

Student evaluations of teaching as an organizational change tool

A case study at the University of Oslo

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Master of Philosophy in Higher Education
Department of Education, Faculty of
Educational Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

The study of Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET, *hereafter*) as a tool for change in Higher Education organizations is a topic that is overlooked. For this reason the investigation presented in this thesis attempts to add to the existing literature on SET particularly from an organizational change angle, in the midst of development of study programmes. This thesis focuses on the perceptions of key stakeholders who are mostly involved with study programme development, in the Norwegian context, and especially engaged with SET conditions. This investigation explores how key organization's stakeholders perceive the relevance of SET as a tool for change, through analyzing their interpretations in light of organizational functioning models as presented by Birnbaum (1988). It also examines the ways in which SET is embedded in the organizations' Quality Assurance system, thus shedding light to describe how SET is conceived in this case.

The findings indicate that the perception from key stakeholders about SET is that it is viewed as a tool that allows monitoring of the level of quality. It is also perceived that SET is a regulated mechanism set forth by the organization's quality assessment system.

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Abbreviations

SET: Student Evaluation of Teaching

HE: Higher Education

QA: Quality Assurance

SOP: Standards of Operating Procedures

UiO: University of Oslo

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1 Introduction

Student evaluation of teaching is a tool that is used by a majority of higher education (HE *hereafter*) organization (Spooren, Brockx, & Mortelmans, 2013). Most HE organizations are using these evaluations to improve the quality of teaching (Hanken, 2011), via the use of questionnaires (Kember, Leung, & Kwan, 2002). In the Nordic countries mainly, students' participation has a strong influence over the control of HE organizations (Froestad & Bakken, 2004). Given that the study of student evaluation of teaching is mostly conducted on the basis of its use, validity and effectiveness this thesis plans to examine the perceptions from stakeholders (academic leader and administrative staff) about student participation and the improvement of study programmes at the University of Oslo in Norway.

1.1 Rationale

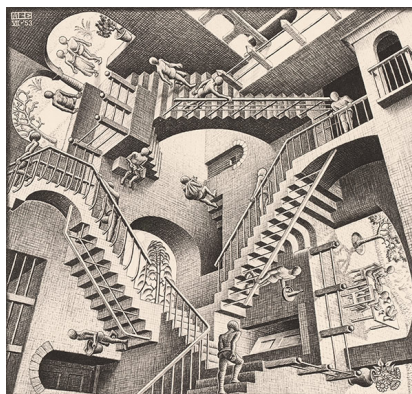
The study of student evaluations of teaching, commonly known as SET (*hereafter*), is a topic that has room to be further studied within the Norwegian context. To approach SET, as a tool for organizational change, is an examination that has not been studied locally nor within in the Higher Education discipline. To achieve this task this thesis uses three particular organizational change (Kezar, 2001) angles in combination with four models of organizational functioning (Birnbaum, 1988). Among models of organizational change, the most noticeable ones are collegial, bureaucratic, political or anarchical. In order to examine SET as an organizational tool for change, the angles used in this thesis are structure, procedures and attitude so as to understand the conditions of change.

Through a qualitative approach this thesis examines the University of Oslo, a single-case organization where SET is the method used more so around the development of study programmes. In order to further contribute to the literature of SET, this thesis examines change in study programmes and the impact that SET has on this developmental process. This thesis takes a unusual theoretical view on SET, one that has not been studied before but that can shed much light about the mechanisms in which change, or development of study programmes, takes place within the University of Oslo.

1.2 Universities as Organizations

In this research using the term *organization* offers a comprehensive description of both the steering and governance mechanisms (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000) of universities, as well as its sociological distinctions (Gumport, 2000) between other public organizations. To include institutional characteristics (Gumport, 2000) that portray universities and colleges, as well as organizational change models (Kezar, 2001), for describing Higher Education organizations, seems to give an unbiased perspective much needed for this type of investigation. Thus to describe universities “in terms of its purposes, and functions or its organizational characteristics” (Olsen, 2015, p. 4) seems reasonable. Furthermore the term *organization*, is more comprehensive as it includes aspects of identity, nature, tradition and history, that comprise what universities *are* and *do* (Maassen & Stensaker, 2011). In other words “its own organizational culture” (Brunson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000, p. 726). Under the organizational arena it becomes almost necessary to borrow management terminology “because many of our ideas about organizations and management come from studies of business firms” (Birnbaum, 1998, p. 2). Therefore, to understand the internal organizational functions of the university, the use of reference frameworks or models to explain any phenomena within them (Birnbaum, 1988) is much needed. Just as Olsen (2015) suggests this thesis examines both quality *purposes* and organizational *functions* of the University of Oslo, in order to examine SET as a tool for change in three study programmes.

1.3 Quality Assurance in Higher Education Organizations



(Figure 1. All M.C. Escher works © 2016 The M.C. Escher Company - the Netherlands. All rights reserved. Used by permission. www.mcescher.com)

The lithograph Figure 1., entitled *Relativity* by Escher (1953) can be very useful to explain why it is important to explore quality, especially for this research. Focusing on the image presented above, quality depicts an arena in which normal laws or logical laws (gravity in the case of the image) are not applicable. The key juxtaposition of the lithograph is the perspective itself, and one feels compelled to understand and interpret it through means of normal laws or logic (McDaniel, n.d.). Using a single focal point to attempt to understand it is not the only viewpoint that can lead to resolve its overall logic. There are other viewpoints that seem just as viable.

Quality is also a difficult term to explain as a whole. Its *relativeness* lies on the perspective one takes towards the issue of quality in higher education. It is here argued that the perspective on quality has the same illusion to the eye, as the lithograph above. There are a number of focal points to concentrate on when examining quality, yet there is not a single point that indicates it is the correct one or even the incorrect one. It is therefore imperative to find a starting point about QA for this thesis. To do so this dissertation concentrates on the *purpose* for achieving quality, which is an important aspect that the new era of higher education (Harvey & Knight, 1996) ought to diagnose.

1.3.1 Preferences of stakeholders interpreting Quality

As points of departure Harvey and Green (1993), conclude that quality is relative as it can be interpreted differently by the stakeholders within the organization. The authors then suggest moving away from attempting a better definition of quality, and rather explore the various layers that make-up the concept. The authors identified five different ways stakeholders may choose to use to interpret quality. The authors illustrate that “quality can be viewed as *exceptional*, as *perfection* (or consistency), as *fitness for purpose*, as *value for money*, and as *transformation*” (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 11).

The first way of viewing quality of higher education organizations is *exceptional*, means that organizations are placed in a distinctive and inaccessible group. For an organization to become a member of this club or cluster, it requires a set of very high standards to be fulfilled for both remaining a member, and becoming one (Harvey & Green, 1993). The second view of quality is *perfection*. These higher education organizations show a strong focus in making

certain that errors don't occur. Thus the organization is consistently in a preventive state of mind where all members of the organization are responsible for ensuring quality. This results in a constant engagement of quality, which creates a strong quality culture (Harvey & Green, 1993). The third view of quality is *fitness for purpose*. These higher education organizations define quality through their mission and vision, as well as from the influences derived from the market. In this setting the notion of customer satisfaction becomes a key indicator of fitness for purpose. The stakeholders such as students, teachers, administrators, government and society are all part of this so-called: customer group (Harvey & Green, 1993). The fourth view of quality is *value for money*. These higher education organizations focus on performance factors such as efficiency and effectiveness, which become essential as they leave room for a competitive arena amongst higher education organizations. In this situation performance indicators are used to oversee how efficient the organizations are (Harvey & Green, 1993). The final view of quality is *transformation*. These higher education organizations focus on the fundamentals of change. As explained by Harvey and Green (1993) the meaning of transformation is cognitive wholeness. It is the collective transformation where the stakeholders (students, teachers, administrators, government and society) are participants in the educational process. In order to foster involvement the participants must be enhanced and empowered. The enhancement is measured by the knowledge, abilities and skills of the educational experience, whereas empowerment exercised by the use of appraisal assessment tools given to stakeholders for influencing their own is transformation (Harvey & Green, 1993).

For this thesis the suggestions from Harvey and Green (1993) take into account the different perspectives of QA and it is highly regarded, because stakeholders may have very different views on the purposes of quality, an unclear understanding, or even a hybrid definition. What seems to be a common agreement lies on the significance of quality, and it remains as an important aspect in the higher education arena to stakeholders (Harvey & Green, 1993). As this dissertation investigates the perceptions of key stakeholders (academic leaders and administration staff) who are involved with study programme development, their preferred interpretations of quality as well as the use of SET, are unquestionably valid. It is argued in this thesis that SET is a tool for organizational change, therefore to examine the organizational functions of a particular single-case may serve a way to prove and explain this tool for change. A good starting point is to understand what type of changes or

developments are taking place in study programmes so as to examine the conditions in which SET as tool for change is impacting development.

1.4 Study Programme Development

Development in study programmes may derive from various forces or occurrences. Some forces may be external and/or internal. Whether the happenings are external or internal, what matters in this dissertation is the impact on the way the members of an organization interact with the changes. In other words how it “affects the management” (Musselin, 2006, p. 69), because it also impacts the way the members of an organization feel about their own jobs and their own disciplines. In the examination of how development of study programmes is perceived it is necessary to highlight the conditions in which change takes place. To do so, it requires examining change as if it were comprised of different features that make up change.

1.5 SET as a tool for change

SET as a tool on its own is considered important because in HE the students are -without question- active stakeholders; they are the ones who *experience* the quality of teaching and that of the courses directly (Spooren et al. 2013). Besides the students, academic and administrative staffs are undoubtedly active stakeholders. The organization decides the use, the purpose and the management of SET data, however as is explained in chapter two, it seems that there is a general agreement on the relationship between SET and QA. The data drawn from SET, when used suitably, can *lead directly to the development* of a study programme (Yao & Grady, 2006). Furthermore SET data can be very helpful in producing information as to what the students consider to be *meaningful* throughout (Menon, Terkla, & Gibbs, 2014) their educational journey. As a result some tensions between students, academics and administrative staff may result from SET (Palermo, 2013).

1.6 Research Questions

The focus of this study is to examine whether SET can be considered a tool for change towards the development of three study programmes in the University of Oslo.

Simultaneously, this thesis explores whether change in study programmes has been impacted by SET in any way. These two main objectives will be studied in light of internal quality-assurance processes. The main question and subquestions are:

Main question:

How do student evaluations of teaching impact the development of study programmes?

Subquestions:

- How can SET, as a tool for change, be conceptualized?
- In what ways is SET embedded in the Quality Assurance System of this organization?
- How do administrative and academics stakeholders perceive the relevance of SET as a tool for change?

1.7 Structure of the thesis

The study is divided in additional chapters. In chapter two, a presentation of the literature review followed by chapter three, which presents the theoretical framework that sets the grounds and provide arguments for this thesis. In chapter four the methodology for this dissertation is described. Chapter five presents the setting in which the case is embedded. Chapter six illustrates the data collected, and Chapter seven presents the analysis drawn. A final chapter with conclusions and recommendations for future research is also presented.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET)

There are a large number of case studies and other research about SET within the HE context. The focus of the literature available tends to investigate SET as a teaching measuring tool, consequently branching out the focus on more specific aspects. The literature seems to focus primarily in one arena, and to some extent on others. The most researched arena is about SET's *effectiveness* and *validity* as a Quality Assurance measuring tool for teaching. Scholars demonstrate through various lenses, how SET can be proved to be both a useless and a useful tool for measuring teaching quality. A second identifiable aspect of research on SET focuses on its methodology, questioning its *utility* nature. A third aspect that seems to be often researched is about the understanding of the *perceptions*, from certain stakeholders, of SET as a quality tool.

2.1.1 SET is not valid nor effective

One particular research that helps setting the grounds for understanding the vast literature on SET condenses a large amount of studies into *validity* categories. One common finding from the literature investigated is that there is a logical consensus over having *good teaching* (Spooren et al., 2013). Not surprisingly, just like the dilemma presented in chapter one about defining quality, so is the inability to define SET because according to Spooren et al. (2013): a) there is no framework or method to define *good teaching*, and b) SET is based on the perceptions of the quality of teaching. The research from Spooren et al. (2013) sustains that SET is understood by most scholars as a very common tool used in HE organizations for quality purposes. Some of the purposes are a) to improve and to monitor the quality of teaching, b) for staff promotion, c) to demonstrate that internal QA or performance management is in place, d) and even for policy-making. However a number of scholars have put into question the effectiveness and validity of SET for such purpose (Spooren et al., 2013). This same study reveals that almost every HE organization uses a standardized or “one size fits all” type of *questionnaire*, which tends to be both poorly designed and

depersonalized, and is used across the organization as a decision-making instrument without being put to test in the first place (Spooren et al., 2013). The concern that Spooren et al. (2013) present in their investigation, is that SET as an instrument, tends not to be customized to specific HE organizations. The authors adds that SET should not only be adapted, but also modified given that the didactic approach has shifted from “teacher-centered to student-centered learning” (Spooren et al., 2013, p. 627). Furthermore, it is argued in their research that *interpretation* of SET data may lead to inappropriate use of SET. Yet the authors argue that there is evidence that those teachers who understand the essence of SET, have a more positive attitude about it (Spooren et al., 2013).

Under these circumstances the belief of SET is that of an instrument used for monitoring and controlling that the QA system is functioning. This study does not go beyond in examining whether SET data has an impact over the QA system or the management of the HE organizations, for instance.

2.1.2 SET is not useful

Other research reveals that the validity of SET is jeopardized as there is very little confidence on the data generated from SET, given that in some HE organizations stakeholders are in the pursuit of getting the right SET results rather than focusing on improving teaching (Palmer, 2012). In his research Palmer (2012) takes a step forward into discussing the use given to SET, concluding that if SET is *used* as a source for rewarding and/or punishing then is it very plausible that some stakeholders focus on SET’s results even more so, than on improving the quality of teaching. In this scenario giving a higher regard to the final result a teacher would attain in a course, would change the utility of SET from a developing teaching tool towards a goal in itself (Palmer, 2012).

Another study reveals that in a decentralized organization, where departments are responsible for analyzing SET data and thus improving the quality of teaching, there is a missing motivational reward for educators to improve their teaching (Kember et al., 2002). It elaborates that in most cases the data drawn for SET is not shared nor discussed amongst educators. Moreover, educators voiced that there is no motivational reward for improving their teaching. Under these circumstances SET is perceived as not being used properly as it intends. Kember et al. (2002) adds that the *perception* is that SET is not taken seriously, the

authors suggest HE organizations to examine whether their SET mechanisms do actually improve teaching.

Under these circumstances, the use of SET is examined as an appraisal tool for the development of teachers/academics, limiting the use of SET as a tool that could potentially change aspects of the HE organization.

2.1.3 SET is negatively perceived

Another study shows that SET is used as the sole tool for measuring teaching quality ignoring other factors that take place inside the classroom, that do serve as indicators of good quality teaching (Pounder, 2007). The author refers to it as “classroom dynamics” (Pounder, 2007, p. 186), thus recommends to have a more equitable way for assessing teaching quality. Rather than simply using SET as the only tool, there are other salient variables: maturity, class size, teacher related factors (likeliness, gender, and age), and course-content (discipline and difficulty level), which are variables that may alter final SET scores (Pounder, 2007). The *utility* of SET according to Pounder (2007) is not effective, as the nature of it does not include the variables aforementioned, which affect the evaluation of teaching. Questioning the utility of SET also includes putting to test how the data that results from it is being formalized within the HE organization (Pounder, 2007).

In a local, Norwegian study that is, SET is viewed by its stakeholders as a mandatory procedure where the students voices are to be heard, and is *perceived* as a symbolic function within the quality system (Hanken, 2011). In some disciplinary areas, such as music study programme, to provide feedback is an ordeal for the students given the personable programme structure, because relationship between student and teacher is very familiar (Hanken, 2011), thus creating a complicated emotional setting for the student. Hanken (2011) offers an interesting final thought about how feedback is properly presented so as to avoid any clashes between teachers and students. The author concludes that adequate handling of SET is a factor to be included when analyzing SET data within HE organizations.

Under these circumstances, the belief of SET is that of a tool that does not offer a comprehensive examination of the quality of teaching. It also implies that QA system is not inclusive of the more personable relationships that are created within the classroom environment which seem to be of importance when assessing quality.

2.1.4 A proposed solution

Overall, it is possible to assert that the research on SET, as presented so far in this chapter observes SET under a teaching quality lens, and the many implications that derive from it. One study attempts to address the *perceptions* about validity, utility, and purpose of SET when it is adopted in a summative way (Surgenor, 2013). This particular study discusses the perspective of the academics towards SET, focusing on four obstacles that hinder SET (Surgenor, 2013). The author describes that one obstacle derives from the traditions of autonomy and new accountability systems that came in place after the Bologna Process. Surgenor (2013) argues that the second obstacle is the notion that a new HE system involves new rules and regulations leading to confused ideologies. The third obstacle, according to Surgenor (2013) is the required definition of *good* teaching, which derives from SET data. The fourth obstacle that hinders SET is about the actual consequences of its records onto the teachers/academics/scientists who do the teaching (Surgenor, 2013). As a result, the author highlights that SET data should be centralized, so that its analysis is objective, thus providing a better verification of teaching quality. A second suggestion from Surgenor (2013) is that the process of SET's utility should be explained to the academics, and even partly designed by them. Lastly, Surgenor (2013) suggests that an expansion of the role of SET is much needed. The author adds that it is key to redefine the method/process of SET by documenting it and by being *transparent* with the data collected from it, so as to openly share and evidence the "reflection on suggested changes, reasons for implementing (or not implementing) such changes" (Surgenor, 2013, p. 374).

2.1.5 SET is useful

Generally most scholars define SET as a tool for measuring teaching quality. In the search for literature or studies, written in English, findings on research concerning SET as a tool for change in study programmes or SET as an instrument used for development per se, remain unaccounted for. The closest the literature has come to investigate SET, towards the development of curriculum, took place at a private Business School (Mc Cuddy et al. McCuddy, Pinar, & Gingerich, 2008). In this research students are considered *customers*, and teaching is a *service*, thus an evaluation of the service received, in other words the quality of such service is highly regarded and acted upon, as it would be in any other service business.

For this HE organization SET is seen as an integral part of the development of curricula because it reveals how close or far are the institutional goals with those of the students whose primarily goal is to enter the workforce. It is not about the individual desires of students, but about their opinions on how courses would meet the needs of the prospective employers (McCuddy et al., 2008, p. 614). The author adds that by merely collecting data, and not responding to it enhances “credibility of the change process” (McCuddy et al., 2008, p. 632). The author has a final argument that SET is viewed as a source of input towards study programme development.

Under these circumstances, SET is perceived as useful when the HE organization aims to use the data from SET to adjust the organization towards the goals set forth whilst ignoring other aspects of HE organizations such as the development of study programmes.

In general the literature reviewed focuses on three examinations given to SET. One that SET is negatively viewed, second that SET is barely positively perceived, and third that there is room for improvement in the utility and interpretation of SET. In Table 1, some of the salient aspects gained from the literature reviewed are presented to summarize the research examined.

Negative views on SET	Positive views on SET	Proposed Solutions
Poor designed questionnaires	Alignment with organizational goals	Accept change
Punishment/Reward system		Transparent rules
Ignores classroom dynamics		Revise SET methodologies
Not personable		Compliment SET raw data with reflections/explanations about change

(Table. 1. SET indicators from Literature)

2.2 Study programme Development

The literature on this topic seems to be defined as the concept of academic development, most likely because the readings for this thesis included the combination of SET and development. Thus, the literature reviewed does favor the positive relationship between evaluations and development. An interesting research about academic development focuses the attention on the stakeholders, as academic developers, and the way they engage with development. It observes that academic developers, are essentially academics, and that higher

education is, as such, a discipline of its own (Bath & Smith, 2007). Under this lens both authors argue for certain indicators that shed light on development within the HE discipline. According to Bath and Smith (2007), academic developers are constantly engaged in

Improvement, support and development of teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum, investigation and research into higher education, and informed debate and promotion of the scholarship of teaching and learning of higher education into goals and practices” (Bath & Smith, 2007, p. 14).

The authors summarize this list into three major categories: research (investigation), teaching: (assessment), and service (HE goals and practices) (Bath & Smith, 2007).

2.2.1 A local research

A current study on QA of HE in Norway reveals that stakeholders in this case academic developers, have an interesting perspective on SET as a tool for change, that is of great value for this study. From the preliminary data collected in the study “En analyse av ledere av studieprogrammer i høyere utdanning” by Aamodt et al. (2016), it is found that academic leaders consider that two main factors for change and development of study programmes derives from student evaluations and from development of the subject or discipline, as follows:

Når vi spør studieprogramleiderne om hvilke faktorer som har betydning for endring og utvikling av programmet, er det tilbakemeldinger fra studentene og utviklingen i faget/disiplinen som betyr mest. Signaler fra arbeidsmarkedet, NOKUT og lærestedenes egne kvalitetssystemer betyr mindre. Slik sett synes studieprogramledernes oppmerksomhet å være mer styrt av indre heller enn ytre endringsdrivere (Aamodt et al., 2016, p. 13)

This same research also reveals that in Norway it is found that there is a strong influence from the students in relation to the development of study programmes. Academic developers perceive that students are key driving forces for change in study program, as stated in the report

Et tredje viktig funn i vår studie er den sterke påvirkningen som studentene synes å ha i forhold til utviklingen av studieprogrammene. Studentene oppfattes av studieprogramleiderne å være blant de viktigste drivkreftene for endring i programmene (Aamodt et al., 2016, p. 15)

To conclude, to argue that SET is a tool for change of the development of study programmes in Norway becomes a more full-bodied concept. Thus to examine how changes takes places, and how SET actually works at the University of Oslo particularly, can reveal much about the conditions needed for SET to be a tool for change.

3 Theoretical Framework

As it is explained in this thesis there is still very little literature and/or research available that labels SET as a tool for change. Most research on SET limits on studying how effective, useful, and valid SET is as a QA tool. To observe SET as a tool for change is to take a different angle on a typical phenomenon. Not only because SET, as research shows, is perceived as a QA measuring tool, but also because its impact towards improvement may go beyond the teaching and learning aspects. The probability that SET impacts development within study programmes is not a far-fetched perspective. Therefore this thesis plans to examine how key stakeholders perceives SET, and whether they consider it is in fact a tool for change.

3.1 Organizational change

Given that HE universities and colleges are being characterized in this thesis as organizations, it is possible to turn the page and examine organizational change. It is argued that a theory of change for higher education has not yet been developed, and that researchers are employing theories or models from other disciplines to explain change (Cannon & Lonsdale, 1987). Although there are existing theories about learning and teaching, these seem not to help explain academic development (Cannon & Lonsdale, 1987). This explains why the definition of change depends on the model being used (Kezar, 2001). However there are some characteristics as Kezar (2001) points out, that are shared amongst these theories and models. The author draws a map of how theories and models of organizational change can be examined parting from a) the forces that drive change, to b) the aspects that essentially change, to c) explaining the manner in which change place, culminating with d) the outcomes that result from change (Kezar, 2001). One of the starting points, used in this thesis, is to examine what *the aspects* that essentially change, within the three different disciplines at the University of Oslo

3.1.1 Focus of change

The pieces or fragments that make up change and which are used in this thesis are:

1. The work itself, the policies, the regulations, the organizational structure; all these are understood as the *structure* (Kezar, 2001) of the organization.
2. The interaction between the members of the organization and the structure, is understood as the *process* (Kezar, 2001) that can be evidenced within the organization.
3. The way its members feel and value both their work and profession (Maassen, 1996) is known as the *attitude* or *culture* (Kezar, 2001).

The advantage of breaking down the impact of change into these pieces, allows this thesis to examine where is SET impacting change. To illustrate Kezar (2001) exemplifies that the introduction of technology in the classroom can be a “structural, process, and attitude issue” (Kezar, 2001, p. 19). However, depending on the conditions in which the introduction of technology occurs, it is possible that it affects more the members’ beliefs of their own work (attitude/culture), rather than the new course design, which is structural. More interestingly, using the same example, not all members tend to have the same beliefs of their own work (Clark, 1983). Some members such as academics and administrative staff, are conditioned by their job specifications and their academic discipline (Clark, 1983). As a result an even more complex phenomena is worth exploring.

3.1.2 Drivers for change in Study Programmes

In this section some general conceptions about drivers of change that lead to development in study programmes are explored. The importance of these examples is that it helps building the argument on different tools for change that exists within a higher education organization.

Academic change through academics

At the departmental level study programmes are seen to be operating with tendencies that lean towards research and knowledge (Clark, 1983). As Clark (1983) explains, once

researchers or scientists begin to deepen their knowledge through research, it becomes evident to them that what seemed to be true at first, is in fact out dated. Thus academic change can potentially take place as these same scientists/researchers, who are teachers in some cases, transmit their new knowledge to the students

Academic change through disciplines

Another phenomenon of change at the department level is connected within the disciplines across organizations. The organization creates its own pathways with both academics in the same discipline across organizations, or with members of the same discipline outside the higher education organizations. In this sense academic change is linked with the various modifications in norms and designs from a discipline standpoint (Clark, 1983).

Academic change through academics in administration

At the departmental level study other directions of change may influence programmes, not necessarily research. For instance, some of those academics who are sitting in administrative roles would tend to listen to two different harmonies of change. Academic change is thereby driven from what Clark (1983) describes as the level of permeability in which the organization distributes power. Since administration is sitting in the middle of the organization, they tend to play an arbitrator role between the bottom and top forces of the organization (Clark, 1983). Thus the power exerted in the academic administration reflects the system in which the organization lies (Clark, 1983).

Academic change through students

It can be argued that student engagement is reinforced through full participation in academic change (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011), and that doing so learning is facilitated, potential bonds between teachers and students are created, and student responsibility is enhanced (Bovill et al., 2011). An opposing view as Bovill et al. (2011) illustrate from the literature is that participation is limited to a few number of students, for example student representatives. Second, that students have diverse interpretations of best learning practices, and third that there is still a norm of dominating power from teacher in the classroom. Combining some of the words of Clark (1983), the power drawn from students could reflect “the nature of learning and teaching strategies” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 142) of the academics and this may ignite the desire to change the strategies of teaching and learning.

3.2 Organizational Functioning Models

It is worth remembering that the focus of this study is the investigation of SET as a *tool for change* most particularly as a mechanism used by academics and administrative staff towards study programme development. Yet, to examine *change*, on its own, is rather complex (Kezar, 2001). According to Kezar (2001), change has been commonly observed by single lenses. This means that researchers have examined the phenomena of change using a single theoretical framework. Kezar (2001) recommends future researchers in the organizational change field that to study change using combined or multiple models is a good approach. This thesis examines change by using as a framework the four models of organizational functioning presented by Birnbaum (1988) in his book: “How Colleges Work”. The four major models are: collegial, bureaucratic, political, and anarchical. As Birnbaum (1988) explains, each model provides a

Specific cognitive frame... [and] it allows the salient aspects of that frame to be placed in uncluttered and bold relief, and... [it also] shows the essential limitations faced by any... researcher who takes a single frame to understand higher education... [Besides] no frame by itself provides a truly complete sense of how any campus really works (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 84)

Using four lenses, four models, or four perspectives, seems to be aligned with what other scholars have written as illustrated in Table 2. It appears ironic but to some degree thinking from “inside the box” is not necessarily negative. Most particularly when the observations from within the box are from four different angles or perspectives.

Some authors agree with this quadrangular perspective because in their search for explaining steering mechanisms (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000), visions of the organization (Olsen, 2015), and autonomy (Fumasoli, Gornitzka, & Maassen, 2014), amongst other functions of the organization they too have used four distinct dimensions.

For example Olsen (2015) describes that there are four theory-based concepts of how the university is viewed. In regards to how universities are steered, Gornitzka and Maassen (2000), define four different steering models. Another example is drawn from the work of Fumasoli et al. (2014), where the authors describe four drivers for university autonomy. In order to provide a clearer picture it is argued that these authors defend their interpretation of

other functions of HE organizations with similar characteristics from more generic framework as is the one from Birnbaum (1988).

COLLEGIAL MODEL (Birnbaum, 1988)			POLITICAL MODEL (Birnbaum, 1988)		
Organizations' method: Consensus and Social Interaction			Organization's method: Negotiations and /or Bargaining from Power and Influence		
<i>Specialized Functions</i>	<i>Organizational Function Focus</i>	<i>Method Used</i>	<i>Specialized Functions</i>	<i>Organizational Function Focus</i>	<i>Method Used</i>
(Olsen, 2015)	Visions of the university	Internal dynamics & Institutional identity	(Olsen, 2015)	Visions of the university	Bargaining & conflict resolution
(Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000)	Steering model	Historical processes & evolution	(Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000)	Steering model	Changes in power, interests and alliances
(Fumasoli et al., 2014)	University autonomy	Adaptation	(Fumasoli et al., 2014)	University autonomy	Bargaining
Organizational Functions And Organizational Functioning Models					
BUREAUCRATIC MODEL (Birnbaum, 1988)			ANARCHICAL MODEL (Birnbaum, 1988)		
Organization's method: Rules & regulations Policies and Coalitions			Organization's Method: The garbage can model		
<i>Specialized Functions</i>	<i>Organizational Function Focus</i>	<i>Method Used</i>	<i>Specialized Functions</i>	<i>Organizational Function Focus</i>	<i>Method Used</i>
(Olsen, 2015)	Visions of the university	Leadership	(Olsen, 2015)	Visions of the university	Adaptation of circumstances
(Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000)	Steering model	Political leadership Coalitions	(Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000)	Steering model	Stability due to changes in environment
(Fumasoli et al., 2014)	University autonomy	Centralization delegation	(Fumasoli et al., 2014)	University autonomy	Strategic adjustment to changes

(Table 2. Examples of other research on organizational functions of HE organizations)

Under this appreciation, it is then suitable to proceed in a similar manner to explain yet another organizational functioning phenomena. As suggested by Maassen and Stensaker (2011) to concentrate on “the mechanisms through which change occurs” (Maassen &

Stensaker, 2011, p. 767) can better help explain what is really taking place in a university in consideration to the many drivers and theoretical frameworks that ignite change. Thus to explore change in light of four the organizational functioning model is aligned with other research frameworks. Last but not least Clark (1983) explains that some characteristic of “bureaucratic, oligarchic, political and market forms” (Clark, 1983, p. 200) are evident in fostering and/or hindering change, thus enhancing the use of the models as described by Birnbaum (1988).

3.2.1 Four Models of Organizational functioning

It is the goal of this thesis to observe whether SET as a tool for change, has an impact or not on study programme development. To understand the dynamics of the phenomena of change at the organizational level, it is useful to use a model as “an abstraction of reality... a conceptual lens that focuses... on some particular organizational dimensions” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 83). In his book, Birnbaum (1988) illustrates each organizational functioning model (collegial, bureaucratic, political, and anarchical), through the use of fictitious HE organizations and stakeholders. The author places special attention to “governance, organization, and leadership” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 84) points of view.

The theoretical framework that derives from the models as presented by Birnbaum (1988) emphasizes on the three aspects of change (Kezar, 2001) in light of the collegial, bureaucratic, political and anarchical organizational functioning models as shown in Table 3.

COLLEGIAL MODEL		POLITICAL MODEL	
Structure	Shared power	Structure	Representatives
Process	Consensus	Process	Negotiations
Attitude	Community of equals	Attitude	Power & influence
Aspects of change according to the Organization Functioning Models			
BUREAUCRATIC MODEL		ANARCHICAL MODEL	
Structure	Organizational chart	Structure	Unclear technologies
Process	Rules and regulations	Process	Garbage can theory
Attitude	Standardized duties	Attitude	Opportunistic

(Table 3. Organizational functioning models in combination with The focus of change)

The Collegial Model

According to Birnbaum (1988) the collegial organization is one that comprises of a “consensus, [a] shared power, [with] common commitments and aspirations, and leadership that emphasizes consultation and collective responsibilities” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 86). Structurally this organization has no defined assembly. The administration is comprised of members of the faculty who agree to work for a period of time, thus is supportive of the decisions made by the academics (Birnbaum, 1988). Although this organization does not have defined policies or written agreements all members have rooted values and norms under which they operate, holding the structure together. Under these conditions, change in a collegial HE organization can be both thorough and challenging.

It is thorough because the procedures for change require complete details of the reasoning behind any proposed change. There are not hurried decisions or solutions, which implies that the stakeholders must consciously and intentionally reach to a consensus where all members have a say. In this decision process there is no documentation nor negotiation about change because in a collegial state of mind all stakeholders are true to their values and have “shared sentiments” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 90) on matters associated to the organization. As long as the focus is on the well being and the continuation of this strong academic culture within the organization, its stakeholders (academic and administration) remain amiable and supportive of each other (Birnbaum, 1988). The collegial stakeholders rather pay much attention in developing each others’ commitment to the organization (Birnbaum, 1988). This is an “[organization of a] community of scholars...[where change is a] mechanism... found in the internal dynamics of science in general and in specific discipline” (Olsen, 2015, pp. 9-10). A collegial organization functions in a way that would preserve its culture, yet is willing to develop towards a more coherent one (Birnbaum, 1988). The role of administration, who are graduates from the organization, focus on giving support and representing the HE organization’s culture as well as following the lead of the academic staff (Birnbaum, 1988). In terms to change, this organization tends to be good at responding to the changes of students’ interests. Given its perpetual interactive nature, of keeping tight bonds with inner subunits these dialogues become sources of information for key stakeholders (Birnbaum, 1988).

One of the challenges of this type of organization is evident, precisely because to preserve its culture implies to ignore anything that happens in the external environment. Any national,

federal or business related actions or policies do not impact the organization (Birnbaum, 1988). Birnbaum (1988) specifically elaborates that a collegial HE organization undergoes a very slow curriculum change because this type of organization is not much vested in acquiring the latest material to develop curriculum, or course design, thus students consequently are taught with traditional materials instead (Birnbaum, 1988). Therefore the uses of new technologies or any advancement in teaching tools that may be used in other organizations have no effect in the collegial organization.

A second challenge is that the collegial stakeholders have a very long process for deliberating and for decision-making. The fact that there is a general agreement is just one step forward. What happens once deliberations take place is ambiguous. Birnbaum (1988) explains that there are no procedures described, nor written, therefore control and accountability are absent. In a collegial state of mind, decisions tend take place in very informal ways, mostly based in its oral traditions, increasing the chances of “misinterpretation and inaccuracy” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 99).

The Bureaucratic Model

According to Birnbaum (1988) the bureaucratic organization is one that is “designed to accomplish large-scale administrative tasks by systematically coordinating the work of many individuals” (as cited in Birnbaum, 1988, p. 107). Unlike the collegial HE organization that focuses on knowledge and research for greatest worth, a bureaucratic organization focuses on structures and rationality of the organization (Birnbaum, 1988). Therefore, what occurs is that the behavior of the individuals within the bureaucratic organization becomes more standardized, creating an environment where the processes and activities are predictable (Birnbaum, 1988). Under these conditions this type of HE organization has both straightforward and complicated processes of change.

It is straightforward due to the high regard to the *structure* of the organization, which is mainly based on its rules and regulations. Birnbaum (1988) elaborates on the standards of operation or SOP's, as a fair and neutral tool intended to suit all stakeholders within the HE organization, because the procedures are delineated so that anyone and everyone is able to follow. Along with the establishment of rules and regulations, comes the involvement of administration in academic matters. Birnbaum (1988) explains that change in curriculum, for example, is administratively controlled. Although the faculties hold the right to design their

own courses, the administrations involvement in academic matters opens room for the creation of new study programmes because the decision-makers (administrative staff, that is) are permeable to the external changing environment, thus influencing what takes place inside the HE organization (Birnbaum, 1988).

As a result of following so strictly all rules and regulations, the bureaucratic organization tends to rationalize all activities from within. Some complications arise. Firstly, this type of HE organization is a loosely coupled system, in respect to both academia and administration combination. Despite that there are lines of communication present in the organizational chart, it remains plausible that those who are in charge of gathering and communicating data (SET of for example), may filter and/or interpret information (Birnbaum, 1988) very differently. As stated by Birnbaum (1988), it matters *who* is responsible for gathering the data, *how* it is communicated, and *how* it is evaluated. The data can potentially be “filtered out by the expectations and experiences” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 110) of those who are handling it. A consequence is that those stakeholders, who need this information to achieve organizational goals, may not get the full picture of what is happening within the organization (Birnbaum, 1988), thus jeopardizing a core component of this organization. The use strategy and planning is very important for this organization as a tool for change. Its rationality suggests linking “means to ends, resources to objectives and intentions to activities” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 113). Birnbaum (1988) also mentions that some staff members may retain and filter data their own jobs are at risk.

The Political Model

According to Birnbaum (1988) the political organization is “a more complex institution, [where] member groups... tend to be more specialized and heterogeneous, with divergent interests and preferences” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 131). A political HE organization does not have a supreme power like the bureaucratic model instead power is diffused. This distribution of power is attached to the differentiation of interests, and thus the “nature of decision-making processes... [Derives] neither [from] academic nor [from] institutional values” (Musselin, 2006, p. 65). In its place, decision-making is based on political discussions, where the subunits (departments) gain supremacy when they are better funded by their environment (as cited in Musselin, 2006).

Under the previous conditions, the process of change for a HE organization is limited to negotiations and social interaction amongst parties. The existence of political tools, as are negotiations and bargaining, can be effective mechanisms that simplify the change process (Birnbaum, 1988). Birnbaum (1988) explains that political processes do not need to involve active participation of all stakeholders (as the collegial model does), only from its representatives. In addition the representatives, who are the key stakeholders, are also strongly bound to their beliefs creating a sense of stability within the interest group, and throughout the HE organization (Birnbaum, 1988). The fact that political instruments are in place, as well as the potential to influence policy, it allows for subunits to work together (Birnbaum, 1988). To illustrate a political organization may agree on outcomes, for instance the importance of quality or even the significance of having SET. However, the interest groups within the organization do not agree on how quality is to be achieved, or how SET is to be implemented and evaluated.

The unity that derives from a strong belief can be a very positive force in the process of change, due to its strong symbolic roots (Birnbaum, 1988), and the consequent emergence of coalitions within the HE organization. However, the existence of many interest groups acting simultaneously has a wider effect. What results from the activities of various groups is a changing environment that moves very fast, one that not even the interest groups have the possibility to respond to (Birnbaum, 1988). This means that the process of change (development) cannot be controlled because the constant changing environment affects the process. Furthermore, in a political HE organization, the process of change can similarly be challenging to interpret. Since the nature of decision-making is based on compromising, it is very likely that change results unexpectedly and even accidentally from the debates amongst representatives, and not exactly from the initial intentions of each of the groups involved. Birnbaum (1988) explains that what tends to happen is that interest groups ask for much more of what they actually get because they know they will compromise. So the process of change is ambitious in its initiation, and not so radical at the end (Birnbaum, 1988).

The Anarchical Model

According to Birnbaum (1988) the anarchical organization “[is a] system where everyone does what they wish... [This organization] exhibits the characteristics: problematic goals, an unclear technology, and fluid participation” (Birnbaum, 1988, pp. 153-154). Structurally, in this type of organization, there are no marked lines of communication, as is the case of the

bureaucratic model, for describing the process of change. The members of this organization are highly autonomous, with highly specialized knowledge within their respective subunits, and very selective in participation within the organization; thus the sum of these characteristics avoids any clashes between its members (Birnbaum, 1988). For these reasons, the HE organization takes a very rational decision-making approach by categorizing its functions into four pillars. Each pillar represents people (or participants), problems, solutions, and a peculiar decision-making method.

Birnbaum (1988) explains that these organizations tend to categorize and prioritize: existing problems, potential solutions, and people engaged by placing each category in a “can”. This strategic decision-making process is called the “garbage can model” (as cited in Birnbaum, 1988, p. 162). This strategic approach on one hand, allows the organization to make very fast decisions because some problems can be tackled so fast that are almost invisible to the people involved with them. On the other hand, some problems can be “allocated” as solutions to other problems, thus reorganizing difficulties around the organization so that decisions can be made easier (Birnbaum, 1988). However the solutions proposed “are neither optimal nor satisfying because they often are disconnected from the [actual] problems to be solved” (Musselin, 2006, p. 66). Under these circumstances, the process of change for an anarchical HE organization is one that is functional, yet chaotic. Its functionality is partly due to the fact that everyone does as they please, which means that each subunit is potentially receptive to change (Birnbaum, 1988). Furthermore, the lack of control, from a centralized unit (as is the case of the bureaucratic model), allows the participants to be more strategically creative and thus more productive.

The change process in this type of organization does not have a clear mechanism, but it does have a functional end result. The chaotic aspect of this type of organization results from the unclearness of its functions. An anarchical HE organization, as Birnbaum (1988) explains, cannot define clear goals to the outside world, it cannot develop valid outcome measures, and it cannot define administrative activities. Instead, it responds to the environment and the demands of the market on a passive mode; waiting for the right opportunity to better allocate problems and solutions.

3.3 Proposed Assumptions

Assessing the impact of SET as a tool for change, in study programmes in light of the Organizational functioning models

How does these models help explain the impact that SET as a tool for change has in different study programmes? As Olsen (2015) argues to describe organizations can be done in relation to its organizational features, these derive from the four models described in this chapter. The assumptions are categorized into the aforementioned aspects of change and in combination with each organizational functioning model see Table 4. These are assumptions are presented using a similar layout as the one Stensaker and Lieber (2015) use in their article “Assessing the Organizational Impact of External Quality Assurance” (Stensaker & Leiber, 2015), where the authors based their hypotheses on how collegial, bureaucratic, political and anarchical models (Birnbaum, 1988) can be strengthened by external QA mechanisms. In this thesis however, the assumptions drawn are based on how SET as a tool for change may strengthen and weaken the chances for development in study programmes within a collegial, bureaucratic, political or anarchical model of organization functioning.

	Structure		Process		Attitude	
	Strengthen Development	Weaken Development	Strengthen Development	Weaken Development	Strengthen Development	Weaken Development
A Collegial SET	Shared rationality	Non-permeable trait	Democratic processes Consensus	Systematized Web-based communication	Face-to-face interactions Dialogue	Impersonal communication Distrust
A Bureaucratic SET	Rules and regulations	Strict rules regulations	A clear SOP of SET	SET is poorly interpreted	Acceptable predictability	Punishment Rewards
A Political SET	Influential representation	Workforce Influences	Coalition of ideas	Incongruent sources	Similar ideologies	External coalitions
An Anarchical SET	SET data overload	Definition of development	Trial and error	Waiting for opportunities	Satisfying activities	Excess of autonomy

(Table 4. Assumptions of the models of organizational functioning for the University of Oslo)

Collegial - Structure

A fully collegial organization in present time is one that would have to be characterized with basic functions typically used in very small organizations (Birnbaum, 1988). Structurally these are organizations that have no written documents about their management. Neither do they have interpretative rules for understanding their nature. They don't have organizational

charts that delineate power, supremacy, or channels of communication. Therefore it could be assumed that the academics (scientists) and the administration are the structure, it resides in their know-how and their historical/cultural roots.

SET is assumed to strengthen development if it is used as a tool that promotes the scientists' knowledge, as well as that of the students. For instance if the students demand high-order thinking tasks that would truly challenge what they have learned from their teachers. In this case both academics and students would evolve cognitively, and potentially change aspects of a course or a study programme. As presented by Pounder (2007) to focus on the *discipline* and its *difficulty level* are variables that alter SET data. On the other hand, to weaken the development of study programmes is to preserve the non-permeability, a characteristic of the collegial stakeholders. As a result collegial stakeholders are unwilling to neither change nor explore new ways of "knowing-how". As mentioned by Clark (1983) the oligarchic system of a collegial organization "tend to become heavily resistant to change as guild like groups" (Clark, 1983, p. 202).

Collegial - Process

While dialogue is the communication tool used to interact with the structure amongst, students evaluations are imagined to be positively perceived as simply *nice gestures* (Birnbaum, 1988), because ultimately the knowledge is within the academics. SET is then expected to be in the form of a dialogue between students and teacher.

SET may strengthen development of study programmes if the evaluations included a deep rational analysis of past actions/historical lessons about teaching theories, research work, or other studies done within the organization to illustrate the need for change. The collegial organization is after all one bounded by its traditions, however its democratic characteristic allows for participation of its members (Birnbaum, 1988). A rational dialogue may avoid misinterpretation and inaccuracy (Birnbaum, 1988). On the other hand SET could weaken development, if the communication changes from a cordial dialogue to a systematized one, via web-based or questionnaire/survey methods. Loosing the sense of collegiality into a more bureaucratized one.

Collegial – Attitude

A collegial organization has tight bonds between students and teachers, that could even be described as friendship (Birnbaum, 1988). Both academics and students might perceive SET to be an evaluation of that friendship. To strengthen the development of study programmes

the collegial culture of face-to-face interactions and constant dialogue would need to endure. Even keeping this dialogues on matters of facilitating learning. However, the evaluation of teaching may create an environment of distrust and uncertainty amongst teachers. It impacts the way the collegial teacher appreciates and values their work (Maassen, 1996), thus potentially weakening the desire to develop study programmes. As demonstrated by Hanken (2011) some disciplines cannot practice SET due to the close relationship between academics and students, creating an emotional setting for both parties.

Bureaucratic – Structure

A fully bureaucratic organization is one that is easier to predict. The nature of this organization is precisely based on the foundations of having rules and regulations in order to foresee the way the organization functions. It is then possible to assume that very detailed rules and regulations about the use of SET for the organization and its subunits are present. Since accountability is another characteristics of bureaucratic organizations, there should also be some information about failing to use SET.

SET may strengthen study programme development when the use of SET is clearly described through a standard of operating procedure for each subunit, and/or for the entire organization to follow. This regulation must be very detailed, so that anyone who has never managed or dealt with SET understands its structure and purpose, thus to proceed without any challenges. Yet SET may weaken development if the rules and regulations are very strict (Clark, 1983) about use of SET towards study programme development. In this sense it may be possible that the structure does not allow for SET to do more than it potentially could.

Bureaucratic – Process

In this type of organization academics and administration have two very distinct roles within the organization's rules. Thus to assume that the organization has regulations in place that describe how stakeholders within the organization' subunits are expected to interact with SET is not farfetched. An SOP on SET towards development could contain specifics on: who (academics, administration, students, external agents) should manage SET, what should SET consist of, how SET is communicated, and how SET is evaluated towards development, where a SET report is communicated handle the data that results from SET (Birnbbaum, 1988). Having all of the above SET may strengthen development in a bureaucratic organization. However, it is possible to weaken development precisely because it matters

who is in charge of handling SET. As pointed by Birnbaum (1988) it matters who interprets and evaluates this data because the data may be filtered out for two reasons: 1) as a result bad experiences, and 2) out of fear of being held accountable.

Bureaucratic – Attitude

In a pure bureaucratic organization all members are expected to be “on-board” with the decisions from the leadership. They are also expected to comply with the job descriptions designed for each member, which creates an acceptable and predictable behavior preventing duplication of roles (Birnbaum, 1988). However SET may weaken the culture if its use does not include an accountability aspect for failing to comply with the job description. In a bureaucratic organization rewards and punishments are expected, as demonstrated in the research conducted by Palmer (2012). Furthermore academics may feel scrutinized through SET as Kember et al. (2002) argue, thus feeling no motivational desire to improve or develop.

Political – Structure

Given the diverse interests from the stakeholders of this type of organization certain tasks are consequently steered by members who are most likely to be interested in a fixed topic. In the case of SET those who could possibly be highly interested could include students, aside from academic and administrative staff. Thus a Student Union could be the interest group handling these evaluations. As pointed before political organizations do not have rules and regulations as the bureaucratic organization does. However power and influence are both functions that regulate the organization.

SET is assumed to strengthen development when an interest group who has a strong influence within the organization has its control and power. For example a research group (could be internal or external) comprised by academics/scientists interested in implementing their own research work into a study programme (Clark, 1983), may strengthen development. However if SET is managed by a Student Union, although it shows active participation a characteristic of the political organization (Birnbaum, 1988), its members are not expected to possess the same power and influence as the academics and scientists. As McCuddy et al. (2008) argue students’ desires are to enter the workforce, thus their individual wishes could potential blur their opinions on how courses would meet the needs of the prospective employers.

Political – Process

What the individuals believe is important activates them to support or ignore a cause. In this sense students could see SET as a very critical evaluation, whereas for the academics it may not be as significant. Maybe academics are rather invested in producing more publications to attract funding, which is a characteristic of the political organization. Likewise the administration could potentially be more inclined to make changes around study programmes based on budget conditions, rather than on SET data.

SET could then strengthen study programme development within the political organization, if this data from SET gains momentum. It requires for interest groups (i.e. student union or advisory boards or council) to share the same interpretation through a coalition of ideas, a typical consequence in a political organization (Birnbaum, 1988), and work together developing the study programme. However, since all interest groups may gather data from different sources (Birnbaum, 1988), SET data may be collected in various ways, leading to various interpretations, thus altering both meaning and perception. If data is incongruent it may be possible that changes to course and study programmes may become highly debatable.

Political – Attitude

It is possible to assume that this type of organization has some tensions amongst different stakeholders, and between interest groups. Stakeholders are motivated by persuasive decision-making, given the nature of the negotiation arena. It is difficult to predict what stakeholders feel about SET because their representatives are not perpetual, like in a collegial organization.

SET could strengthen development if academic leaders share the same type of ideologies. As pointed out by Birnbaum (1988) academics are ideological and their ideologies only differ between disciplines and departments. On the other hand similar ideologies can develop coalitions with other stakeholders from different organizations because political organizations are highly dependent on research grants to survive (Birnbaum, 1988). Thus creating competing arguments for the development of study programmes.

Anarchical – Structure

In a purely anarchical organization there are “problematic goals and unclear technologies” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 155). Structures are created after the implementation of new study programmes or technologies (Birnbaum, 1988), and much of what consist to be its structure, is based on the organization preferences of seeing what it has done in the past.

SET as a tool for change could potentially strengthen development of study programmes if SET data is presented and proposed constantly, thus forcing academic developers to make decisions either by flight or by sight (Birnbaum, 1988). This means ensuring that participation levels of SET are high so that decisions on development are forced to occur. SET as tool for change may weaken development of study programmes if the organization does not agree on what development means. As illustrated by Birnbaum (1988) anarchical organizations have problematic goals for example if a “bulletin states that its goal is to prepare students who are liberally educated... the college finds itself unable to define this goal more clearly or asses the extent to which it is being achieved” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 155). In this sense the SET has no real utility.

Anarchical – Process

In a purely anarchical organization there is no clear explanation as to why teaching and learning works, it simply does (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 155). Its stakeholders have a common understanding of autonomy, thus teaching and learning is not dependent of the actions of the academics entirely. If that is the case, the students are assumed to be academically productive whilst having very little lecturing. It is further argued by Birnbaum (1988) that there is a trial and error approach to change.

SET may strengthen development in study programmes if SET data recognizes that the input from students, when used, has lead to the development that satisfies the academics. On the other hand SET may weaken the development because the stakeholders tend to wait for the right opportunity to get involved and participate in opportunities available to them (Birnbaum, 1988), it is a voluntary decision after all. This means that waiting for the coincidental occasion to change a study programme, may become stagnant or timeless thus weakening the chances for development.

Anarchical – Attitude

In terms of stakeholders feelings about the structure and process it is highly dependent on the level of autonomy and creativity these individuals hold. As scientists their research and scholarly productivity is important (Birnbaum, 1988) added to this, meeting the expectations of the market would be the ideal anarchical scenario.

SET is then able to strengthen development in study programmes when SET data confirms the stakeholders are teaching what they consider is relevant (Birnbaum, 1988). Academics are free to engage in activities that satisfy them personally (Birnbaum, 1988). In this sense

academics would have the autonomy to create new courses, design new study programmes based on ongoing research. On the other hand SET may weaken development if the academics preferred engaging more in their own research, they could detach from teaching thus limiting development.

3.4 Final remarks

To sum up, the use of the collegial, bureaucratic, political, anarchical models described by Birnbaum (1988) help this research explain the perceptions by selected actors regarding SET as a tool for change, towards the development of study programmes. It provides a single snapshot of what is taking place in this case. Nevertheless, these four models may compliment or overlap in an attempt to describe the phenomena of change. If a combination of these functional models is evident in the data analysis, it could potentially add on to the existing argument about the complexity of HE organizations, and the importance of maintaining an unbiased perspective through one sole organizational model.

4 Research Design

This chapter outlines the research design this qualitative study adopts. It explains the methodology, the data analysis approaches, and the relationship between with the organizational functioning models (Birnbaum, 1988) and the main research question. This study is a single-case design because it represents a typical phenomena of an ordinary situation (Kezar, 2001, p. viii) in today's organizational studies of higher education. Thus it is a representative case because it "captures the circumstances and conditions" (Yin, 2003) of a situation that is neither strange nor extreme.

Through deductive methods, the goal is to test whether the assumptions that are described in the theoretical framework section, which derived from the models of organizational functioning (Birnbaum, 1988) can be confirmed or rejected (Bryman, 2012, p. 70). After the data has been collected and analyzed, it is possible to assert or ignore the assumptions elaborated for this single-case study about SET as a tool for change. Moreover, because the study of change can answer many questions this single-case study has a particular angle on change. As pointed by Kezar (2001) some organizational models may elaborate on the following dimensions: the drivers for change, the degree of change, the timing of change, the scale of change, the focus of change and the responsiveness of change (Kezar, 2001, pp. 15-23). Therefore to provide a better set of assumptions about the four models of organizational function as presented by Birnbaum (1988), change is examined by looking into the aspects of the organization that are impacted, or as Kezar (2001) describes the focus of change.

The three aspects that encompass the focus of change: structure, process and attitude (Kezar, 2001), and have been described throughout the thesis. This investigation concerned with the processes and the attitude aspects as described by Kezar (2001, p. 19), because that such focus helps answering the research questions. However the structural aspect is not ignored because it sheds light on the characteristics of how the work is distributed within the selected subunits.

4.1 Selection of case

The higher education organization selected for study is, among others in Norway, one that offers study programmes based on all four disciplinary cultures: hard pure, hard applied, soft pure and soft applied, as described by Becher (1994) The significance of using this approach highlights that research on higher education organization can no longer be examined in a general manner, but rather in the representation of academic cultures within these organizations (Trowler, 2009). Thus the to focus on the way members of an organization interact with the work, and to explore the way they feel about their work and their academic background, is to acknowledge to some extent these disciplinary differences.

4.2 Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis

This section explains which sources of data are used to gain knowledge and be able to answer the research questions. The first source is document analysis that consists on the organization's regulations on QA, action plans from each subunit, and the organizations' strategic plan. The second one is a semi-structured interview.

4.2.1 Documents

The initial method for data collection is to revise the online documentation about study programme development, and quality assurance which is available through the organization's website. Access to these documents is generally easy, however the subunits' webpages are arranged differently thus the accuracy of the documents listed below, is somewhat blurred.

A list of the documents used as published in the organization's website:

- Quality Assurance System for the educational activities at the organization. The document used is the translated English version, which is uploaded for informational purposes only. The Norwegian version is considered to be the legal document.
- Elements of the Quality Assurance system.
- Strategic Plan for the organization.

- “Studiekvalitet ved XX-Fakultetet” can be translated to: Quality of studies for the XX-Faculty (hard pure and hard applied disciplines)
- “Evaluering av programmer” can be translated to: Programme Evaluations (soft applied discipline)
- Current¹ Action plans for: hard pure, hard applied, and soft applied study programmes.
- “Verktøykasse for studentevaluering” can be translated to: Toolkit for student evaluations

4.2.2 Interviewing

One method for data collection here used is semi-structured interviews. This type of interview format is the most adequate because with the questions (see Appendix 1) the participants are able to openly share their perception about SET as a tool for change without limitations. In this way the participants’ point of view about the phenomena is the actual data. As a guide, this interview format asks about three areas. The first area is on study programme development. It opens the interview by inquiring a definition of development, illustrating it with an example of being involved with development and/or outcome from development. A second section inquires about drivers of change, example to illustrate changes in study programmes. The third concluding section explored the definition of SET, its uses, its purpose, and its significance.

These type of questions allows for the participant to engage on topics that are relevant and important about the phenomena (Yin, 2003). Through probing methods, more data and information allows for clarity of the internal processes taking place in each discipline.

A total of five semi-structured interviews were conducted. All of these interviews use English as a main language for communication, yet the participants did use Norwegian when needed. Four interviews were recorded, and one is based on note taking.

4.2.3 Selection Process of study programmes

The purposeful selection of three different study programme chosen for this study is made on the basis of attempting to gather a representative group of participants within the

¹ Being executed at the time of this investigation.

organization. To do so in a comprehensive way, the study programmes are selected on the basis of their “epistemological differences” (Trowler, 2009, p. 181) categorized from a cognitive dimension (as cited in Trowler, 2009) only as hard-pure, soft-pure, hard-applied and soft-applied. Hard-applied disciplines are those that can be categorized as abstract. Hard-pure disciplines are those that are categorized as having well-developed theories. Soft-applied disciplines are described as the functional disciplines. Soft-pure disciplines as those characterized as not having well-developed theories. Exercising the work of Becher (1994), this study selects only three disciplinary areas. Due to unfortunate time constraints this thesis examines the following study disciplines in the bachelor level: hard applied, hard pure, and soft pure at the University of Oslo.

Participants

The participants who engage in this study are those who can potentially address the phenomena of SET as a tool for change. By means of purposeful sampling (Bryman, 2012) the strategy here is to have a varied group of participants who is knowledgeable and experienced about how change takes place in their study programmes. Among all the stakeholders that make up the population of this organization, academic leaders and administrative staff are both two groups of interest. The reason for selecting these two groups of participants is because they have a direct and/or indirect relationship with SET and study programme development. Therefore to include them in this study signifies that the data collected during the interviews can reveal different perceptions about the phenomena of SET as a tool for change; as well as testing whether one or any models of organizational functioning described by Birnbaum (1988), can help describe the how change takes place in this organizations’ subunits. This way it is possible to draw a “logical inference about the phenomenon...precisely because it is anticipated that it might allow a [model] to be tested” (Yin, 2003).

The initial step used is to reach out to the respondents via email, where a brief overview of the purpose of the study is introduced. It is also noted in this thesis how their participation is handled emphasizing anonymity. The initial invitation results with one acceptance and concrete interview date. A week later a second invitation provides a more punctual explanation of this research, which results with four positive outcomes. However, most respondents claim that due to the initiation of the semester their schedule is limited, and have only one hour to grant. These interviews are spread out in time, considering the role of the respondents and their busy agendas. Regardless of the several attempts made during the

course of three months, only one interview is not conducted for the hard applied discipline representing the administration.

In Chapters 6 and 7 the respondents' are cited using the reference table as illustrated in Table 5.

	Soft-Applied	Hard-Applied	Hard-Pure
Academic Leader	SAU	HAU	HPU
Administration	SAA	HAA	HPA

(Table 5. Respondents' Abbreviations)

4.3 Criteria for data interpretation

4.3.1 Construct Validity

In order to explain how development (change) of study programme behaves the way it does at the University of Oslo, this thesis tests the four different models of organizational functioning (Birnbbaum, 1988), and the components of change (structure, process and attitude)(Kezar, 2001). This combination is necessary because the models of organizational functioning as described by Birnbbaum (1988), do not speak of organizational change as such, but rather about how HE organizations function in light of four different influences (collegial, bureaucratic, political and anarchical). Therefore, in order to speak of organizational change or change on its own, the models are being tested in light of the impact of change on the structure, process, and attitude (Kezar, 2001), of an organization that is purely influenced by collegial, bureaucratic, political and anarchical backgrounds.

Given the qualitative nature of this study it is important to ensure that both findings and analysis are not interpreted as subjective. For this reason it is imperative to develop a number of indicators in the theoretical framework that result from the literature review (Bryman, 2012). However given there is little research that characterizes SET as a tool for change for drawing up relevant assumptions of how it may impact study programme development, an ample examination of this phenomenon is employed in this thesis.

Through the use of the four models of organizational functioning in combination with the aspects of change, four imaginary contexts for the University of Oslo (UiO, *hereafter*) are

sketched. Each context represents a purely collegial UiO, bureaucratic UiO, political UiO, and anarchical UiO. By doing so, it is possible to ensure that the findings about study programme development are not being misleadingly reported from a single angle or inclination, but rather from four well-known dimensions so as to maintain utmost objectivity.

In this thesis to explain how study programme development (dependent variable) is taking place, and whether such change has a relationship with SET (independent variable) is the objective. However to assert there is a casual relationship between these two concepts is incorrect (Yin, 2003). For this reason this thesis is interested in knowing if there is maybe a other variables that may be fostering study programme development. It is therefore important that the assumptions drawn in the theoretical framework that derived from the literature review are properly triangulated with the data that derives document analysis and interview methods. Thus providing the investigation a higher degree of certainty to explain how and why SET as a tool for change may lead to study programme development (Yin, 2003).

The use of a case added to the small number of participants, five in this case, is a problematic situation in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). To ensure that this investigation is valid the theoretical framework provides a number of circumstances (assumptions) in which the phenomena of SET as a tool for change (independent variable), could potentially strengthen or weaken study programme development (dependent variable); such practice may also shed light whether some adaptations to the four models of organizational functioning are useful interpreting the mechanism of change (Yin, 2003).

4.4 Ethical considerations

In order to maintain utmost ethical considerations, this study does not reveal the participant's personal information/data. As noted by the Norwegian Center of Research Data (NSD), the collection of data for this study allows recording the interviews. However, these recording must be deleted and kept only as transcriptions. During the interviews, note-taking procedures take place, which did set an ethical boundary between the interviewee and the interviewers.

As regulated by Norwegian Center of Research Data (NSD), this thesis is not subject to notification because at no time is there a combination of features that may identify the five

respondents. The only background variable that is used in this thesis is the respondent's current role within the University of Oslo. However given that there are more than one three hard-applied, more than one soft-applied, and more than one hard-pure disciplines within the University of Oslo it is not possible to assert who are the respondents.

5 Empirical Setting

This chapter provides a general picture of the context where this case takes place. By describing the setting through a small summary, it facilitates the interpretation of the data that follows this chapter. The chapter begins with a presentation of the HE Norwegian system in light of Quality Assurance. A second component makes reference to the agency NOKUT, and its involvement with SET and QA. A final section illustrates the QA system of the University of Oslo, as well as some SET components.

5.1 The HE Norwegian System

To investigate about certain tools for change in HE organizations, requires to some extent, to provide a frame to the analysis of change. As noted by Clark (1983) the analysis of change requires to focus on its structural setting, meaning its immediate context. In doing so it becomes possible to know how change takes place by analyzing the fashion in which the higher education system functions (Clark, 1983).

As of 2015 Norway has fifty-three accredited universities and university colleges, eight of which are considered universities (NOKUT (a), n.d.), making the University of Oslo one of them. The universities are managed by the state, where the Ministry of Higher Education and Research is the political body responsible for the universities as well as some university colleges (NOKUT (a), n.d.). Through the Act of relating to University and University Colleges, NOKUT, plays the role of an independent expert body, which acts as a supreme governing body (NOKUT (b), n.d.).

5.1.1 NOKUT

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT, is authorized to control the QA system as defined in the Acts and Regulations for all Norwegian universities and university colleges (Stensaker, Langfield, Harvey, Huisman, & Westerheijden, 2011). In the big picture, this system serves to oversee the quality of HE in Norway through the

evaluation of: a) internal quality systems, b) institutional accreditations, c) accreditations to new study programmes, d) reaccreditations, and e) national evaluation to assess quality (Stensaker et al., 2011).

In a recent study about the work conducted by NOKUT in terms of Quality Assessment and Developing Quality, it is found that the current role of NOKUT is of great significance to the purpose of this study.

As described in the report, NOKUT seems to be mostly inclined in following its goals rigidly by following the state laws (Liv Langfeldt, Lee Harvey, Jeroen Huisman, Don Westerheijden, & Stensaker, 2008). The approach given to Quality derives from what the state has defined, where NOKUT plays the role of the regulatory body. As mentioned by Liv Langfeldt et al. (2008) such approach is at the cost of development of quality, where improvement and change are planned activities. To this end it can be highly expected to see such behavior at the University of Oslo, where development per se is not common, and rather a mandated activity.

The recommendation from the researchers to NOKUT is to foster a developmental approach on Quality rather than focusing solely on controlling QA (Liv Langfeldt et al., 2008). Thus considering the work done almost six years before this thesis, it is of great interest to observe what is taking place in the current Norwegian setting of higher education.

5.1.2 Quality Assessment – National Level

Norway adapted many of the parameters denoted from the Bologna Process (Handal et al., 2014). Quality Reform made changes in the grading system, changes in the credits system, added to the introduction of the three-cycle system (bachelor/master and doctorate) (Friedrich, Prøitz, & Stensaker, 2016). Even though, historically, in Norway external evaluations were not an unknown subject (Friedrich et al., 2016), it is suggested that the quality and efficiency (Lehre, Hansen, Lehre, & Laake, 2012) of higher education is in need of both a reform and the adoption of the Bologna Process (Serrano-Velarde & Stensaker, 2010). As a result Norwegian higher education established a number of developments within its higher education system. The three major reforms that are signification for this thesis are: the creation of a national system of external QA, the enforcement that all higher education organizations had internal systems of QA, and the creation a body NOKUT responsible for

monitoring the external evaluations among other duties (Serrano-Velarde & Stensaker, 2010, p. 216). Thus Norwegian higher education organizations are today very much invested in the quality of teaching, learning, internal QA systems, and on study programmes (Serrano-Velarde & Stensaker, 2010).

A good starting point is to briefly illustrate what the Norwegian Ministry of Education regulates to this date, in regards to their national QA system. The national law of higher education points out in its second chapter to two aspects of the QA system. The first aspect designates the use of the national QA system, and can be translated as: “continuous improvement, providing satisfaction of the work, and showing the deficiencies in quality” (Serrano-Velarde & Stensaker, 2010). It also discusses that universities and colleges are to include an internal control system, namely the “student evaluation of courses” as part of the national QA system (Serrano-Velarde & Stensaker, 2010). A second aspect is the role of NOKUT is the QA system, the law state that this body conducts evaluations of study programmes every sixth year,

5.2 University of Oslo Internal QA system

The University of Oslo has an internal QA system that can be found in the university’s website. In this website, under the webpage that displays the university’s Regulations Concerning Studies it is possible to find the (Stensaker et al. 2011, p. 467) document. The document was adopted in 2004 for the first time, and underwent a revision later in the year 2015 (Q. A. UiO, 2015). The QA system of this organization is presented in connection with the ten-year Strategic Plan to be achieved by the year 2020, the Faculties annual plans, and the study programmes and course descriptions (Q. A. UiO, 2015).

The QA system of this organization is comprised of twelve chapters, parting from the purpose and structure of the QA system as described in the first chapter. In this chapter a description of the system is presented. The following chapter describes the leadership and management structure of those stakeholders who are to assure the QA system. The next three subsequent chapters indicate monitoring aspects of the QA system, and the reviews of programmes. Two succeeding chapters highlight on the evaluation of course for both Bachelor and Master programmes. It is also included in this QA system the evaluation of two

PhD components: educational and thesis, each is explained in a separate chapter. The last two chapters of this QA system include an external evaluation assessment, and system for reporting about the learning environment.

5.2.1 Student Evaluation “Tool-Kit”

A toolkit (UiO (b), 2012) for student assessment is found in the University of Oslo’s website. This document is written in Norwegian. The document refers to the tool-kit as an aid to the planning and execution of student evaluations in both courses and study programmes. The document presents some methods that are recommended by the university’s QA system. The recommendations are based on the overall knowledge that certain evaluation methods work best on subjects or programmes of varying sizes.

6 Findings

This chapter is divided in two main sections. The first section presents the findings in light of development of study programmes from both document and interviews. The second section presents the findings from documents and interviews in light of SET as a tool for change.

6.1 Study Programme Development

This section presents the findings from the document analysis, and the interview data, which are indicated in two subsections. Each sub-section illustrates the data in light of development of study programmes.

The findings are presented in three categories: structure, process and attitude, in combination with the two perspectives of the 1) academic leaders and the 2) administrative staff. If the perspectives differ amongst the respondents, it is then highlighted with subtitle.

6.1.1 Findings from Document Analysis

As described by Harvey and Green (1993) quality is relative therefore to explore the various layers that make-up the concept is argued to be a better approach. The way this organization evaluates its study programmes in light of Quality Assurance is presented next.

Quality Assurance

The document analysis of the organization's QA system highlights two types of routine checks for quality: a regular basis, and every six years (Q. A. UiO, 2015). Both routine checks are regulated by the organization. The general purposes the routine checks as described in this document, is to assess quality, to assess whether change is necessary, or whether it is better to discontinue a study programme. As stated in the document,

The purpose of the system is to ensure that there are regular reviews of the quality and of measures for improvement in educational programmes and in the educational activities as a whole (Q. A. UiO, 2015)

However each routine check has also specific purposes, a different structure, and a different process. The document suggests that all faculties should have procedures for each evaluation and that these ought to be available in the organization's website. Unfortunately, during the analysis the procedures could not be found.

Structure

The QA system document highlights the stakeholders who are to participate in “coordinating the work with quality” (Q. A. UiO, 2015, p. 2). The list includes “deans, heads of department, programme directors, the academic council, and the course leaders” (Q. A. UiO, 2015, p. 3)

1. Student Input

The data from the documents states that for the six-year revision “input from the students” (Q. A. UiO, 2015, p. 3) must be considered. However for regular evaluations the results from SET data is considered to be “part of the knowledge base” (Q. A. UiO, 2015, p. 5) for the faculties to assess whether changes are needed. It clearly states that SET data is not the final assessment (Q. A. UiO, 2015, p. 4).

There is no evidence in this document of how the input from the students is systematized. There is evidence on a second document on how to systematize SET, and it is explored following this section.

2. Regulated Revisions

Regular

The document analysis describes that within the organization regular routine checks, or revisions, must be done. It does not state how frequent these checks ought to be done, but it states revisions must be done “during the periods between the periodic programme evaluations” (Q. A. UiO, 2015). It also states that faculties must have a procedure in place, and that the purpose is to monitor activities and make assessments whether changes are needed (Q. A. UiO, 2015, p. 4).

Six-year

The document analysis describes that this organization must, every six years, evaluate its study programmes. It states that the purpose is to assess, and to change or discontinue study programmes. The evaluations must cover the following aspects: “learning outcomes, academic content, forms of teaching and working, and assessment agreements.” (Q. A. UiO,

2015) The work is divided between internal and external evaluations. The internal evaluation must include a panel comprised by the deans, heads of department and programme directors/managers. For the external evaluation a panel is appointed by the programme owner/manager (Q. A. UiO, 2015, p. 5).

3. Performing Revisions

On one hand the data from the document establishes the way in which stakeholders may interact with the regular study programme revisions as follows:

The monitoring can take the form of regular dialogue meetings with the department or programmes, departmental or programme reports, or it can be organized as convenient for the faculty (Q. A. UiO, 2015)

On the other hand, the data from the document does not reveal how the stakeholders of the organization may interact with the six-year routine check.

In general, there is no evidence in this document explaining how assessment is conducted. There is no evidence of how change takes place. Neither is there evidence of a procedure of how to monitor all “educational activities” (Q. A. UiO, 2015, p. 5). In this document there is no clear explanation of what the organization refers to as educational activities. The document states however, that a definition of educational activities is evidenced in the organization’s strategic plan. Therefore a revision of that document seems relevant for describing the meaning of educational activities.

4. Strategic Plan for the Organization

The strategic plan presents an overview of five goals set forth by the organization. Each goal has a number of strategies embedded. Each strategy is designed to help attain the goals. As a whole it can be drawn that the plan includes features of quality and academic development. The strategies drafted in the strategic plan focus on internationalization and funding as two components that are planned for fostering quality and academic development (Q. A. UiO, 2015). There is no evidence of the interpretation given to educational activities.

6.1.2 Findings from Interviews

The interview data complements the data not provided in the documents. The findings are presented in three categories: the structure, the process and the attitude, in combination with the two perspectives of the 1) academic leaders and the 2) administrative staff.

Perspectives in light of Structure

Academics and Administration

1. Academic Council

The SAU and SAA respondents claim that the members that make up the internal evaluation committee include: administration, scientists/teachers, student representatives, programme managers, and course leaders. Both respondents refer to this group as the academic council.

Much of it lies on its on the structure. We have, I'm here because I'm ahead of the education and I have to do my work. The administration of education, they are doing a great job feeding into the process, we have "programmråd" where are we also have student representatives for the department and so on. So people are there, and also the manager for different departments and some departments. Everything lies on the structure. And then we also have to student democracy, these processes that feed people into our democratic processes, people have the right to be heard in different ways, and that is part of the democratic structure of the department

The HAU respondent also claims that there is an academic council in place, however the student representation is by means of the Student Union.

2. Single Leader

The HPA respondent claims that the design of the new programme,

Come from once certain creative individual. That actually is the case, as far I know, with the new revision of the bachelor program. Where one individual at the [hard-applied] faculty department, [name of the individual removed], was the driving force behind this revision. So it might be due to one creative person who has a certain position, and are able to influence the department or the faculty (HPA)

The HPA, clarifies after the interview, that

We do not currently have a "programrådsleder" as we no longer have any program council (programråd), however this is going to be reinstated next year (HPA)

3. Revisions taking place

The interview data reveals that at the time of the investigation all three academic disciplines hard- applied, and soft-applied are in the process of reviewing their study programmes. As the respondents claim,

We have recently started an evaluation process that it's called: "periodiskevaluering" which we have to do every six years (SAU)

In 2017 comes another revision (HAU)

The hard-pure discipline on the other hand, is ready to implement an already designed study programme

In the fall semester of next year [2017] this new [study] program it's supposed to be up and running (HPU)

Perspectives in light of Process

Academic and Administrative staff

BIG changes

A general a common finding from the interview data reveals that the way in which the five respondents believe that their work in relation to development of study programmes is a *big change*.

We have recently started an evaluation process that it's called: "periodiskevaluering" (...) that's one big thing. That's and important thing. (SAU)

I think next year. We will really do some changes. Like a revolution to say it like that (...) I think we are going to make huge changes. (SAA)

In 2017 comes another revision. It will focus on learning needs. The use of more interactive tools. More internet based. (HAU)

In the fall semester of next year [2017] this new program it's supposed to be up and running. And is a big change. (HPU)

We are currently doing (...) the whole XX faculty is doing a huge change in their bachelor program. (HPA)

Academic's view

Change process

In the discussion about the process of change, the soft applied academic leader (SAU) responded

I need to go [meaning consult] through the programråd [translated to academic council], I need to go through the board, the department... That [interaction] was also a kind of democratic process where we started with some ideas then all the different avdelinger [departments] we were discussing this; they came back, we did the draft of the plan, and then we discussed... we have lots of "to" and "from"

The interview data reveals in the view of the HAU respondent it is through consensus that change in study programmes takes place.

The hard-pure discipline HPU respondent mentioned that the process of change is spearheaded by the Head of Department who can

Discuss things and reach an agreement on a certain level of abstraction, then it's much easier to sort out the details below (HPU)

Given that this response lacked clarity the respondent further illustrated how the Head of Department conveys this so called *abstraction* to promote change within the study programme in one of his meetings

We have already agreed that this is the principal that we will follow here. So we have to keep that in mind. So, when you say that you still want to have this course that we have been running for 30 years but there's only three students [attending the course, that is] (HPU)

However, the respondent added that as a Head of Department,

If you manage to get some kind of top-down approach when trying to sort out the most important ideas and get the consensus on that, and then you're fine

The way HPU perceives the way in which the process of change is realized

Because the energy, the enthusiasm, the passion, comes from below. It comes from the single person who is passionate about what he or she teaches (...) I think that the hard thing, or the difficult thing, or

what it's really the only sustainable way of doing things like this is try to work several levels at the same time. That you have a sort of top down level, but you still at the same time have some kind of diversity among the people who actually do the education (...) Balancing. I mean, this is something that probably plays out very differently for different people. I don't feel that I am particularly qualified or skilled or anything, for this.

Following the same thread of discussion the academic leader SAU agrees that

This is not an organization where you can decide from top. And tell people what they are doing, because we are at the bottom line. Definitely depending on the engagement, and the activity of the teachers they need to be passionate about what they are doing. And if there aren't just isn't good teaching. We have to do this in a thorough way (SAU)

Administrative staff's view

Small Changes

Another common response from the interviews conducted is about small changes that take place. To this end both administrative staff members from the soft-applied (SAA), and hard-pure (HPA) claim that

Course change development can be done by the head of the course basically. If there are some small changes that the head of the course feels need to be made, based on the student feedback, they can of course to get themselves without going through a whole mill of applications or process (SAA)

It's also possible for teachers, and you know those responsible for the individual subjects, to do minor changes that don't really need to be program changes (HPA)

Perspectives in light of Attitude

Academic's view

1. Following rules and regulations

The SAU respondent explains that the periodic evaluation is comprised of an internal and an external evaluation. The respondent explains that as an academic leader: "I have to do my work" (SAU), thus active participation in the evaluations seems to be structured by job specifications.

2. Following leadership

The HPU respondent claims that the Head of the Department, the respondents' superior, who "obviously cares about education" (HPU), was able to "put ideas into other people's heads" (HPU), which lead to the design of a new study programme. The respondent argues that as an academic leader,

You don't really have that much means to influence decisions, and that you don't have a budget that is, that you can use to do or make priorities. Everything which is related to education has to go through the Head of Department because that person is the one who is responsible for the bottom line of the business basically (HPU)

3. Teaching and Research implications

The academic leader of the soft-applied discipline (SAU) highlights that one of the aspects that is being considered for the development of the study programmes has to do with the teaching time

We teach too much, much too much... So it seems to me and we have a big problem with coordinating what we have taken on to do, what we promised to do in our programs... So I think that the program revisions that are going to do have to be about reducing the amount of time spent doing teaching (SAU)

In combining teaching and researching, the academic leader for the hard-pure discipline (HPU) argues that

We should try to be scientists in teaching also, and we should try to do teaching in such a way that, that would actually, can measure the response of what we do. That's something where I know specifically that we have a long way to go. And I think, that in my own teaching, I definitely have a trouble doing things systematically enough and specially the, I think it's a challenge to collect reliable data. Reliable data you can actually use to say something about how things are going (HPU)

4. Revise Teaching Methods

The academic leader argues that an aspect for development lies on effective teaching. Adding that it requires the investigation of teaching methods that include more student activities, because research on pedagogy demonstrates "that student activities is the most important pedagogic instrument" (SAU).

The academic leader of the hard-pure discipline (HPU) mentions that the process of development in an activity that must be continuous, not only because the disciplines change thus

The idea of transforming the [hard-pure discipline's name] education in the more technical, of the way we do, of the way we teach, for example. In the [department's name] we have this paradoxical situation that our research is super user in computational resources, while the education is extremely light in computational skills (HPU)

The academic leader for the hard-applied discipline (HAU) argues that the developmental changes are with the students "learning needs" (HAU) in mind.

5. Discipline Influences

The academic leaders for soft-applied (SAU), hard-applied (HAU), and hard-pure (HPU) all agree that development is closely related with the ways in which the discipline performs outside the organization. All three respondents refer to different ways in which they gather data,

Checking with what other universities are doing, other departments here at [name of organization], of course we have talked with [hard-applied discipline's name], and then we are going to other [soft-applied] department in all the other universities in Norway. And we might also go out to some European universities if we find something, which we are now in the process of gathering information where other cool things that we can look into and see if they are a relevant for us (SAU)

We have good contacts in industry, and we encourage a close cooperation. Some of the ideas proposed by our professors are based on input from businesses (HAU)

Big-league publications a more or less regularly have pieces on education, on [hard-pure disciplines name] education, development. And then you have the [name of] foundation this noble prizewinner in [hard-pure discipline] who decided to spend the rest of his life improving education. There are some people especially at the [hard-pure discipline's name] department here, that we have a good cooperation with (HPU)

The of the academic leader hard-pure discipline (HPU) adds that reaching out to others outside the organization, but within the discipline, is part of the process of development.

Administration Staff's view

In the perspective of the administrative staff, the respondent for the soft-applied discipline (SAA) argues that

We keep on hiring new staff. And of course we, all those staff members they shall also teach. And most scientists they like to teach within there are of expertise, so that might mean that we are creating new subjects. So in the bachelor and the master program we have had changes going on to reflect the expertise of the new staff (SAA)

The HPA respondent claims not to be involved with development in study programme. As the respondent states “ I haven't been involved in any huge changes” (HPA).

6.2 Student Evaluation of Teaching

This section presents the findings from the document analysis, and the interview data, which are indicated in two subsections. Each sub-section illustrates the data in light of development of study programmes.

The findings are presented in three categories: structure, process and attitude, in combination with the two perspectives of the 1) academic leaders and the 2) administrative staff. If the perspectives differ amongst the respondents, it is then highlighted.

6.2.1 Findings from Document Analysis

Quality Assurance

This single-case the organization has a document referred to as “tool-kit” for SET. The purpose as stated by the organization, is to have an evaluation system that creates and ensures high quality of the current curriculum (S. P. UiO, 2010)

The document's purpose is to provide a number of different methods for student evaluations that are aligned with the QA of the organization, and that can be adapted for both course and programme evaluations. The methods presented in the document are mindful of the size of course and programmes.

The document recognizes that some study programmes or “communities” are currently using “good systems” for QA (UiO (a), 2012)

Structure

1. SET Methods

The document describes in details and with examples, ways in which stakeholders may interact with each suggested method. The document also pinpoints to exactly which method is suitable for course and programme evaluation. From the document analysis three out of eight methods, are recognized as suitable for evaluating study programmes. The data presented is limited to the topic of this thesis.

Process

Method 1. Evaluation meeting with selected of students

From the document analysis this method is used with student representatives, because it is recognized that not all students have an opinion to give. This representation can be from a) students nominating students, b) teachers picking out random students.

Method 2. Consultation Meetings

From the document analysis this method is considered an open forum with students, teachers, and other staff members. Although selection of participants is not explained, the goal is to have an open dialogue. According to the document, this method requires that suggestions for changes and feedback are taken seriously, and concludes that final resolutions are to be shared to the students.

Method 3. Questionnaires

From the document analysis this method is described as an easy way to compare programme with each other over time. It recognizes that students may experience this method as a routine and therefore loose interest in providing constructive feedback.

6.2.2 Findings from Interviews

The interview data compliments the data not provided in the documents. The findings are presented in three categories: the structure, the process and the attitude, in combination with the two perspectives of the 1) academic leaders and the 2) administrative staff. Since the perspectives differ amongst the respondents, some sub-titles indicate to whom the responses belong.

Perspectives in light of Structure

Academic and Administrative staffs

1. Regulated SET

The SAU respondent mentions that the student evaluations must be in place as they are “obliged by the faculty and the [organization’s name].” (SAU)

The HAU respondent states that SET is performed every semesters and managed through the Student Union.

In the view of the academic leader for the hard-pure discipline HPU,

We do this [meaning SET] because we are asked to do it, and we produce something that is filed and that’s it...At least I have very personally feeling that the way we do this now is that we, okay. We actually use quite a bit of effort to do it, but we do it in such a way that the outcome is more like just for a checkmark, and not really for producing something that we can use for development (HPU)

The administration staffs SAA and HPA agree that the method used for collecting SET data is via questionnaires.

The SAA respondent adds that

We have a periodic evaluation of all subjects that we do every semester. But it’s periodic so that means not all subjects will get him evaluated every semester. But based on what the students say, and the administrations view... We sent out an additional form.

Perspectives in light of Process

Academic and Administration

1. Monitoring tool

All three academic leaders perceive that SET is a monitoring tool. The academic leader for the soft-applied discipline SAU, explained that the data that results from SET allows the academic leader to

Know where things are burning. I want to know where things are flourishing. I want to know where things are functioning and nonfunctioning. I’m responsible for the whole thing here (SAU)

The HPU respondent added that the data from SET serves a quality measure of courses.

The HPA respondent argues that although there is not a good system in place,

We haven't really seen what the potential of that kind of information is. Maybe its overrated, maybe it can't be used for as much as people say. Most likely it is worth gathering, but we don't really have good enough data to say we if we can use it, or if this is useful or not (HPU)

We know very clearly that one of the places where we fail miserably is in this sort of systematic data gathering of the student evaluations (HPU)

The HPA respondent explains that SET initially was the responsibility of the administration. The respondent's perspective on the way the student administration manages SET, seems to lack monitoring

I'd like to think we did our job, but I am not sure that everyone is as eager to do this evaluation, as course head...I am not sure if it has been done with all because it hasn't been many control. It hasn't been any control by us or anyone else, I think (HPA)

2. SET Data collection

There is a common use of methods for collecting SET data. The academic leaders agree on two, particularly.

Questionnaires

From the interview data it is also found that questionnaires is one method used across the disciplines. All three respondents refer to these as "web-based" or "netskjemma"

Evaluation Meetings

The SAU respondent explains that

Each semester we have one meeting with all the "kull-contacts" or the students representatives for every semester. So we have a meeting here where they have, in advanced, they have gathered information from all their fellow students for that semester and gathered every information they had and we had a big meeting that takes a whole day, where are we discussing we gather information and we can get the information not only from semester to semester but the whole line for the programs

The HAU respondent states that the student representatives present the SET data that results from the web-based questionnaires to the academic council.

One-on-one meetings

The HPU respondent, mentions that structurally SET data can derive from

Informal signals, I mean we have students that we talk to. We [the respondent refers to himself and another academic in charge of a large course] try to recruit teacher assistants, among the students who are taking the course themselves, because they are so much better than us to pick up sort of: What was the hard part of this? What was difficult? What was presented in such a way that it was impossible to understand?

Personal communications

The SAA and HPA respondents also coincide in their claim that students tend to be more responsive of SET, after they write personal communications to the students (via e-mail), so as to increase the response rate.

3. Use of SET

Two academic leaders coincide that SET data is or can be used, to resolve critical issues. The SAU respondent mentions that currently they are having some conversations with members of the academic council

I've initiated meeting with [named those responsible for courses] and go into the feedback from the students, and ok, this just doesn't work! We need to do something, and what can you do on the intermediate, and what can you do on the long-term. And what can we do in order to make this better (SAU)

The HPU respondent perceives that SET

Can be used acutely, I guess. If there is something that is terribly wrong, so wrong that it's almost self-evident and you can probably use the data you get from, for example midterm evaluation, or something like that (HPU)

The HAU respondent referred to SET's use as a way of checking for quality of courses. But that in general students were very happy with the programme, in his view.

Both administrative staff respondents agree that SET is useful. The HPA respondent assert that the use of SET

Some feedback it might be one feedback, that's very good. And that the teacher finds correct or a good point, I'd say that is taking into consideration. And then it does it need to be validated by several other students (HPA)

The SAA respondent explains that as a result from SET

most recently I think this was 2014 we changed the third and the fourth semester of the program, and also the 10th to the 12th. So the three last semesters, the third and the fourth. And we did this based on what the students have been telling us overtime, from the feedback from the students (SAA)

Academic's view

1. Students and SET

The key players who gather SET data are the students. For both soft-applied and hard-applied discipline the student representatives are in charge. The SAU respondent adds that also the

The administration feedback to us, that this course, or this doesn't function. And then we know that, and then, we built that into our evaluation or work (SAU)

The HAU respondent explains that the students are suitable for gathering and reporting the findings from the data that comes from SET (questionnaires). The HAU clarified that the respondent commented that students (meaning the representatives from the Student Union) understand the feedback better, as they are the ones using the questionnaires.

The HPU, on the other hand, respondent recognizes that having course leaders manage data is not an effective process.

I think what we have done is probably to down source the responsibility of doing this to the course responsables and of course, sometimes, you change the person responsible for a course and that person may have choose a different evaluation or change some questions (HPU)

2. Reliability of SET

The HPU is the only respondent who argues that there is another element to SET and QA. In the discussion on the exercise of change for study programmes the respondent claims that

That's something where I know specifically that we have a long way to go and I think that in my own teaching I definitely have a trouble doing things systematically enough and specially, the, I think it's a challenge to collect reliable data. Reliable data you can actually use to say something about how things are going (HPU)

Perspectives in light of Attitude

Academic's views

1. Value of work

The SAU respondent adds

Because I already have some things I know I want to do, changes based on the feedback from the students. It's sometimes also the students, I think there is, they need to have a dialogue there. I don't buy everything the student say. Because there is also things that I think different about. So it isn't just that I get in the feedback and I say okay, and then I need to reflect on what does this means, and what do I think about it, and what we think about it (SAU)

The HPU respondent argues that

If I put on my Head of Education hat, and say I want data that we can use strategically to do long term planning and to try to decide the, if there are some sort of general patterns here, that we can recognize, and so that maybe this means that we should do more of this, and less of that. Then I think I failed much more than how I perform relative to myself as a sort of being an educator developing a particular course

2. Value of Profession

The SAU respondent explains that as an academic leader it is important to analyze the evaluations that come from the students

I think in order for me to learn more, and to follow my process I would prefer I would have needed you to say more of that [the respondent refers to the adding and element of self-evaluation for the students]. Instead of being a kind of customer position you could be a more of an active participant in a teaching process (SAU)

The HPU respondent elaborates and explains why the utility of SET is to some extent useful the respondent adds that

Most of my research is related to trying to make sense of limited and noisy data. And I feel that a lot of data that we produce in the student evaluation is in sort of that category... My feeling is that the kind of data that we are able to collect so far, is data that is not really reliable enough that we can make usage for short term or short time [strategic] kind of decisions ... I think we have, what we have done is probably to down source the responsibility of doing this to the course responsables (...)So I think it's hard to gather consistent data all the time... So I think that the, we should probably try to do this more professionally, and on the other hand we hardly have the professional skills that you probably would need to do this properly, so we do this in a sort of individual and have (...) way and do it in addition to all the other stuff that we have to do with our... [interruption]... so the quality of the data that we collect also limits the usefulness

3. SET an emotional tool

The academic leaders expand their explanations by adding a final component of the way in which SET is perceived. Taken from their experience, it is argues by the HAU respondent that some of the evaluations tend to be very “candid” (HAU). The respondent illustrates that some evaluations included comments of the personal appearance of the teaching staff.

The HPU respondent perceives that students,

On one side you would maybe say that it's important that the students have seen the whole package before they respond to it. Because something is, at least some courses are constructed in a way that is some expectation of inter-magical integration that should happen in the end of the course, when all the pieces should fall together. And you should somehow, do the actual learning. So in one sense is maybe okay to get this sort of postmortem evaluation. On the other hand, at least the way we have found it is that is really hard to get representative answers after the final exam because you often get very bimodal kind of responses. You get some responses that are maybe quite enthusiastic and you get some responses that are furious frustrated but the number is small. And I feel that there is a large piece in the middle that is simply missing (HPU)

The HPU respondent also argues that

There's a lot of emotional issues in education, I think. Or at least many people have very strong opinions of things so it's almost like discussing religion (HPU)

Administrative staff views

1. Value of work

The administrative members perceive and again coincide, that it is a challenge in their role to make changes, because as the SAA respondent explains

To make changes in an academic setting is not always very easy. There is a lot of toes that doesn't like to be stepped on (...) Everybody is a king of their own dominion (...) To tell this person that is in charge of your subject, we are going to do something drastical and dramatic with it, that maybe is not that well received (...) So its hard to actually tell someone, to do anything at all if they don't want to do it themselves (SAA)

The HPA respondent claims that in some situations SET is ignored altogether, and that is challenging for an administrator. The respondent illustrates

The course leaders they do have pretty much ownership of the courses and they are sort of free to do what they want with the course. And if you are a certain person that does not like very much change then you are free to ignore the student feedback. Without repercussions. It doesn't have any repercussions. And that's unfortunate (...) So I have one example it's about a course that's been a problem, for many years, and where I've been in contact with the faculty, and try to get help. Trying to get someone there with a little bit of authority to tell this person to: "listen we have to make this changes because it's against the rules it's unethical..." and these things, but that didn't work

2. SET an emotional tool

From the administrators view, it seems that SET tends to impact emotions. The SAA respondent states that,

To make changes in an academic setting is not always very easy. There is a lot of toes that doesn't like to be stepped on, there is a lot everybody is a king of their own dominion (SAA)

In order to provide a clearer picture from the findings that resulted from the two major areas Study programme Development and SET, all findings presented above are summarized in Tables 6 and 7. The data from both document analysis and interviews are presented together so as to facilitate the interpretation of findings for the following chapter.

Study programme development findings		
Structure	Process	Attitude
Student input	Big change	Follow rules and regulations
Regulated revisions	Change process	Follow leadership
Performing revisions	Small change	Teaching and research
Strategic plan		Teaching methods
Academic council		Discipline influences
Single leader		
Revisions		

(Table 6. Study programme development findings)

SET		
Structure	Process	Attitude
SET methods	Monitoring tool	Students and SET
Regulated SET	Data collection	Reliability
	Use of SET	Value of work
		Value of profession
		Emotional tool

(Table 7. SET findings)

7 Discussion

This chapter describes an interpretation of the data, and provides a discussion of the findings. As it is mentioned in chapter two, this thesis is built on the four organizational functioning models: collegial, bureaucratic, political, and anarchical (Birnbaum, 1988) in combination with the focus on the impact of change: structure, process, and attitude (Kezar, 2001).

This chapter discusses each aspect of change in a subsection. It explains change or development in light of the features observed in light of the most predominant organizational functions as the data reveals.

7.1 Structure

To analyze the structure (Kezar, 2001) is in other words, to examine the conditions in which work is organized (Maassen, 1996). In this section the discussion derives from the findings about structure. It combines the data gathered about development (change) of study programmes and SET as a tool for change. Most of the findings are based on the document analysis, where the interview data compliments the findings. In this case, this analysis illustrates a) a relationship between QA and SET, and b) that work is organized in a bureaucratic functioning manner.

QA conditions the structure

From the document analysis is evident that this organization has established regulations aimed to monitor and ensure that QA system is active. The document analysis describes routine checks of study programmes, which are aimed to two different purposes of quality (Harvey & Green, 1993). Added to this, from the document analysis SET is also linked to quality. SET can also be interpreted from one of the perspectives described by Harvey and Green (1993).

The document about revision of study programmes explicitly states that “constant monitoring of activities”, and “implementation of methods for improvement of activities” (Q. A. UiO, 2015) are two main objectives of the QA system. Two different views of quality result from these objectives.

The first objective implies that the stakeholders who are responsible for QA ought to, routinely, supervise the functions/tasks under their command. This implications seems to be in line with the way (Harvey & Green, 1993) describe the preferred view of quality as *fitness for purpose*, because

Quality assurance is not about specifying the standards or specifications against which to measure or control quality. Quality assurance is about ensuring that there are mechanisms, procedures and processes in place to ensure that the desired quality, however defined and measured, is delivered (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 19).

According to the authors, quality is aimed to the organization's own objectives and not necessarily to those of its members (Harvey & Green, 1993). In this case it is aimed to the organizational goals set forth in the Strategic Plan. That explains why the QA system document refers to the organization's Strategic Plan as a way to define the term "educational activities". In this case, the organization uses the QA system as a tool for achieving the organizations' goals.

The second objective according to the QA system refers to having methods for improvement of functions/tasks. This objective leads to two different interpretations. It sustains the view of *fitness for purpose*, because it ensures that these methods will lead to the quality desired by the organization (Harvey & Green, 1993). However, having methods or technologies in place that can also help the organization determine how effective and efficient it is. In other words, having performance indicators that can measure the output (Harvey & Green, 1993). This leads to another preferred purpose of quality, as noted by Harvey and Green (1993), is to view it as *value for money*.

From the document analysis about SET, the notion of quality is evidenced. It is found that SET is an evaluation system that ensures high quality of the current curriculum (Q. A. UiO, 2015). Hence SET is conceptualized as a tool, which helps ensuring the levels of quality of study programmes. In this case SET has the function of acting as a performance indicator (Harvey & Green, 1993) because academic leaders and administration staff, among others, can guarantee and secure the existing quality levels (Harvey & Green, 1993). In the view of the respondents SET data provides an outcome. It measures quality. According to the respondents SET acts like a thermometer where very high temperatures represent poor quality levels that require immediate attention. In other words the measurable outcome from

SET indicate the level of quality. This perception is to view quality as *value for money* (Harvey & Green, 1993). Overall, the evidence and discussion shows that QA plays a major role in the way in which the structure is organized. QA is an element that is vital for this organization as it conditions work.

7.1.1 Bureaucratic Influences

The document analysis clearly delineates which members of the organization take part in the development of study programmes. The respondents from both soft-applied and hard-applied disciplines coincide and structurally follow the regulations set forth in the QA system document. The hard-pure discipline on the other hand does not have an academic council in spite of this; there is evidence to assert that a single representative is sufficient for coordinating work.

Organization of work

On one hand the evidence shows that having a single representative can act as the body where change takes place. From the findings it is evidenced that the hard-pure discipline clearly stands apart from the other two disciplines. First of all there is evidence, at the time of this thesis, that the hard-pure discipline does not have an academic council functioning as the body. Rather, as the interview data reveals, the body where change takes place is actually the Head of Department, a single representative. This could mean that the absence of an academic council explains why HPA and HPU respondents perceive that the Head of Department is mastermind behind change. The interview data from both HPU and HPA respondents confirm that the Head of Education a) has a key position, b) has influential power, and c) is in charge of the “business”. The sum of these characteristics seem to be inline with the bureaucratic leadership, as described by Birnbaum (1988). The author claims that “the work of individuals can be coordinated and controlled by having them follow the directives of a superior” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 122).

On the other hand it is argued that the academic council acts also as a body where work (revisions of study programmes and SET) is controlled and coordinated. As the findings reveal both academic leaders and administrations staff have very clear understanding of their roles within the council. It is evident that the academic leaders are also in charge of the

council, whereas the administrative staff has a limited function, they are secretaries as asserted by SAA respondent. By indicating who sits in the academic council work becomes standardized. It creates an environment where the processes and activities are highly predictable (Birnbaum, 1988), thus it is possible to assert study programme revisions do not derive from SET data as such, but rather because they are regulated by the organization. The improvement is conditioned by the QA goal set forth by the organization and not by the data that results from SET. As Birnbaum (1988) explains all activities of the organization are rationalized because ultimately these activities are geared towards linking “means to ends, resources to objectives, and intentions to activities” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 113).

7.1.2 SET is Structured Bureaucratically

So far it can be argued that development (change) is embedded in the organization’s rules and regulations. The academic developers, those who sit in the council, are expected to plan for change every six years. Failing to do so, means failing to do their job as stated by the SAU respondent. In order to plan for change, the academic council must use some tools that help them build their case for change. SET is one these tools because structurally it is a regulated instrument that must be included in the change plan for each discipline. Thus it can be sustained that SET is a tool change, yet evidence reflects that SET is perceived more as a tool for monitoring rather than a tool for change. The evidence from the interview data supports what the document analysis states regarding the methods suggested for collecting SET data. As a whole this means that there is a rule about using SET and a systematic process that supports it, thus making SET a bureaucratic tool.

To begin with, all the three disciplines collect SET data using the methods suggested in the Q. A. UiO (2015) QA document. Since this document presents very detailed instructions on how to arrange a good working SET system, thus to assert that the tool-kit is an SOP seems appropriate. From the bureaucratic model of organizational functioning it is common to evidence SOP’s as methods for accomplishing tasks, more so if the tasks are related to the organizations goals (Birnbaum, 1988). The interview data evidences that the technologies or procedures of SET are exactly what the organization suggests in its tool-kit document. The use of both questionnaires and participatory meetings with the student representatives are two out of three suggested methods for managing SET data (UiO (b), 2012), that are being used at

the time of this thesis by all three disciplines. This means that when systematic processes are regulated. From the interview data the respondents of each discipline agree that the SET is a regulated tool, and used consistently every semester.

Final Remarks

The assumptions drawn in the second chapter of this thesis were correct. Under a bureaucratic organization work is structured through rules and regulations, thus development of study programmes is strengthened because it is a mandated activity. SET is then used as a tool for change in the way work is organized. This means that SET is structurally regulated to help the member of the organization to make any necessary changes. This finding however is not enough to conclude that SET is indeed a tool for change. Examining the process of development and SET are both aspects needed for constructing a better-informed conclusion. It is possible to moderately conclude, that the work of the QA system is organized bureaucratically via academic council, and surprisingly through a strong leader (Head of Department). Second, SET is structured to serve as a tool that feeds the goals of the QA system. Finally, it is possible to assert that as Birnbaum (1988) illustrates change in curriculum, can be administratively controlled, which is what the findings indicate.

7.2 Process

The process refers to the way members of a HE organization interact with the structure (Kezar, 2001). In this section the discussion derives from the findings on processes in light of development (change) of study programmes and SET as a tool for change. Most of the findings are based on the document analysis, where the interview data complements the findings. It is found that a) the processes are conditioned by structural functions, and b) as a result academic leaders and administration staff maneuver with different organizational models.

Conditioned Interaction by QA

One general argument as proposed in this thesis is that the change process seems to depend on the structural functions of this single-case. In this organization the QA system has two

purposes of quality: *fitness for purpose* and *value for money* (Harvey & Green, 1993). The sum of these purposes has some implications in the way processes are executed.

From the findings there seems to be a general perspective that SET is an instrument that allows the monitoring of activities. From the document analysis it can be stated that SET is used to feed the QA system, and that as a result QA leads to change of the study programmes. The way in which SET feeds the QA system is precisely under the notion that SET is a monitoring tool. As described by Harvey and Green (1993) a performance indicator, like SET, helps the organization identify issues with efficiency. It is also found that in the research from Spooren et al. (2013) the authors sustain, that SET is understood by most scholars as a very common tool used in HE organizations for quality purposes. Some of the purposes are to improve, monitor (internally) QA, for appraisal, to demonstrate QA procedures are in place, for performance management, and even for policy-making. The respondents in this single-case do agree with Spooren et al. (2013), in the way in which SET is perceived. It is evidenced that stakeholders interact with SET, as a performance indicator that signals what aspects of the programmes requires revisions. This is a characteristic of the bureaucratic model (Birnbaum, 1988) explains that its members are inclined to structure problems and solutions, therefore if a performance indicator such as SET shows low level of quality, then members act upon it and reorganize the structure. Such action result in the development of study programmes, and this is precisely what the respondent perceive.

7.2.1 Bureaucratic Influences

From the interview data the respondents' perceptions about the process of development (change), and SET echoes with the rules and regulations of the QA system for the single-case. The evidence from the interview data suggests that revisions are taking place because this is expected to happen. The academic leaders understand that revisions of study programmes have to occur. This explains why all three disciplines are currently working on study programmes revisions. The academic leaders and administration staff are limiting to follow the rules of the organization. In this sense both development and change of study programmes are planned.

Likewise the use of SET data is also expected to be included as student input, in the proposals for change. The document analysis also reveals the way in which SET data is to be

collected, as described in the “tool-kit” document available in the organization’s website. This document fulfills the characteristics of an SOP (Birnbaum, 1988), because it explains in full the methods of collecting data, it illustrates them with very clear examples, and it even suggest how to analyze the results. The findings reveal that all three disciplines evidence that they use questionnaires as a main source for gathering data. Having such a systematic process in place, shows that the three disciplines can coordinate SET in their operations. Most of all, it reflects that SOP’s become embedded in the way stakeholders interact with the structure and “come to be considered as a ‘given’ by the organization” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 117).

In contradiction to what has been argued about bureaucratic structures and processes, the hard-applied discipline is able to change and restore its study programme despite that neither control mechanisms of SET nor academic council are present. According to the respondents the Head of Department is perceived to have the power to influence development (change) in their study programme. The data collected is rather limited to better explain the impact of change for this discipline. This unexpected finding describes that change can be from the top-down, but there is no evidence that SET had any implications on the way the Head of Department processed change. That explains why the respondents (HPU and HPA) of this discipline do not perceive SET as a tool for change.

Both respondents argue that there is very little control of SET data, where there are no clear methods in place. This argument is evidenced by the academic leader of the hard-applied (HAU) who claims that SET is something they do, because it has to be done thus undermining the potential of SET as a tool for change.

In spite of these conditions change and development of study programmes are not hindered in this discipline, and the role of a leader can in fact create change top-down. This finding on leadership could be explained from a political and bureaucratic model, yet it requires understanding more about the way in which the Head of Department interacted with the structure and the members of the department. Thus gaining an insight about SET as a tool for change, which the data collected does not reveal in full.

7.2.2 Political Influences

In the absence of well-defined change processes, or more SOP’ as those found in a purely bureaucratic organization, key stakeholders are left with no other choice but to engage

politically in the way decision-making takes place (Birnbaum, 1988). The findings from the document analysis clearly state that each faculty ought to establish their own monitoring process of QA of the study programmes, and that student input ought to be considered. Student participation is regulated at a national level that means all organizations should include the student's participation in the decision-making process. This participation is claimed to be collegiate, which seems to oppose the definition given by Birnbaum (1988).

First of all, in purely collegial and bureaucratic organizational models, students are not active participants in decision-making processes. In a purely collegial body its members are attentive to the opinions of "non-members such as students and staff, but the right of these to participation is severely circumscribed" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 88). Active participation is rather a characteristic of the political organization, where problems are assigned to those stakeholders who would most likely believe and show interest in a particular topic (Birnbaum, 1988), in this case SET.

As assumed in chapter two members of a student union or academics are both interest groups who most likely believe in SET, and the data confirms it. Both the soft-applied and hard-applied disciplines have assigned the task to students, whereas the hard-pure has assigned the task to the course leaders. As explained by Birnbaum (1988), in the inclusion of students, researchers/scientists, administration, the board, the council, leaders; constitutes emblematic elements. Active participation holds the subunits together, or at least to work together, as opposed to a rally of energetic crowds fighting for a cause. Furthermore, having the students collect, summarize and present, within each discipline allows for a "single" interpretation as a result this diminished the tensions between student and teachers. In a purely political organization there is a general tendency of gathering data from different sources, which results in numerous interpretations of a single phenomenon (Birnbaum, 1988). Probably this explains why the academic leaders of these two disciplines perceive the process of change as democratic. As active participation through regulated structures coordinates work, and allows stakeholders to work collaboratively, which may result in a coalition of shared values.

Second, the academic council although is structurally bureaucratic seems to engage politically. As observed in this single-case, the type of academic council has representation from different levels within a study programme (students, teachers, leader, administration, among others). All members are expected to participate in development, as the academic

leaders from the soft-applied and hard-applied disciplines explain. To sustain that academic leaders can make changes on their own is not accurate, there is a body (academic council) where power is diffused. As described by (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 139) structurally the distribution of power is attached to the different interests of its members. Therefore, the council acts more or less like a coalition,

Challenging the formal authority structure... Where administrative power is considered strong enough to overwhelm any conceivable coalition... Or where power is accessible to all and people believe that their interests will be received due consideration in all decisions (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 141)

The interest of the members, in this single-case, is the development of study programmes in light of QA system for the organization. Therefore the members or the coalition itself is fashioned for that mere purpose. Not only does this council, has a defined role and a defined purpose which allows the organization achieve its objectives, but also has sufficient power and influence to attain the goals.

7.2.3 Anarchical Influences

So far it has been said that in the view of the five respondents and the from the document analysis it is possible to argue that all three disciplines have bureaucratic structures. As mentioned before, development (change) and SET instruments are bureaucratically regulated. Another common characteristic is that all three disciplines interact in a democratic manner. And as pointed recently, representation from various actors is politically symbolic, that is the academic council, who acts as a coalition of interests for the mere purpose of change and development of study programmes.

A general finding about process of development (change) is that development is *big* change. Academic leaders and the administration staff coincide using the same adjective. To describe a task or work as *big/huge* can be connected in its pure literal form as the amount workload. Yet to limit to a literal association is rather elusive. A more substantial implication can be about the process itself, because it involves a number of conditions or even influences. From the data collected, it is observed that the combination of influences that condition the process of change is slightly anarchical. In a purely anarchical model organizational functioning as described by Birnbaum (1988) processes display a

Mixture of collegial interactions, bureaucratic structures, ongoing coalitions, chance, and cognitive processes by which people make inferences and judgments (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 165)

In the examination about the way the respondents perceive the process of change they too refer to influences from bureaucratic structures (regulated revisions of study programmes), collegial interactions (democratic process of deliberating), and coalitions (academic council representation) as the general interpretation of change.

The respondents perceive that development of study programmes is big, possibly because the influences that impact the process of development create a chaotic environment. As noted in the research from Aamodt et al. (2016) it seems that in this single-case academic leaders and administrative staff deal with a chaotic organization, as the academic leaders in their research inform. Thus describing development as a big change. In the same manner the respondents from this thesis also have less changes to make more structural or organizational changes (Aamodt et al., 2016) on their own, because the bureaucratic, political and collegial processes influence them.

7.2.4 SET is used Politically

It was observed in Chapter 5 that in Norway all universities and university colleges are bound to have a participatory system where students have the right to take part of the decision-making council of their respective institution. In this single-case, the organization regulated such legislation, and that is why it is argued that SET is bureaucratically structured. However, the participatory involvement of students in gathering, collecting, summarizing, presenting SET data does function in a politically manner. Their participation in the academic councils is evidenced in two out of three disciplines selected. Most specifically within the hard-applied discipline, which has assigned this task to the students that are member of the student union.

SET data is protected against any misuse because the students handle SET data, thus there is no chance of it being filtered out. On the contrary, SET data would be mostly presented in a way that builds a case for the students, in a political arena, rather than that of the teachers. The students are the ones who *experience* the quality of teaching and that of the courses directly (Spooren et al., 2013). To which the administrative staff respondents agree with. In the view of both SAA and HPA respondents, the impact of SET is mostly towards change in the

courses. In the view of the respondents from the administrative staff, SET is a tool that course leaders do use to make changes. The respondents believe that the data that results from questionnaires and/or personal communications do make a difference.

Final Remarks

The findings suggest that SET has a small effect on development. It could be attributed to the fact that students have a voice in the system, through regulated policies within the organization and from state level legislations. Thus ensuring that the process of development includes the full democratic participation, as described by the respondents. From the assumptions developed in chapter two, it can be argued that systematized or web-based SET data does not weaken development, as it was assumed. In fact it is used and taken into account. More so, there are also face-to-face methods that compliment the web-based data.

7.3 Attitude

The process refers to the way members of a HE organization feel about the work (Kezar, 2001). A better way to explain this is by dividing this perception into two. As Maassen (1996) suggests the aspect of attitude can be better explained through the values about work and those of the profession itself. In the same manner this analysis explains the concept of attitude. From the findings from interview data it is found that a) the values of work derives from bureaucratic and political influences, and b) the values of the profession are discipline based.

7.3.1 Bureaucratic Influences

After having understood the structure and the process of development in study programmes it becomes much clearer to interpret and discuss the findings from the perceptions of academic leaders and administrative staff.

From the interviews conducted with the academic leaders of the three disciplines it can be argued that each one of them is aware of the value of their work (Maassen, 1996). The

academic leaders understand that managerial traits are needed. As one of the respondents wittily states: “wearing the head of education hat” (HPU). The characteristics of the job itself that require monitoring, supervision, control, and planning are evidenced in the organizational rhetoric used by the respondents. The bureaucratic influences are evidenced in the way the respondents accept their role as academic leaders, as another leader responds: “I have to do my job” (SAU). In a purely bureaucratic model, the members and most particularly the leaders do not question the job specifications and adhere to the expectations specified for the role (Birnbaum, 1988). However, this HE organization is not purely bureaucratic. There are collegial influences that explain the way its members value their work and their profession (Maassen, 1996).

The attitude of the administrative staff is quite straightforward in terms of work. From the data collected the respondents engage in the importance of development as a task that ought to occur, similarly the perception about SET as a monitoring tool. Thus they comply and support the academic leaders understanding that some times their role is limited. Yet to the respondents there is evidence of the values for their profession (Maassen, 1996). As mentioned by all academic leaders, the input from their scientists/researchers is essential in the process of development. Equally the academic leaders view teaching just as essential; for which they describe that change includes acquiring new teaching technologies, the use of interactive tools, and being scientist in teaching. The search for better ways of teaching cannot be explained through a purely collegial organizational functioning model (Birnbaum, 1988), because new ways of teaching do not characterize this type of organization. However, it is argued that the permeability and market influences for developing and improving courses and study programmes are viewed as a way of adhering to the organizational regulations of this single-case organization. This argument is drawn from the way in which the respondents of the soft-applied discipline explain how teaching and research are elements that define the organization, thus academics and scientists must be able to both effectively, for which new teaching methods are being investigated. Similarly the respondent of the hard-pure discipline explains that adapting scientific methods to teaching is a practice that should ensure being more professional.

Unlike the administrative staff the academic leaders have to juggle with the bureaucratic processes of change and development, and the values of their profession and discipline. Thus

being an academic leader implies confronting the collegial influences that are active within each discipline.

7.3.2 Collegial Influences

The data collected evidences that the respondents have a two forces that impact the way the perceive change. One is the bureaucratic role, of being leader, and the second the profession itself their discipline. The evidence shows that changes in study programmes tend to personally affect some academics. Across the three disciplines all respondent agree that one of the most difficult situations for them is to have to engage in changes that require eliminating a course or modifying the teaching methods. As Birnbaum (1988) explains in a purely collegial organization teaching is not influenced by any modern technologies are taken place outside the organization. Academics are most likely to follow the traditional teaching, with the traditional materials, thus maintaining the traditions of the discipline and that of the organization (Birnbaum, 1988). In the same was, the respondents claim that changes and development of courses, which are part of the development of the study programme, becomes an emotional element, for which SET seems to be an tactless tool in their opinion, about other members' feelings.

Final Remarks

The findings suggest that SET has an effect on the way academic of an organization value their profession. This could be attributed to the collegial culture embedded in these academics. It is also possible to confirm that the assumption about development being strengthen when academic developers comply with their work.

8 Conclusions and Future Research

The investigation conducted in this thesis means to serve as providing more knowledge about SET as a tool for change and development of study programmes at the University of Oslo. The thesis uses the combination four models of organizational functioning (Birnbaum, 1988) to interpret the data collected. However in order to examine change deriving from the use of SET as a tool the thesis also combined the perspective of change as presented by Kezar (2001).

As a general conclusion, the models from Birnbaum (1988) do not help explaining quality or the preferred view of quality that could potentially derive from the collegial, bureaucratic, political and anarchical models. Should the models have provided this framework, it would have been very helpful in the analysis because maybe a relationship between model and a preferred QA view could have better explained SET and development of study programmes. Specially after having seen how both SET and QA are two concepts that are part of a quality system.

8.1 How does SET impact study programme development?

First of all, SET does not have an impact of study programmes. SET is rather a tool that feeds the QA system. Study programme development is limited to a regulated revision as established by the University of Oslo. In this thesis it is evidenced that SET is a tool that helps the QA system operate, but does not foster development not change of study programmes.

8.2 How can SET be conceptualized?

SET can be conceptualized as a bureaucratic tool that is used politically. The respondents of this study perceive SET as a regulated method for monitoring quality of course and study

programmes. The respondents understand that SET is to be used because it is part of the QA system, and thus they must follow the rules.

Since in purely bureaucratic and political organizations it matters who manages any type of data, SET is used politically. In this case students are managing the data and summarizing/presenting to academics/scientists and to the administration. In purely bureaucratic organizations students don't participate (Birnbaum, 1988). Thus to have students manage SET is without question politically inclined.

The research from Aamodt et al. (2016) shows that the academic leaders do consider student input, this single-case study can add that such perception is due to the fact that student participation is regulated both internally by the organization, and externally by the legislation. Therefore academic leaders are obliged to include students in the decision-making process.

8.3 In what ways is SET embedded in QA?

SET is embedded in the QA system in the University of Oslo as a monitoring tool of the quality system. The respondents do not perceive SET as a tool for change. The QA system, which is regulated by the University of Oslo, has its own aims, which is what defines the path of development. The strong bureaucratic influences onto QA and SET defines the attempt to link goals to purposes (Birnbaum, 1988).

8.4 How do academics and administrative staff perceive the relevance of SET as a tool for change?

It is interesting to see that the academic leaders and administrative staff interviewed display much of the characteristics of leadership in the bureaucratic organizational functioning model as described by Birnbaum (1988). However academics do stand apart from their work attitude and respect and value their profession (Maassen, 1996). For which they perceive that students' opinions of a course and/or programme are of great value to them, as educators.

8.5 Limitations

One of the biggest challenges in this thesis was not having a positive response from the administrative staff representing the hard-applied discipline. This could be attributed to the fact that the timing for the interviewing was at the beginning of the semester.

A second limitation is the fact that this thesis could have benefited from interviewing the members of the organization who handle SET, these are student representatives, teachers, and administration personnel. Their views and perception about SET as a tool for change could have given this thesis a different spin on the findings which could have complicated in a very good way, the analysis of findings.

8.6 Future research

One of the ideas that result from this thesis is about the future of SET in the way it could be used. It would be very interesting to examine the relationship between SET and QA moving away from study programme development. Even though the University of Oslo has defined the use of SET in its QA system, there is not enough evidence that corroborates if the QA view of the University matches that of the stakeholders. In doing so it could be possible to observe how SET is being negotiated amongst stakeholders, in terms of its purpose. Further research on the political use of SET can help explain the combination of bureaucratic structures and political processes of SET.

Likewise, to examine the way on which SET impacts each discipline can be of great value. This thesis found that all three disciplines have different ways of handling SET, where different stakeholders are key participants in the management of SET. In this view, increasing the number of respondents and including those who manage SET directly it will be possible to better examine the impact that SET has in each discipline.

Another aspect that this thesis does not provide is an investigation of the changes that have taken place in some study programmes. If there is evidence that some of the changes derive

from SET, or from student opinions, then it will be possible to evaluate SET as a tool for change.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions

Interview Script

I will provide a short introduction about the way this interview will be conducted. I will explain about the recording, and deletion of it afterwards. I will add that I will ask for clarifications of their responses, to better understand their reasoning.

Introduction.

Background

This investigation came to be what it is today about 2 years ago, after seeing how our Master Programme has made modifications of their course design, and curriculum as per the suggestions received from the Student Evaluation of Teaching surveys (via netskjemma).

It became very interesting to me, specially after having studied in two other different contexts, that our programme actually read student feedback. Therefore, I begun digging up on this area.

About Study Programme Selection

I purposely selected three study programmes: biology, psychology and informatics. The goal is to attempt to gather a stronger representation of UiO, based on some “epistemological differences” (Trowler, 2009) these departments have. Using such differences, one may categorize all study programmes in four major dimensions: hard applied, soft, applied, hard pure, and soft pure (Becher, 1994). Given the short timing I have for conducting this investigation I left out the soft applied study areas (like mine), and focused on the other three rather.

About the interview

After having checked with NSD, and based of the nature of my study, I am allowed to record our interview and store the data (answers) in my personal computer. I am also allowed to share the responses with my supervisor as I analyze the data.

As mentioned in my invitation message, your personal data is not relevant for this study. Rather the opinions/insights of different study programmes, on a particular subject relevant for all.

Now lets begin, shall we?

Warm up questions

How long have you been working at UiO?

Have you had other roles (or worked in other levels) here at the university?

How often do you put into practice new ways to (teach) or (administer) in your study?

(As a teacher) (As an administrator)

Now that we are on the topic of DEVELOPING trends... Lets go in a bit deeper in the topic of development in your study programme here at UiO.

(Recording will begin at this point)

What can you tell me about your understanding of STUDY PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT?

Can you tell about a time when you were involved with the development of the study programme? If not, can you kindly explain the reason for this?

(*In case there is no development... I will ask the questions below *)

How did the participation on Study Programme Development impacted your own ways of doing your job (as a teacher) (as an administrator)?

Can you describe to me the process of study programme development?

Can you describe what type of developments were implemented in your Study Programme? (In a more punctual manner, maybe)

Would you have done something different, now that you have reflected on development?

**** In case there has not been any development the questions are ****

Can you explain to me why do you say there has not been any development in your Study Programme?

What do you know about the process of Study Programme development?

What does it mean to you (as a teacher) (as an administrator) that there is no Study Programme Development in your field?

What kind of developmental aspect, in your opinion, could be implemented in your Study Programme?

Introduction to the next section:

So far we have been discussing about development. I would like to go in deeper in this subject and talk about the actual forces (drivers) that create these changes... and about the instruments your study programme uses in the process of change.

In your experience, where do the most influential ideas for change come from?

What type of instruments does your Study Programme use when making changes?

Aside from the instruments you mentioned, have you thought of any other instruments -not used right now- that could lead to change?

Do you agree with the process of change in your Study Programme?

Would you change any step about the process itself?

In your opinion, do you think there is a sense of change culture within your Study Programme?

In your opinion, do you think your Study Programme needs to change in any way?

In regards to the participants who take part in the process of change...

In your opinion, what do you think of the role of the key players in this process?

Would you do/or would have done anything different from what the key role players did/ or have done?

What role do the students have in the process of change?

Now that we are talking more precisely about the role of the students, let move onto a related topic.

How familiar are you with Student Evaluation of Teaching?

What can you tell me about the use of Student Evaluation of Teaching in your department?

In your opinion, what do you think the use of Student Evaluation of Teaching means to your role (as a teacher) (as an administrator)?

Can you tell about a time where you have been impacted by Student Evaluation of Teaching?

In what ways do you think Student Evaluation of Teaching can be used?

In your opinion, in what ways do you think Student Evaluation of Teaching may be a good instrument for change and potential Study Programme Development?

In retrospect, have you ever considered that Student Evaluation of Teaching can be an instrument for change, towards the development of study programmes?

Thank you for your time.

(Recording stops)

Final remarks

I might reach out to you again once I analyze your answers to ensure I am interpreting them as you meant. I will do this via e-mail. Again your personal data will not be included in this investigation. I would love to share with you my findings with you about my observations. Kindly let me know if you are at all interested.

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Van: Carol Herseth [mailto:carolherseth@gmail.com]

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Publicatie Informatie:

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Auteur van de publicatie: Carol Herseth
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Waar worden de afbeeldingen gebruikt: Introduction Chapter, under the Quality Assurance of Higher Education Organization section
Welke taal of landenrechten zijn van toepassing: English

Afbeeldingen Informatie

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