented behaviour (Ostrom, 2007) and hence, furthered understanding of institutional diversity. Its proponents have argued that actors’ actions and strategic interactions, such as political conflicts and the pursuit of personal interests, can generate critical consequences in terms of institutional arrangements and thus determine the outcomes of institutional development (Scharpf, 1997). In addition, sociological institutionalism focuses on the institutional aspect relating to normative and cognitive ideas and draws attention to actions that are affected by social constructions, culture and identity (March and Olsen, 1989).

Based on the findings of the present study and the theoretical framework combining the three schools of thought in the new institutionalism camp, the literature in relation to the continental governance model can be supplemented, with the idea of policy preferences. In particular, influenced by the feature of structural constraint, it was found that policy entrepreneurs in the Dutch HE system tended to provide and accept the payoff and scope rules, in accordance with which, QA results would be linked to governmental approval of study programmes. On the other hand, the ownership of the English HE system was claimed by self-governing communities and due to its feature of institutional innovation, English policy entrepreneurs hesitated to accept the QA alternatives which would allow the government to be involved in the process of decision-making, particularly in relation to quality criteria and QA outcomes. In general, coverage of policy preferences assists in linking the policy entrepreneurs to policy ideas and further, to understanding why the relationship between internal and external stakeholders may be different from country to country, even from period to period. Moreover, due to the nature of HE policies, collective decision-making appears to be the most common scenario in the
policy arena, based on the eight episodes of the present study. As a result, it is posited that the policy change pattern of punctuated equilibrium, as a result of collective policymaking, might be a common pattern for HE policy change in Western Europe.

Thirdly, the factor of external stakeholder involvement includes the issue of European and international influence on domestic QA development. With respect to this, it had either been emanating from EU policy initiatives or the Bologna process, but was scarcely noticeable in the English university community in the years under investigation. This can be put down to a lack of discussion on QA proposals for European requirements in the English policy process during the formulation of the new QA system. According to a review report sponsored by HEFCE, UUK and the SCOP (HEFCE et al., 2005), an accreditation system at programme level and/or institutional level, which had been adopted by a number of European HE sectors, was not welcomed. Instead, institutional audit was adopted and subject assessment was ended in 2001 as a result. In contrast, the Netherlands rapidly restructured its QA system soon after the Bologna process was launched. Moreover, the Dutch influence on the European agenda regarding the developments of quality-related policies, which can be traced back to 1992, when the Dutch government presided over the European Union. At the outset of the 2000s, the country again took a leadership role in an informal international network for the development of accreditation in Europe, called the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI) (Luijten-Lub et al., 2005). During this process, the Netherlands, together with the government of Flanders (Belgium), promoted the initiative and provided its experience of the accreditation of bachelor and master programmes to other European countries. Consequently, the Dutch preference for choosing education output (e.g. competences of graduates) as the major quality conception in accreditations was incorporated into the JQI (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden, 2004).

In relation to the difference in reactions to the Bologna process between the two countries, an explanation put forward was the ‘small country syndrome’ (Westerheijden, 2003). Small countries are inclined to engage actively in international projects and cooperation so as to extend their international influence, which explains why the Netherlands’ policy-making process, as a small country, involved more foreign interaction in the years under investigation than the UK. In
addition, from the perspective of Campbell (2004), organisational characteristics can be pivotal for the process of translation when an external policy idea is combined with the local system. That is, the scale of the university community would be another feature that would influence QA development. A small-size HE system seems to be more willing to be exposed to new principles and practices through the process of diffusion and more likely to translate them into the local context. This can also provide an explanation as to why the case of England showed an inclination to follow the policy ideas that had a long history and to maintain the HE policies that had been implemented. Furthermore, the explanations that are derived from Westerheijden and Campbell, in effect, come from two different perspectives: the former from the international/external relationship, whilst the latter is from an internal one. This diversity echoes with the aforementioned difficulty in relation to drawing a line between the intrinsic and extrinsic factors in relation to policy change. With respect to this, it is proposed that this difficulty can be avoided by applying the theoretical framework devised for this research, which focuses on distinguishing policy entrepreneurs and ideas rather than on external and internal factors.

8.2.3. **Contribution to the Theory of Campbell**

Among comparative policy scholars, particularly those that address policy change and adoption in the context of globalization or European integration, conceptualizing what has been changed has emerged as a fundamental topic (Howlett and Cashore, 2009). An overview of empirical studies on policy convergence showed that many studies on policy convergence failed to identify which policy elements were investigated (Heichel et al., 2005). The authors claimed that the lack of sufficient conceptualization has been problematic for the study of policy change. In relation to the issue of dependent variables, Ochs and Phillips (2002), for instance, proposed a structural typology for analyzing the adoption of educational policies and practices. It consisted of the aspects: the guiding philosophy or ideology, policy goals, strategies for policy implementation, enabling structures, educational processes and technique. Also, in a framework for analysing the process of policy transfer, Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) suggested significant policy elements: policy goals, policy content, policy instruments, policy programs, institutions, ideologies, ideas and attitudes and negative lessons.

However, such taxonomies were criticised as being exhaustive ‘shopping lists’,
which led to a mechanistic, linear view on policy processes (Bennett, 1991, p. 220). This would be particularly problematic in research against a global or cross-national context. It would be difficult to develop a set of conceptual categories that universally fit different legislative processes in different countries. A formal output of legislation, for instance, may correspond to an administrative action in one country or an informal agreement in others. In relation to this, Campbell (2004) postulated that institutions are multidimensional and the process of change is conceived of as a dynamic, complex, multi-tiered, nested phenomenon. Moreover, his view differs from Ochs and Phillips or Dolowitz and Marsh in terms of what constitutes the analytical categories. Instead of providing an ‘accurate conceptualization’ (Bennett, 1991, p. 219), Campbell (2004) reserved considerable flexibility when defining variables. He argued that policy dimensions are never ‘accurate’ but open to consideration. In other words, Campbell’s work is promising especially in addressing policy change in the global context, which may involve several different sets of institutional arrangements.

In addition, Campbell maintained that the selection of institutional dimensions is based on the analyst’s perspective, and that specifying critical dimensions of the institution in question is one of the fundamental empirical approaches to determine which pattern of change has occurred. Accordingly, when an analyst is primarily concerned with the formal part of quality assurance rules, the regulation pillar vis-à-vis other ideational pillars in the HE system would need to be paid more attention to. Campbell’s work (2004) seems to focus more on normative and cognitive dimensions. As a result, a point of criticism is that there is not enough attention paid to regulative dimensions. The framework could therefore fail to fully explain policy change in QA schemes. Consequently, we supplemented Campbell’s theory with a set of regulative dimensions, derived from the Institutional Analysis and Development framework (Charlotte and Elinor, 2006, Ostrom, 2005). By doing so, the relationships between actors and formal QA rules could be further explored. They have been used to explain the process in which the policy entrepreneurs advocated certain QA schemes and mobilised resources to stimulate policy change. Regarding this, there are a couple of benefits achieved: a result of deliberately defining of the regulative dimensions.

Firstly, the present study found that the relationship between the QA schemes and the
policy entrepreneurs advocating them was mutually interdependent. In other words, the actors and the policy element were reflectively intertwined with one another in such a way that the pre-existing QA schemes, as the rules of a game, influenced the actors’ interests, capacities and identities. Conversely, the actors with those institutionally-defined properties formulated and advocated their QA innovations, which would become part of the rules of the strategic game after being institutionalised. It could therefore not only explain why policy entrepreneurs with different positions (e.g. the CVCP vs. VSNU or the HEQC vs. HEFCE) had variant effects on the formulation of QA schemes, but also why actors with similar interests formed different coalitions and why a policy entrepreneur (e.g. QAA) may cause distinctive influence and impact in different episodes of QA change.

These findings show that the interaction between actors and ideas is of crucial importance in policy change. This conclusion is, to a certain extent, distinctive from those adopting actor-centred institutionalism. In research based on actor-centred institutionalism, the interaction between actors is stressed, playing a crucial role in the process of formulating policy, policy alternatives and strategies. For instance, the conceptual framework devised by Witte (2006) focused on the actor constellation, which was composed of capabilities, preferences and perceptions. She argued that those actor orientations were of the paramount importance in relation to policy change. Her framework (ibid, p. 93) is in some respects similar to what we illustrated in figure 8-1. Both frameworks, devised to probe the relationship between national HE systems and policy change, argue that the HE system affects policy change and actors’ interaction. In addition, the two frameworks share the contention that in the process of change actors play significant roles. Nonetheless, the present study, instead of paying full attention on actor interactions and constellations solely, emphasises the interaction between agency and structure. That is, the institutional context, constituted by actor constellations and the regulative and ideational dimensions, accounts for the change in HE policies and differences between systems.

Secondly, the categories of the regulative pillar provide a better framework for understanding policy actors. As explained in subsections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, proponents of actor-centred institutionalism are more likely to emphasise the micro-perspective and investigate the influence of actors on institutions. It is assumed that the influence of institutional arrangements is fixed. On the other hand, Campbell’s theory is aimed
at integrating different schools of new institutionalism, and therefore some theoretical foundations derived from organisational institutionalism and historical institutionalism are incorporated. This includes a macro-perspective, stressing for instance how institutional arrangements affect actors’ behaviour and preferences. As a result, his theory offers insights into both the micro- and macro-level of change processes, arguing that both agency and structure affect institutional change (Campbell, 2004, pp. 173-4).

Campbell implied that the rationality of the policy entrepreneurs is based on a combination of the logic of instrumentalism and that of appropriateness. That is, the policy entrepreneurs try to maximise their own advantage, or they want to promote specific policy ideas. Motivated by that, they endeavour to increase the likelihood of political consideration for modifying other actors’ beliefs about what these actors’ self-interests are, how policy problems should be defined or which specific policy solutions are considered. In the light of the profound influence of institutional context, interests are not perceived as an objective fact in the theory of constrained innovation, but as the outcomes formed in the course of interactions between agency and structure. Campbell’s notion of constrained innovation is deemed to be one of the key explanations that distinguishes his theory from others in the camp of (new) institutionalism. The theory is similar to actor-centred institutionalism arguing that actors are centre stage in the process of change, yet it differs in the argument about whether or not actors’ behaviour is fully predictable given contextual settings (Crouch et al., 2007).

Accordingly, the present study treated interests as the ideational conception defined by Blyth rather than the materialist conception of interests argued by Swenson (Hay, 2004). Regarding the interests that were directly affected by QA schemes, such as the cost and benefits and the potential outcomes of the action situation, we included those in the analysis of regulative dimensions particularly in terms of payoff and scope rules. These QA elements are considered as exogenous variables in the course of interaction. With respect to the interests that are not intimately connected to the QA schemes yet related to other HE issues, the discussions of policy entrepreneurs in each episode of QA policy change covered this type of interests as well as the strategies that actors pursued to further their own interests.
As a result of this, we found that the actions of policy entrepreneurs were not limited to articulating policy innovations at the stage of agenda setting. They actually played multiple roles throughout the policymaking process, such as facilitating policy adoption and implementing policy ideas. A similar finding was reported by Bakir (2009), whose work was in the context of central bank reform in Turkey. His and our studies agree that policy entrepreneurs may be decision makers, theorists, framers and mediators/brokers, acting in different ideational realms such as normative and cognitive ideas.

8.3. **RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The present study has contributed significantly to understanding the phenomenon of QA change in England and the Netherlands through the theoretical lens of Campbell’s new institutionalism. Nevertheless, there were a number of limitations and unexpected problems that emerged during the research process.

8.3.1 **GENERALISATION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The findings of the study suggest that the common pattern of QA change occurring in the English and Dutch HE systems is punctuated equilibrium, which can be further divided into several sub-types. That is, the more external involvement in the policy-making process, the more likely the pattern of QA change would present an evolutionary nature rather than one that is revolutionary. With respect to the claim that the frequency and the degree of policy change might be different from country to country and from period to period, this was investigated by way of a case-study method, along with documentary analysis and Q-methodology. Therefore, the above conclusions were robustly obtained by probing contextual ideas, rather than abstract concepts, to which a questionnaire would have been restricted. Although this approach can contribute to the understanding of QA development in the English and Dutch HE in particular and it can provide testing hypotheses based on a theoretical framework, the level of generalisation is open to improvement. This could be enhanced by considering policy change occurring post 2005 in the two countries. In addition, investigating other QA schemes in the English or Dutch HE context would be beneficial in confirming whether the pattern of policy change that was observed, particularly in QA for teaching and learning, would be similar to, for example quality
procedures for research. Also, due to the initial research purpose being aimed at building a bridge between theories of public policy change and the HE policy domain, it would be valuable to extend the scope of generalisation to other HE policies and to other Bologna signatory states.

8.3.2. Extension of the Theoretical Framework

As the framework specifically emphases the significance of the relationships between actors and ideas regarding policy change, its improvement should be focused on delving deeper into relationships between the policy actors and policy ideas involved in the European HE. Unfortunately, the contribution of the study with respect to this is limited. For example, there has been an implicit causal link between the determination of QA schemes and the purpose of conducting quality processes. In particular, Vroeijenstijn and Acherman (1990) implied that peer reviews were incorporated in the quality procedures when improvement was perceived as a significant QA function, whereas the introduction of performance indicators was considered as quality control and state steering was especially valued. The present study did not observe such correlation (see table 7-6) and according to the findings, QA functions in both case countries revealed a fluctuating development pattern, and had no strong correlation with the determination of QA schemes. In contrast, a connection between QA normative ideas and policy programmes was observed, yet that was related to public sentiment about HE quality rather than QA functions. It was found that when external stakeholders dominated public sentiment, the QA schemes tended to involve extrinsically reporting procedures, such as review reports including graded or threshold judgements, and the participants in the quality procedures were more likely to be the external policy actors. A move towards the extrinsic side of quality definitions frequently occurred during the episodes when the QA schemes included extrinsically-oriented information rules or position and boundary rules. In other words, it seems that the orientation of the newly-adopted QA schemes was more significantly influenced by normative QA ideas in the background (i.e. quality definitions) than those in the foreground (i.e. QA functions).

As mentioned in the previous subsection, further studies drawing upon other cases in the European HE policy context would benefit scholarship in the field on how different QA elements influence each other. Such an endeavour would possibly also answer some unsolved questions that we encountered in the present study. For
example: in the UK, the degree of change in normative QA ideas in the foreground was more significant and frequent than other QA elements; whereas in the Netherlands, the cognitive policy ideas in particular in the background were more unstable and the level of change was higher than other ideas categorised as normative QA ideas. Moreover, the proposed research can be expected to generate more convincing evidence for supporting the proposition that structural constraint is featured in the Dutch HE system and similarly, institutional innovation in the English system.

8.3.3. Reflection on the Q-methodology

Most of the limitations in relations to the historical analysis and Q-methodology were considered before carrying out the study. They were expected to be sufficiently addressed by adopting a mixed research design, as discussed in subsections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4. In particular, as compensation for the limitations of documentary analysis, it was envisaged that the required data would be available through the interviews. Furthermore, regarding the theoretical orientation of the historical analysis, the lack of narrative perspectives from diverse participants was expected to be improved by incorporating multiple observations, such as from experts and practitioners in relation to QA. Their perceptions were collected by the process of conducting Q-sorting. In practice, these benefits of Q-methodology were affirmative according to the researcher’s personal experience.

Face-to-face Q-sorts are expected to be a promising way to achieve a relatively higher response. In this regard, during the process of the researcher carrying out the Q-sorts, two of the participants in the Q-sorts voluntarily carried them out before the scheduled interview and these results were somewhat different to those collected in the researcher’s presence. Eventually, the latter ones were incorporated into the Q-analysis in the light of the importance of having a standardised procedure. In fact, there was no apparent discrepancy between the final outcomes of Q-analysis in relation to these two different Q-sorts. There are some possible reasons for the low level of discrepancy. For example, the Q-statements that were scored differently by a participant, yet following different procedures, tended to be those adhering to the perspectives categorised as ‘neutral’ rather than ‘significantly agree’ and ‘significantly disagree’. That said, the process of communicating related concepts and ideas with varying participants during the interviews did advance the
understanding and interpretative skills of this researcher, who was seen as an outsider to the phenomena of interest. Therefore, the researcher recommends this approach in preference to the mail or computer-based alternative. Nevertheless, when the issue relating to the costs of administration or wishing to cover a wider geographical distribution are of paramount importance, then the other options must be considered.
REFERENCES


BOEZEROOY, P. (2003) Higher Education in the Netherlands. Enschede, University of Twente, CHEPS.


CVCP (1997) CVCP annual review: 1996/97, Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom.


DE BOER, H. F., ENDERS, J. & WESTERHEIJDEN, D. F. (2007) From paper to practice: Two reforms and their consequences in Dutch higher education. IN:
GORNITZKA, Å., KOGAN, M. & AMARAL, A. (Eds.) Reform and Change in Higher Education. Dordrecht, Springer


HUISMAN, J. (2003b) Watching over Higher Education, the brain police, Enschede, CHEPS.


QAA (1998a) Higher Quality 3. IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (Ed.).

QAA (1998b) Higher Quality 4. IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (Ed.).


QAA (2002b) QAA external review process for higher education in England: Operational description (019 03/02).


Accreditation and Evaluation in the European Higher Education Area.


THEISENS, H. C. (2004) The state of change: analysing policy change in Dutch and English higher education. CHEPS. Enschede, University of Twente.


(Eds.) *Quality and internationalisation in higher education*. Paris, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.


## APPENDIX A: DUTCH Q-SORT ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Factor A N=3</th>
<th>Factor B N=3</th>
<th>Aggregate N=3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ranks</td>
<td>Z-scores*</td>
<td>Ranks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Definitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as passing required standards (1.3)</td>
<td>1. In the period 1985-1992, rather than governmental regulations, academic standards were perceived as the pivotal criterion for assessing the quality of higher education provision.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as fitting the institution’s missions (3.2)</td>
<td>2. In the period 1985-1992, a programme was perceived as delivering quality, when it fulfilled its educational goals pre-determined by the staff involved.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as passing required standards (1.3)</td>
<td>3. In the period 1985-1992, governmental regulations regarding the input, process and output of higher education were perceived as a primary guarantee of quality.</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as fitting the institution’s missions (3.2)</td>
<td>4. In the period 1985-1992, a programme was perceived as delivering quality, when fulfilling its educational goals that were largely determined by the government.</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-1.76</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA functions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the provision of HE (1)</td>
<td>5. In the period 1985-1992, the quality assurance system was geared towards stimulating the improvement of quality awareness within the universities.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve ultimately (4)</td>
<td>6. In the period 1985-1992, quality improvement was conceived of as an ultimate objective for quality assurance, which would be reached after the fulfilment of accountability.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-1.29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountable for money (1)</td>
<td>7. In the period 1985-1992, value for money was considered as a pivotal principle in the formulation of quality assurance policy. For example, the government proposed to establish a link between quality judgements and funding for teaching.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-1.37</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External control (2)</td>
<td>8. In the period 1985-1992, the introduction of quality assurance was conceived of as a means</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Z-scores: Normalized factor scores
of quality control, in exchange for more leeway in financial and managerial matters of the universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality as passing required standards (1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In the period 1993-2001, subjective judgements that made by academic peers were perceived as more capable of measuring the quality of higher education provision than numerical standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as fitting the institution's missions (3.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. In the period 1993-2001, it was believed that a high quality programme was one capable of achieving the aims and objectives of the university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as passing required standards (1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. In the period 1993-2001, there was a consensus in the Dutch higher education system that the quality of provision should be measured through objectified performance indicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as fitting customer specification (3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. In the period 1993-2001, a programme which could well equip its graduates with skills for career development was perceived as delivering quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QA functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve the provision of programmes (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. In the period 1993-2001, quality improvement was perceived as a pivotal function of the quality assurance system, in which exchanging ideas between the faculty and the visitation committee was key.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve ultimately (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. In the period 1993-2001, as some universities had learnt tricks after two rounds of external visitations, the introduction of new quality procedures was aimed at preventing the visitations that had been conducted for over ten years from eroding quality improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External control (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. In the period 1993-2001, the quality assurance system was conceived of as an instrument for governmental control over the supply of study programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountable to the interests of stakeholders (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. In the period 1993-2001, the quality assurance system was expected to fulfil an accountability role not only to internal but also to external stakeholders. For example, external quality agencies were to be in charge of the quality procedures, which were envisaged being more independent of the universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. In the period 2002-2005, internal stakeholders in the discipline were perceived as knowing better about quality standards and how to meet those than external stakeholders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality as passing required standards (1.3)</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>-0.41</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0.19</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>-0.22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

18. In the period 2002-2005, quality was related to the study programme’s mission, which was dominated by the (local) faculty and professional organisations, instead of being based on international standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality as fitting the institution’s missions (3.2)</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>-0.46</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0.23</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>-0.23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

19. In the period 2002-2005, rather than relative standards, common quality criteria especially for quality output (e.g. the capacities of graduates) were the focus of quality assurance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality as passing required standards (1.3)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0.42</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>-0.68</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>-0.26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

20. In the period 2002-2005, the conception of quality was challenged to accommodate external requirements and specifications derived from outside the Netherlands (e.g. international student mobility).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality as fitting customer specification (3.1)</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>-0.48</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0.18</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>-0.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**QA functions**

21. In the period 2002-2005, the accreditation system was geared towards improving the diversity of programme provision. A programme would be allowed to select a preferred evaluation format by choosing a qualified external quality agency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improve the provision of programmes (1)</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>-0.2</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-0.86</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1.06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22. In the period 2002-2005, the accreditation system was introduced to improve the effectiveness of the quality assessment, for the universities had learnt to play the (previous) quality assurance game.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improve ultimately (4)</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1.27</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1.18</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>2.45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

23. In the period 2002-2005, validation became an important function of the quality assurance system in the light of customer protection. Accreditation results would provide information and give assurance that the programmes, passing a minimum threshold, were delivering quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide public information (4)</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1.44</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>0.95</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>2.39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

24. In the period 2002-2005, the accreditation system envisaged facilitating the comparability of qualifications throughout the European Higher Education Area (e.g. student mobility).

| Achieve compliance to European policy (5) | 1 | 0.57 | 0 | -0.36 | 1 | 0.21 |
Factor Loadings: Assigning participants to factors: ‘Flagging’ assignments to subgroups marked with *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Factor A</th>
<th>Factor B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.79X</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.8X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.86X</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.76X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.76X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.78X</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results: Six participants are assigned to two factors. Each factor represents a distinct ‘voice’
## APPENDIX B: ENGLISH Q-SORT ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Factor A N=6</th>
<th>Factor B N=2</th>
<th>Aggregate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Z-scores</td>
<td>Z-scores*</td>
<td>Z-scores*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Definitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as distinctive</td>
<td>1. In the period 1985-1991, the university community conceived of quality as being self-evident, without the need to demonstrate it. There were neither definable means of determining quality nor criteria against which external examiners made their judgement.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as exceeding high standards</td>
<td>2. In the period 1985-1991, the perception of quality in the higher education (HE) system implied an elitist notion, insofar as excellence was confined to a few universities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as value for money</td>
<td>3. In the period 1985-1991, consensus emerged in the HE system that market mechanisms would take care of quality in the long run. Driven by rationales of efficiency and effectiveness, the government forged a close link between quality and value for money.</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality as fitting customer specification</td>
<td>4. In the period 1985-1991, the idea of quality as fitting customer requirements was pervading the HE system. Requirements of students and employers were conceived of as the main criteria against which quality should be judged.</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-1.82</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA functions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve performance</td>
<td>5. In the period 1985-1991, the university community realised it was necessary to introduce a quality assurance system to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in each individual university.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance appearance</td>
<td>6. In the period 1985-1991, the introduction of quality assurance procedures was mainly aimed at enhancing the participation rate in higher education (e.g. one in three of all 18-19 year olds by 2000).</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-1.59</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountable for money</td>
<td>7. In the period 1985-1991, the government followed the idea of value for money, particularly through quality control over the HE system.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Provide public information
(4)

8. In the period 1985-1991, the government believed that a quality assurance scheme that provided students and employers with relevant information would help to improve the quality of universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality as passing required standards (1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In the period 1992-1994, quality meant passing a set of required criteria, being connected to standards: higher quality meant universities meeting higher standards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Improve the diversity of institutions (1) |
| 13. In the period 1992-1994, given increasing competition, the university community envisaged a quality assurance system which would ensure distinction within and between institutions. |

| Improve performance (2) |
| 14. In the period 1992-1994, the university community recognised an immediate need to assure the society that the quality of the newly unified HE system would be maintained or enhanced. |

| Accountable for money (1) |
| 15. In the period 1992-1994, the Treasury and other actors external to the HE system insisted that there was a need for proper accountability for the substantial public funds invested in the universities. |

| Accountable to stakeholders (3) |
| 16. In the period 1992-1994, the government stressed the necessity of rearranging the quality assurance system to be accountable to (in particular) students and employers. |
### Quality Definitions

**Quality as fitting the institution’s missions (3.2)**

17. In the period 1995-1997, a high quality university was not so much an “excellent” university (of which there can only be a few), but one that clearly stated its own aims and objectives and was able to achieve its goals efficiently and effectively.

| 1 | 0.47 | -1 | -0.08 | 0 | 0.39 |

**Quality as passing required standards (1.3)**

18. In the period 1995-1997, rather than absolute standards, quality was conceived of as being measured against relative standards. Different standards could be set for different types of universities.

| -4 | -1.82 | 0 | 0.08 | -4 | -1.74 |

**Quality as passing required standards (1.3)**

19. In the period 1995-1997, the HE system appreciated quality standards which were externally determined and universally applied across either institutions or subjects. These helped to distinguish a first from a second class of degree performance and to compare quality of institutions.

**Quality as fitting the institution’s missions (3.2)**

20. In the period 1995-1997, attributed to a market-led competitive situation, universities were encouraged to emphasise different quality elements. It could imply high fitness-for-purpose for one element, and low fitness in relation to another purpose.

| -1 | -0.43 | -1 | -0.22 | -2 | -0.65 |

### QA functions

**Improve performance (2)**

21. In the period 1995-1997, there was consensus among the representatives of the institutions and funding councils that one of the purposes of quality assurance should be to facilitate quality improvement through the sharing of good practice and innovation.

| 2 | 0.88 | 3 | 0.95 | 5 | 1.83 |

**Improve ultimately (4)**

22. In the period 1995-1997, improvement was conceived of as a secondary function of the external quality assurance procedures, which would be realised after accountability was achieved.

| 3 | 1.03 | 0 | -0.06 | 3 | 0.97 |

**Accountable for money (1)**

23. In the period 1995-1997, it was envisaged, particularly by the Treasury, that the quality assurance system would generate comparative information facilitating discrimination between providers in the HE system.

| 1 | 0.65 | 1 | 0.5 | 2 | 1.15 |

**Provide public information (4)**

24. In the period 1995-1997, most policy actors in the higher education arena believed that the quality assurance process would support the dissemination of good practices and accessible public information to inform student choice.

| 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 |

**Quality Definitions**
25. In the period 1998-2001, quality assurance was to ensure the existence of mechanisms for quality control, rather than to set standards against which examiners measured quality or to specifications which the universities were required to achieve.

26. In the period 1998-2001, the HE system inclined to the view that the university’s reputation represented its quality.

27. In the period 1998-2001, in response to public interest in managerial efficiency and the general expectation of institutional effectiveness, performance indicators were thought appropriate to monitor the higher education system.

28. In the period 1998-2001, the HE system defined quality as passing a threshold determined by an external agency. Standards should be ‘absolute’, in particular be predefined, easily measurable and quantifiable.

29. In the period 1998-2001, the QAA envisaged a quality assurance system which would promote public confidence, at home and overseas, in higher education and in the standards of awards.

30. In the period 1998-2001, by publishing information about performance, the HE system believed that quality assurance would contribute to transparency of the objectives of programmes and universities, and as a result enhance quality.

31. In the period 1998-2001, the quality assurance system was envisaged serving the functions of defining professional standards and of external control over self-regulation in university teaching.

32. In the period 1998-2001, the HE system appreciated the value of the quality assurance system in generating necessary information for the funding council to allocate public resources.

33. In the period 2002-2005, high quality provision was perceived by the HE system as being constantly free of defects. Instead of relying on final inspection to identify zero defects, reliability and prevention were key in the quality process, to claiming quality and to
ensure no faults.

### Quality as passing required standards (1.3)

| Quality as passing required standards (1.3) | 34. In the period 2002-2005, standards were conceived of as the results of on-going negotiations in the light of changing circumstances. Actors internal to the HE system and to the institution had a substantial role in determining quality standards. | 0 -0.01 2 0.73 2 0.72 |
| Quality as fitting customer specification (3.1) | 35. In the period 2002-2005, the universities thought it important to meet customer requirements. Institutional missions and objectives would have to relate to the niche in the HE market, which the university carves out based on constant negotiation between different stakeholders. | 0 -0.2 2 0.73 2 0.53 |
| Quality as passing required standards (1.3) | 36. In the period 2002-2005, quality was conceived of as meeting benchmarks or threshold standards with to be applied consistently across subjects and institutions. | 1 0.52 1 0.36 2 0.88 |

### QA functions

| QA functions | 37. In the period 2002-2005, the HE system agreed upon an audit-based system of quality assurance mainly because of the diversity of universities and institutional cultures. | 2 0.91 -2 -0.87 0 0.04 |
| Improve provision (1) | 38. In the period 2002-2005, the quality assurance system aimed at stimulating enhancement in teaching quality which would be realised after accountability to external stakeholders was achieved. | 0 -0.07 0 0.22 0 0.15 |
| Improve ultimately (4) | 39. In the period 2002-2005, accountability to both external and internal stakeholders was the predominant purpose of conducting an audit-based quality assurance. | 2 0.8 0 0.16 2 0.96 |
| Accountable to stakeholders (3) | 40. In the period 2002-2005, quality assurance primarily functioned to provide information which external stakeholders demanded. | 0 -0.01 0 0 0 -0.01 |
| Provide public information (4) | | |
Factor Loadings: Assigning participants to factors: ‘Flagging’ assignments to subgroups marked with *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Factor A</th>
<th>Factor B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0554</td>
<td>0.8193X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7589X</td>
<td>0.0429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5079X</td>
<td>0.2798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.1864</td>
<td>0.7251X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6191X</td>
<td>0.4704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.7218X</td>
<td>0.3299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.7114X</td>
<td>-0.0105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.7854X</td>
<td>0.2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results: Eight participants are assigned to two factors. Each factor represents a distinct ‘voice’
APPENDIX C: DUTCH Q INSTRUCTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS Q SORT

The study is about policy ideas regarding quality assurance pervading in the Dutch higher education system in the period 1985-2005. We are interested in your perceptions of these policy elements, in particular (a) the purposes of conducting quality assurance; and (b) the notions of quality.

Please read each step to the end before you start carrying out the Q sorting.

1. Take the deck of cards [see Annex A] and the layout for Q sort cards [see Annex B]. Put the layout in front of you.

2. The 24 cards in the deck contain statements about quality assurance. We invite you to sort these statements. Our question is: To what extent do you agree with the following statements as the predominant policy idea during the given period of time? The numbers on the cards (from 1 to 24) have been assigned to the cards randomly and are only relevant for the administration of your response.

3. First read all of the statements/cards and then split these into three piles of indeterminate size: (1) AGREE: a pile for statements you tend to agree with; (2) DISAGREE: a pile for statements you tend to disagree with; and (3) NEUTRAL OR DO NOT KNOW: a pile for statements you neither agree nor disagree with, or you feel you have insufficient knowledge for a judgment.

4. Take the AGREE pile and sort the cards into three more piles of indeterminate size: (1) a SIGNIFICANTLY AGREE pile; (2) an A-AGREE pile; and (3) a SOMEWHAT AGREE pile.

5. Take the SIGNIFICANTLY AGREE pile, select one statements/cards you most agree with and place them in the “+4” column on the layout. Next, from the remainder of the SIGNIFICANTLY AGREE pile and/or the A-AGREE pile, select two cards you most agree with and place them in the “+3” column. The order in each row is not important. Following the same logic, sort and place the remainder of the cards in the columns at the right side of the layout.

6. Use a similar sorting procedures with the DISAGREE pile and the NEUTRAL OR DO NOT KNOW pile. That is, divide the cards into three piles (step 4) and place these on the layout (step 5). For the DISAGREE pile, start positioning these at the left side columns first.

7. Having completed the initial sort, move cards back and forth between the “+4” and “-4” columns until reaching the middle. Feel free to rearrange your distribution of the cards in the sort at any time, but bear in mind that for the finalized sort you can only use the white spaces of the layout.
Annex A: Cards with 24 statements

1. In the period 1985-1992, rather than governmental regulations, academic standards were perceived as the pivotal criterion for assessing the quality of higher education provision.

2. In the period 1985-1992, a programme was perceived as delivering quality, when it fulfilled its educational goals pre-determined by the staff involved.

3. In the period 1985-1992, governmental regulations regarding the input, process and output of higher education were perceived as a primary guarantee of quality.

4. In the period 1985-1992, a programme was perceived as delivering quality, when fulfilling its educational goals that were largely determined by the government.

5. In the period 1985-1992, the quality assurance system was geared towards stimulating the improvement of quality awareness within the universities.

6. In the period 1985-1992, quality improvement was conceived of as an ultimate objective for quality assurance, which would be reached after the fulfilment of accountability.

7. In the period 1985-1992, value for money was considered as a pivotal principle in the formulation of quality assurance policy. For example, the government proposed to establish a link between quality judgements and funding for teaching.

8. In the period 1985-1992, the introduction of quality assurance was conceived of as a means of quality control, in exchange for more leeway in financial and managerial matters of the universities.

9. In the period 1993-2001, academic peers making subjective judgements were perceived as more capable of measuring the quality of higher education provision than numerical standards.

10. In the period 1993-2001, a high quality programme was one capable of achieving the aims and objectives of the university.

11. In the period 1993-2001, there was a consensus in the Dutch higher education system that the quality of provision should be measured through objectified performance indicators.

12. In the period 1993-2001, a programme which could well equip its graduates with skills for career development was perceived as delivering quality.

13. In the period 1993-2001, quality improvement was perceived as a pivotal function of the quality assurance system, in which exchanging ideas between the faculty and the visitation committee was key.
14. In the period 1993-2001, the introduction of new quality procedures was aimed at preventing the visitations that had been conducted for over ten years from eroding quality improvement. The universities had learnt tricks after two rounds of external visitations.

15. In the period 1993-2001, the quality assurance system was conceived of as an instrument for governmental control over the supply of study programmes.

16. In the period 1993-2001, the quality assurance system was expected to fulfil an accountability role not only to internal but also to external stakeholders. For example, external quality agencies were to be in charge of the quality procedures, which were envisaged being more independent from the universities.

17. In the period 2002-2005, internal stakeholders in the discipline were perceived as knowing better about quality standards and how to meet those than external stakeholders.

18. In the period 2002-2005, the study programme’s mission was dominated by the (local) faculty and professional organisations, instead of being based on international standards.

19. In the period 2002-2005, rather than relative standards, common quality criteria especially for quality output (e.g. the capacities of graduates) were the focus of quality assurance.

20. In the period 2002-2005, the conception of quality was challenged to accommodate external requirements and specifications derived from outside the Netherlands (e.g. international student mobility).

21. In the period 2002-2005, the accreditation system was geared towards improving the diversity of programme provision. A programme would be allowed to select a preferred evaluation format by choosing a qualified external quality agency.

22. In the period 2002-2005, the accreditation system was introduced to improve the effectiveness of the quality assessment, for the universities had learnt to play the (previous) quality assurance game.

23. In the period 2002-2005, validation became an important function of the quality assurance system in the light of customer protection. Accreditation results would provide information and give assurance that the programmes, passing a minimum threshold, were delivering quality.

24. In the period 2002-2005, the accreditation system envisaged facilitating the comparability of qualifications throughout the European Higher Education Area (e.g. student mobility).
Annex B: Layout for Q sort cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Disagree</th>
<th>-4</th>
<th>-3</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
<th>+3</th>
<th>+4</th>
<th>Most Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: ENGLISH Q INSTRUCTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS Q SORT

The study is about policy ideas regarding quality assurance pervading in the English higher education system in the period 1985-2005. We are interested in your perceptions of these policy elements, in particular (a) the purposes of conducting quality assurance; and (b) the notions of quality.

Please read each step to the end before you start carrying out the Q sorting.

8. Take the deck of cards [see Annex A] and the layout for Q sort cards [see Annex B]. Put the layout in front of you.

9. The 40 cards in the deck contain statements about quality assurance. We invite you to sort these statements. Our question is: To what extent do you agree with the following statements as the predominant policy idea during the given period of time? The numbers on the cards (from 1 to 40) have been assigned to the cards randomly and are only relevant for the administration of your response.

10. First read all of the statements/cards and then split these into three piles of indeterminate size: (1) AGREE: a pile for statements you tend to agree with; (2) DISAGREE: a pile for statements you tend to disagree with; and (3) NEUTRAL OR DO NOT KNOW: a pile for statements you neither agree nor disagree with, or you feel you have insufficient knowledge for a judgment.

11. Take the AGREE pile and sort the cards into three more piles of indeterminate size: (1) a SIGNIFICANTLY AGREE pile; (2) an A-AGREE pile; and (3) a SOMEWHAT AGREE pile.

12. Take the SIGNIFICANTLY AGREE pile, select two statements/cards you most agree with and place them in the “+4” column on the layout. The order in each row is not important. Next, from the remainder of the SIGNIFICANTLY AGREE pile and/or the A-AGREE pile, select three cards you most agree with and place them in the “+3” column. Following the same logic, sort and place the remainder of the cards in the columns at the right side of the layout.

13. Use a similar sorting procedures with the DISAGREE pile and the NEUTRAL OR DO NOT KNOW pile. That is, divide the cards into three piles (step 4) and place these on the layout (step 5). For the DISAGREE pile, start positioning these at the left side columns first.

14. Having completed the initial sort, move cards back and forth between the “+4” and “-4” columns until reaching the middle. Feel free to rearrange your distribution of the cards in the sort at any time, but bear in mind that for the finalized sort you can only use the white spaces of the layout.
Annex A: Cards with 40 statements

1. In the period 1985-1991, the university community conceived of quality as being self-evident, without the need to demonstrate it. There were neither definable means of determining quality nor criteria against which external examiners made their judgement.

2. In the period 1985-1991, the perception of quality in the higher education (HE) system implied an elitist notion, insofar as excellence was confined to a few universities.

3. In the period 1985-1991, consensus emerged in the HE system that market mechanisms would take care of quality in the long run. Driven by rationales of efficiency and effectiveness, the government forged a close link between quality and value for money.

4. In the period 1985-1991, the idea of quality as fitting customer requirements was pervading the HE system. Requirements of students and employers were conceived of as the main criteria against which quality should be judged.

5. In the period 1985-1991, the university community realised it was necessary to introduce a quality assurance system to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in each individual university.

6. In the period 1985-1991, the introduction of quality assurance procedures was mainly aimed at enhancing the participation rate in higher education (e.g. one in three of all 18-19 year olds by 2000).

7. In the period 1985-1991, the government followed the idea of value for money, particularly through quality control over the HE system.

8. In the period 1985-1991, the government believed that a quality assurance scheme that provided students and employers with relevant information would help to improve the quality of universities.

9. In the period 1992-1994, quality meant passing a set of required criteria, being connected to standards: higher quality meant universities meeting higher standards.

10. In the period 1992-1994, the idea was pervading the HE system that individual universities, rather than the government, should assume responsibility for quality control. If a university fulfilled its own institutional objectives or missions, it was conceived of as delivering quality.

11. In the period 1992-1994, there was a view that “universal” quality existed. External evaluation against universal standards was designed to reject ‘defective’ study programmes failing to conform to the required standards.
12. In the period 1992-1994, value for money pervaded the HE system. The government introduced competition for funds and students into the sector, aiming to promote the efficient use of resources.

13. In the period 1992-1994, given increasing competition, the university community envisaged a quality assurance system which would ensure distinction within and between institutions.

14. In the period 1992-1994, the university community recognised an immediate need to assure the society that the quality of the newly unified HE system would be maintained or enhanced.

15. In the period 1992-1994, the Treasury and other actors external to the HE system insisted that there was a need for proper accountability for the substantial public funds invested in the universities.

16. In the period 1992-1994, the government stressed the necessity of rearranging the quality assurance system to be accountable to (in particular) students and employers.

17. In the period 1995-1997, a high quality university was not so much an “excellent” university (of which there can only be a few), but one that clearly stated its own aims and objectives and was able to achieve its goals efficiently and effectively.

18. In the period 1995-1997, rather than absolute standards, quality was conceived of as being measured against relative standards. Different standards could be set for different types of universities.

19. In the period 1995-1997, the HE system appreciated quality standards which were externally determined and universally applied across either institutions or subjects. These helped to distinguish a first from a second class of degree performance and to compare quality of institutions.

20. In the period 1995-1997, attributed to a market-led competitive situation, universities were encouraged to emphasise different quality elements. It could imply high fitness-for-purpose for one element, and low fitness in relation to another purpose.

21. In the period 1995-1997, there was consensus among the representatives of the institutions and funding councils that one of the purposes of quality assurance should be to facilitate quality improvement through the sharing of good practice and innovation.

22. In the period 1995-1997, improvement was conceived of as a secondary function of the external quality assurance procedures, which would be realised after accountability was achieved.
23. In the period 1995-1997, it was envisaged, particularly by the Treasury, that the quality assurance system would generate comparative information facilitating discrimination between providers in the HE system.

24. In the period 1995-1997, most policy actors in the higher education arena believed that the quality assurance process would support the dissemination of good practices and accessible public information to inform student choice.

25. In the period 1998-2001, quality assurance was to ensure the existence of mechanisms for quality control, rather than to set standards against which examiners measured quality or to specifications which the universities were required to achieve.

26. In the period 1998-2001, the HE system inclined to the view that the university’s reputation represented its quality.

27. In the period 1998-2001, in response to public interest in managerial efficiency and the general expectation of institutional effectiveness, performance indicators were thought appropriate to monitor the higher education system.

28. In the period 1998-2001, the HE system defined quality as passing a threshold determined by an external agency. Standards should be ‘absolute’, in particular be predefined, easily measurable and quantifiable.

29. In the period 1998-2001, the QAA envisaged a quality assurance system which would promote public confidence, at home and overseas, in higher education and in the standards of awards.

30. In the period 1998-2001, by publishing information about performance, the HE system believed that quality assurance would contribute to transparency of the objectives of programmes and universities, and as a result enhance quality.

31. In the period 1998-2001, the quality assurance system was envisaged serving the functions of defining professional standards and of external control over self-regulation in university teaching.

32. In the period 1998-2001, the HE system appreciated the value of the quality assurance system in generating necessary information for the funding council to allocate public resources.

33. In the period 2002-2005, high quality provision was perceived by the HE system as being constantly free of defects. Instead of relying on final inspection to identify zero defects, reliability and prevention were key in the quality process, to claiming quality and to ensure no faults.

34. In the period 2002-2005, standards were conceived of as the results of on-going negotiations in the light of changing circumstances. Actors internal to the HE system and to the institution had a substantial role in determining quality standards.
35. In the period 2002-2005, the universities thought it important to meet customer requirements. Institutional missions and objectives would have to relate to the niche in the HE market, which the university carves out based on constant negotiation between different stakeholders.

36. In the period 2002-2005, quality was conceived of as meeting benchmarks or threshold standards with to be applied consistently across subjects and institutions.

37. In the period 2002-2005, the HE system agreed upon an audit-based system of quality assurance mainly because of the diversity of universities and institutional cultures.

38. In the period 2002-2005, the quality assurance system aimed at stimulating enhancement in teaching quality which would be realised after accountability to external stakeholders was achieved.

39. In the period 2002-2005, accountability to both external and internal stakeholders was the predominant purpose of conducting an audit-based quality assurance.

40. In the period 2002-2005, quality assurance primarily functioned to provide information which external stakeholders demanded.

Annex B: Layout for Q sort cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Disagree</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

293
**APPENDIX E: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ted Tapper</td>
<td>25th August 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Brown</td>
<td>25th August 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoffrey Alderman</td>
<td>6th September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Shattock</td>
<td>30th September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Brennan</td>
<td>6th October 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Williams</td>
<td>12th October 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin Middlehurst</td>
<td>31st October 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Frederiks</td>
<td>2nd November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obe de Vries</td>
<td>4th November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlies Leegwater</td>
<td>8th November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roel In ’t Veld</td>
<td>3rd November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijk van der Wende</td>
<td>4th November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ton Vroijenstijn</td>
<td>7th November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frans de Zwaan</td>
<td>2nd November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn Campbell</td>
<td>1st December 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Harvey</td>
<td>7th December 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>