CHAPTER SEVEN

QUALITY TEACHING: SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES: RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS AND FIELD NOTES

Introduction

This chapter explores the teachers' and principals' perspectives of quality teaching and the contextual factors that influence quality teaching on attempts to answer the following questions:

- **What are the school stakeholders' perspectives of quality teaching in Jordan?**
- **What are the factors that influence quality teaching from the school stakeholders' perspectives?**

The answer for the first question helped the researcher to complete the descriptive picture of the concept of quality teaching. The MOE's perspective, as legislative body, was presented in chapter five and this chapter presents the school stakeholders' perspectives of quality teaching as policy implementers. The answer for the second question helped the researcher to explore the contextual factor that influence quality teaching as an attempt to connect that with the conceptual map for the study as it was presented in chapter three. Ultimately, both questions have helped the research to answer the main research question which is: to what extent the NSWQT Model can be applied to the Jordanian primary school context?

The chapter is divided into two sections: the first section explores the school stakeholders' perspectives of quality teaching, and the second section reveals the potential factors influencing quality teaching.

Section One: School Stakeholders' Perspectives of Quality Teaching

The analysis of the teachers' and principals' interviews shows that their perspectives of quality teaching revolved around the elements and themes discussed below.

Instructional Objectives and Variety

The most common response of school stakeholders was that quality teachers who implement quality teaching determine their instructional objectives before beginning a lesson. The school stakeholders believed these objectives should be comprehended, clear, varied, timely and applicable. Quality teachers should establish sophisticated semester and lesson plans that include instructional objectives. One teacher said: 'The effective teacher is the teacher who able to determine their objectives so that these objectives are clear and varied. An effective teacher is able to vary their lesson activities so that the activities are suitable for all student levels' (Maha, February 16, 2005). Another teacher suggested that the objectives should be both comprehensive, and remedial if need be. She commented:

> I have objectives in my semester and lesson plans, and I include my methods, teaching materials and assessment. Objectives must relate to all students and be assessable. If I have a problem in the classroom, or a student has a problem, the objectives should include this student and the plan should have some objectives designed for this student so that I can deal with him or teach him in the light of these objectives (Sharefah, February 27, 2005).

Most of the schools' stakeholders agreed on the need for variety in a teacher's approach, aided by varied and interesting teaching materials, equipment use and teaching techniques. From the interviews and field notes. it is clear that utilizing different, but appropriate and innovative, techniques is seen as fundamental for quality teaching and the learning process. One teacher said: 'An effective teacher is able to vary the activities in their lessons so that the lessons are suitable for all student levels' (Maha, February 16, 2005). One principal commented on one of the teachers at her school (Hassnah) who was concerned about using a varied approach to teaching. The school had held a workshop three years previously on 'training teachers how to vary teaching strategies to achieve teaching outcomes'. She felt that teaching techniques should be varied and 'every objective in a teaching plan should [ideally] have a different/varied approach. The principal said:

> ... the person who most benefited from this [the workshop] was Ms [Hassnah]. Even when she first arrived at the school, she suggested that the first goal was to gain the students' attention. The second goal was to use class groups. The third goal involved using the board or cards or activities in or outside the classroom, in the corridors or around the school. She is concerned about variety, and has used all kinds of teaching methods, discussions, debates, cooperative groups and peer tutorials (a principal, February 23, 2005)..

The principal said: 'peer teaching is more useful than teacher-centred teaching'. She spoke of Hassnah using cooperative learning as a strategy; good students help their peers but

these good students also gain from he experience: 'She encourages good students to help others, telling the good student: "thi; student is your responsibility because they are part of your group and you all want a good outcome".' Cooperation within, and competition between groups, act as reinforcement for the learning experience.

> [Hassnah also:] ... varies her assessment methods. She follows up everything; especially practice written papers, despite these being discouraged by the Ministry of Education because they consider they are exam papers. She likes students to write, regardless of how the technique is labelled. So she called them work papers, to teach [students] how to answer questions and promote their thinking (a principal, February 23, 2005).

Principals, as well as teachers, considered instructional objectives and the variation of these objectives and the relevant teaching techniques as important. This is an indicator of a school culture in which school stakeholders have a cohesive understanding of teaching and learning strategies. Some teachers went on to explain in more detail their teaching approaches inside the classroom. One teacher explained his teaching approach by saying:

> Every lesson needs goals, methods, activities and assessment. Now the new method in mathematics is called 'warming up'. This method depends on thinking, not on the writing, as you saw in the lesson I just gave. I teach by clapping activities or by the number of fans [teaching material] or the numerals on the ruler or asking question such as "I am a number..." and the students respond. I start w th the 'warming up'. After that comes the implementation; at this stage I move from the perceivable to the semi-perceivable to the simply (symbolic). We do a work paper or the activities in the textbook. ... But if I note that I have students with learning difficulties, I focus on the work paper and the perceivable or motor activities. Through action, the student will remember more readily. The Arabic language lesson, I divided it into two sessions, conversation and reading (Jamal, February 20, 2005).

The interviewed teachers try to implement their objectives using different teaching approaches of quality teaching and learning and modifying teaching activities taking into account the ability of their students in the classroom.

Skills Acquisition and Implementation

Schools' stakeholders agreed that quality teaching makes a difference to the degree of students' acquired skills. The interviews and the field notes confirmed that stakeholders were vitally concerned about the acquisition of skills. They celebrated teaching that led to the desired outcomes and also improvements in students' skills. One teacher said:

> I enjoy teaching first grade very much because the teacher can easily mould them [the children]. I mean the students are immature [when they come here]; they don't know anything. So when the students start to write and read

[even] one word that I have aught them, it's something I don't forget. I feel as if something is carrying me and I am flying, because it means I have really achieved something that I worked hard for. ... So when they achieve something I am more than happy and I keep telling my friends and my husband about it. I tell everyone who comes to the school about my experience. Thanks to God, when I get in the classroom I forget all my private problems and issues and focus on teaching those children (Samar, February 22, 2005).

Another teacher described his teaching skills and then distinguished between teaching and learning strategies for acquiring skills. He mentioned strategies that make students think on how to solve problems and ultimately to acquire skills. He commented:

In mathematics, the students in my class are not dependent on written work [to solve problems], instead they use thinking and induction – mental processes. For example, in addition, I ask the students question such as "give me two digits whose sum is 5". The question challenges the student's thinking; he has to use his mind, and not just [count on] his fingers (Jamal, February 20, 2005). .

The teacher (Jamal) felt using inductive and deductive techniques made students think – '[the students would be involved in] intellectual work'. He enjoys teaching:

... teaching is like planting grain, and when the grain grows you can harvest it. I feel happy that I have achieved something and see my students learning how to write and read. (Jama , February 20, 2005).

Another teacher saw her teaching as building a foundation of skills for the future. Her message in teaching is to encourage students to connect what they have learnt in their real life and construct on their prior knowledge, which will help them solve problems they might face in the future. She went or to say:

Sometimes I think that for those students, whatever I have taught them or the information they have gained will be a cornerstone of their future. When any girl among my students grows up and becomes an adult, I can't imagine she will forget or not be influenced by whatever I have taught and shaped in her personality (Maha, February 16, 2005).

One principal described one of the quality teachers in her school by saying:

She uses good teaching methods and keeps the students' attention. Her teaching approaches are suitable and connected to the lesson's topic and objectives. She asks questions at the beginning of the lesson in order to assess the students' prior knowledge from the previous lessons (a principal, February 14, 2005).

Having students implement what had been taught was seen as fundamental to quality teaching from both the teachers' and principals' perspectives, and as a significant indicator of quality teaching. One teacher said

> I have already finished four months of the first semester and taught 11 consonant letters and all the vowels. I have many students starting to break up words into letter and sounds and so learn to read. They read everything written in the street signs, send messages to their parents using mobiles. In mathematics it's the same, [the students are] adding and subtracting. They are active. All these things were achieved; they feel happy when they come to the school, not feeling that they were forced to come (Samar, February 22, 2005).

Another teacher explained the way that students can implement their acquired skills and how the achievement of these skills reflects on their personalities. Her concept of quality teaching entailed building students socially, psychologically and academically. She spoke about her students' achievements, saying:

> Now the student knows how to read if you give her a newspaper or a journal, and she can answer questions in mathematics, such as in addition, multiplication, division and subtraction; that means she has achieved these objectives. In addition, there is emotional growth, which means building a students' self-confidence, honesty and understanding of the people around them. That means if you value them they will value others; respecting their elders and the youngest [in the community]. If we can build these values we will have succeeded (Maha, February 16, 2005).

One principal described one of the quality teachers in his school as using a 'practical' rather than 'theoretical' approach in skills acquisition. He said:

> When he gets into the classroom he makes or creates interactions among the students, like a chemical reaction. He ... makes the students interact with each other as groups, so they learn from each other ... and get benefits from each other. The new approach in teaching is by grouping; it is sometimes called the circles method, each group sitting around a circular table. They help each other,... they learn from each other how to write and read. He also uses teaching materials extensively, creating the materials himself, ... and he teaches in a practical way, using that material. (a principal, February 20, 2005).

Another principal noted of a teacher identified as a quality teacher should implement the students' skills to real life, making learning relevant because it impacts on the future of the students. She said:

> One of the positive things that she frequently talks about with her colleagues is how we can transfer learning from theory to real life or everyday actions, and how we should convince a student that what he had learned in school is useful to him in his life. Therefore, he learns not because of the teacher, but because it is relevant to his future. (a principal, February 23, 2005).

School stakeholders, teachers and principals, agreed that the preparation of good instructional objectives and using a variety of teaching approaches will enhance the quality

teaching and learning process and ultimately students' outcomes at different levels. Such systematic skills acquisition or construction will help students in investing and implementing these skills in their real life at different stages and to different degrees.

The Physical and Social Environment of the Classroom

Part of the physical environment is teaching aids. Teaching aids were seen by the school stakeholders as an essential element in the quality teaching process. Most commented that a quality teacher was able to implement their objectives successfully by using the available teaching aids effectively. This effectiveness was judged as having students grasp the desired knowledge regardless of the quality of the aids or their source. One teacher said: 'If they provided us with teaching materials it would make teaching easier. Sometimes I buy these things with my own money. Others I copy and make and [I] also bring some teaching materials from home. They provide us with [only a very] few simple things' (Maha, February 16, 2005). Another teacher considered the provision of teaching materials to be the most positive sign of cooperation between the teacher and the principal. He said, 'When I ask the principal for teaching materials he responds positively every time. If there is no cooperation on this point, there will be no teaching and learning process' (Jamal, February 20, 2005). Another teacher commented that 'Instructional materials can be frustrating or helpful', meaning that a shortage of aids in those situations where they could be most helpful was frustrating. She continued, 'Most of the time I buy these materials with my own money because they are very important for teaching, and when I can't find them in the school I have to buy them; I can't wait until they are provided, it takes too much time' (Hassnah, February 23, 2005). One principal, describing one of the participating teachers who used teaching materials to motivate her students and to stimulate learning, said:

> ... she uses teaching materials, even if the material is simple; sometimes she uses materials from the surrounding environment ... she uses stones for counting, matches, chocolate bars, ... anything [suitable]. She takes into account the student [in her class] with [learning] difficulties; she takes into consideration his psychology, encourages him frequently, and gives him stimulation. In her free time she teaches those students (a principal, February 16, 2005).

All stakeholders considered teaching aids as essential elements in quality teaching. Quality teaching can be elaborated by teachers who are able to manage themselves under any situation in providing teaching illustrations and aids that can enhance quality teaching and learning and ultimately students' outcomes.

From the researcher's field notes, it was clear that the observed classrooms' were clean and well organised. Teachers were concerned about students' cleanliness and health. Further, students' seats were well organised and minimised any potential harm from overcrowding. Despite the shortage of resources and the lack of some other types of support, the observed teachers and their principals came up with initiatives to establish reasonable and desired quality teaching and learning environments. At one of the schools visited, the researcher noted the poor condition of three c assrooms in an annexe. The annexe had no teachers' room, no students' canteen and no storage room. However, the teachers were comfortable and had adapted well to this environment as had their students. One of the teachers said:

> As you can see we have nothing, but we are happy because we know each other and we work solidly and cooperatively; sometimes we even help our students with their pocket money. We feel that we are one family. These challenges have motivated us to work regardless of the context (Samar, February 22, 2005).

Classroom organization, safety and comfort were regarded as platforms for quality teaching from the perspectives of the school stakeholders. Quality teaching can work with teachers who are able to develop their teaching environment even if the resources are limited. Most of the interviewed school stakeholders agreed that the relationship between the teachers and their students was a crucial element in the quality teaching and learning process. They commented that the quality teacher who implements elements of quality teaching should be able to establish warm and compassionate relationships with their students. Most teachers said that 'my students call me mum/dad'. Furthermore, other school stakeholders saw a quality teacher as a person who could establish friendly relationships with their students, and be patient with, and tolerant and respectful of, their students. One teacher said:

> My strength is that I have patience; I bear with children whatever they do. I control them at the right time. Sometimes I want them to be free because you cannot control children for 45 minutes, [it's] impossible... whether the teacher is capable, or holds a whip to them (Samar, February 22, 2005).

Samar felt children need the opportunity to be children, to be free to move about, to be free from a too rigid application of 'rules'. 'Many of the parents who have observed my lessons have said that I am lucky to be patient and to tolerate childish annoyances'. But at the same time she ensured that her students achieved the educational objectives:

> As you saw in the class, whatever the pupils did, they have to achieve the objectives, even if it takes to the end of the school year. A student must write and read; he should know the numbers and how to add and subtract, I cannot

give up. I can allow students to move in the class because it is human nature to do so, especially for the young. (Samar, February 22, 2005).

She went on to say:

> They hold my hands and try to get close, laughing and joking. Sometimes they go a bit too far, but I never use "violence". In the holy festivals they come to my home to visit me. I live close to them; also the parents keep in contact by phone. No one is absent without either asking for permission or sending an apology, and sometimes the parents call me about that. That shows there is a respect (Samar, February 22, 2005).

Another teacher considered patience as a fundamental element in the relationship between students and their teacher in the first grade. He went on to say:

> They treat me as a father not a teacher. Showing warmth and compassion in the class is very important. My most important strength is that I am patient and tolerant with the students. In first grade, students, honestly, can be hard work. They need patience and [then] more patience ... because teaching first grade is not easy (Mahmmoud, February 21, 2005).

One principal described one of the participating teacher's relationships with her students as a relationship that continues to grow and this relationship eventually takes the form of friendship. She commented:

> Her relationship with the students is very strong and persists for a long time. Students in the fourth grade are still in contact with her because she taught them in the third grade, and so on into the fifth and sixth grades. The students in the [present] seventh grade were her students; she taught them when they were in the third grade, [these students still] have a warm relationship with her; they listen to her and they obey her more than their current teachers because they respect her. This shows the quality of her personal relationship with her students (a principal, February 23, 2005).

Another teacher said: 'I treat them as friends' (Hassnah, February 23, 2005). The establishment of warm human relationships between students and teachers was encouraged by other school personnel.

All the interviewed school stakeholders believed that reinforcement is an essential part of quality teaching and a quality teacher reinforces positive behaviour and academic achievement in their classes. One teacher said: 'I use a lot of reinforcement. I try to stimulate the girls to maximize their ability, ... saying negative things such as "you're not good student", I think, reflects negatively on students, even good students' (Maha, February 16, 2005).

From the researcher's field notes and observation of the 14 lessons, it can be said that all teachers were using positive reinforcement. The participating teachers always asked class members to applaud a student when they answered correctly. It was part of the teachers' day-to-day teaching practices. Some teachers reinforced certain behavioural characteristics. One teacher said: 'I regularly reinforce self-confidence, I like it and I like it in a student, because it reflects on the student cognitively' (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

In terms of classroom management, school stakeholders considered that controlling students in the classroom was a significant characteristic of a quality teacher. One teacher said: 'My strength is that I am able to control students in the classroom so that I have their attention during the lesson. If a teacher cannot control their class, they will not be able to deliver their lesson properly' (Sharefah, February 27, 2005). Another teacher said: 'My strength is in controlling this number of students who have such varying abilities' (Hassnah, February 23, 2005). Therefore, the physical and social classroom environment is considered by school stakeholders as the main part of the quality teaching context and quality teaching concept cannot be understood without such environment.

Conscience and Honesty

From the participants' interviews, it can be concluded that conscience and honesty were a great concern in the quality teachers' work. From personal experience, it appeared to this researcher that these teachers were committed to Islamic obligations and principles. They felt there was reward in doing their job properly and in using self-monitoring techniques of supervision, investigation and evaluation. They believed that quality teaching is implemented by a quality teacher who fears God and appeals to God to be satisfied with that individual's performance. One teacher said:

> For me, thanks to God, I try to teach those students from my conscience and I am responsible for teaching them before my God. and I have to produce good teaching regardless ... if she [her principal] does not like that, that is up to her and she is entitled to her opinion, but for me I have to deliver my mission because I am responsible for those students. When He (God) lines them up [at doomsday] and one by one ask me for their rights they will take their rights from me. So how I am going to face that?! (Samar, February 22, 2005).

Another teacher believed that the students' abilities are a gift from God. Teachers should respect and accept that, and help students to achieve the desired level of knowledge. She said of students with learning difficulties:

With those girls I use reinforcement. Their abilities come from God; we have to admit and believe that ... even if they give simple answers I try to give positive reinforcement every ime... I think my strength is that I am here not just to give the lesson and then go. I consider those students as my daughters. I take into account their circumstances (Maha, February 16, 2005).

She felt particular responsibility and concern for the young girls:

I cannot say this student is not good, especially the little ones. If she were an adult, I would probably say maybe she doesn't care about study but for the "small one" – I believe that God gave her this level of ability. If God gave her this level of ability, it's not reasonable; that I push her and her family pushes her as well. I try to make her as happy as I can. I give her the opportunity to adapt herself. As long as she likes school, it may eventually be possible for her to improve. But frustration does not give any better outcome. I encourage them to love school and me, which will make them try harder (Maha, February 16, 2005).

Another teacher said:

First of all I expect and ask my God to help me to continue to be productive, so that my students become the best students and none achieve poor results. This is my wish and what I expect, and that is what I ask my God for, to not have any student below average ... Because God relies on us to do more for the student than the student's parents can...The teacher is like the student, if he finds the encouragemen he will be productive and creative (Jamal, February 20, 2005).

He found it 'unacceptable' that any teacher would regard teaching as 'just a job' working to earn a wage and doing nothing more. He felt 'every teacher should be committed to his job, not just looking for the wage'. The child is the most important aspect of teaching and teachers need to 'teach honestly'. Another teacher commented: "Teaching is the most interesting career. It has a holistic message and every teacher should carry that with honesty and believe in their message. As long as you believe in your message, you will – God willing – achieve all your goals" (Mahmmoud, February 21, 2005). One of the principals (February 23, of 2005) also stressed honesty, describing one of the participating teachers as being regarded by the entire school as having integrity and being honest. The school members readily value her opinions and actions because of these personal attributes. Her 'honesty reflects on her students' in their values and work. Another principal mentioned two teachers in her school who 'do not believe that they work for the sake of the Directorate of Education or the MOE. They work for God's sake' (a principal, February 22, 2005). Conscious and honesty regarded as moral characteristics of quality teacher and quality teaching process can be enhanced by these characteristics.

Collaboration with Colleagues and Parents

Teachers and principals agreed that quality teaching is easy if a cooperative relationship is established among school stakeholders and between teacher and parents. One teacher said: 'If a child has a problem, I try to make contact with his sister or brother in the school. Also we always send a letter home or call the parents' (Hassnah, February 23, 2005). One principal commented: 'The parents' council has contributed to Maha's success. She always meets with parents and discusses with them their children's behaviour and academic issues' (a principal, February 16, 2005). Another teacher said: 'If I have any problem with any student in the classroom, I tell his/her parents straightaway' (Sharefah, February 27, 2005).

Another teacher (Samar), however, did not agree with her principal's ideas regarding the empowering role of parental factors in quality teaching. Her school is divided into two buildings and the interviewed teacher was located in the annexe of the main building. She saw the principal and staff in the main building as attributing the success of her students solely to their parents' involvement rather than crediting any part of it to her teaching: 'In the main building the teachers say that in our building the parents and the social context are more cooperative than in theirs ... [due to] the parents' efforts' 'Once the principal said this in front of the supervisor' and the teacher had objected to this. She felt 'whatever happens in the classroom is through my efforts'. When working she was not just 'playing or having fun with them [the students]. But they say that the teacher is good because of the parents' efforts' (Samar, February 22, 2005). Samar asked the valid question:

> Okay, the other parents [in the school], where do they come from? All of them are from the same environment. That means I encourage parents to cooperate. One teacher said "[Samar], the good thing is that you guide the parents and the students, and don't let the students lead you" (Samar, February 22, 2005).

She believed that parents play an important role in quality teaching but the teacher also contributes the most to students' outcomes. Her point is that collaboration between teachers and parents is a crucial issue in quality teaching and learning.

All the interviewed stakeholders talked about collaboration with school members and its significance for the quality teaching and learning process. They considered it to be an important characteristic of a quality teacher. One teacher said:

> I do my best during the school year. If I find one student has not improved I will inform my colleague about how to teach that student the next year. I tell

her that this student has difficulties so she can take this into account when she teaches him (Sharefah, February 27, 2005).

Another added:

> Of course if any teacher asks me for help I must help them ... also sometimes I ask Faiza [another teacher] to help me, especially in mathematics. I ask her how to explain this lesson or that lesson. ... I asked her to "please give me an approach on how to teach this, since this subject is very important". We exchange visits. If there are some issues, we get together and discuss these issues (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

One principal had suggested at a staff meeting that the teachers should sit in on one lesson of one of their colleagues and this visit should be reciprocated by the other teacher. She described how one of her teachers specifically encouraged other teachers to be involved in reciprocal visits:

> I thought that all the teachers understood what was required or what I meant by [the reciprocal visit being] a teaching duty. ... [Hassnah] who is recently graduated (two years only) explained the benefits of the teacher's visit. Such exchange visits must be beneficial not because of administrative requirements, but through the reciprocal experiences. These visits are best between teachers who teach the same subjects and they will reflect upon both students and the teacher (a principal, February 23, 2005).

The principal regarded Hassnah's 'aptitude and patience for teaching others' as commendable attributes:

> As soon as she started in this school, she relieved subject teachers. I usually recommend or send a new teacher to Ms [Hassnah] to watch her preparing her roster, to discuss the preparation of her lesson plans and writing goals and attending her class. She s always welcoming, although this takes up her time and effort. Also she helps in computer skills; she has advanced computer skills and knowledge (a principal, February 23, 2005).

Another principal described one of their quality teachers as an important go-between for the school administration and that this role assisted the principal in many ways, especially in implementing quality teaching and learning. The principal appointed the teacher to assistant principal, saying:

> [Jamal] is among the best teachers in the school. He has helped many of his colleagues, especially new teachers, in their training on students' basic learning and in the courses and workshops. [Jamal] has many certificates from workshops and courses in education, such as the curriculum, teaching approaches and computers ... I count on him in this school as a principal assistant, because of his experiences in this field, his ability as a teacher and his knowledge of administration (a principal, February 20, 2005).

Another principal described quality teaching being affected by other people's contributions. She said: 'The teacher who was a dictator has died. Effective teaching involves teachers, students and parents; through this circle we can be productive, (a principal, February 14, 2005).

High Expectations

The interviewed teachers expressed their satisfaction when their students achieved as expected. They demonstrated their satisfaction as they saw themselves through their students' achievement. One teacher said:

> In the first grade I expect the students to read and write. The most important things in this grade are reading and writing. I consider this grade to be a foundation grade. It's the same as a house: if you don't set it up properly you will never be able to add any floors to it. The students in the first grade are the same. I try to prepare then in a way I feel satisfied with. So I am happy, thanks to God, when I feel my students understand or gain something (Sharefah, February 27, 2005).

She saw the foundation she helped lay down as the achievement of her teaching and the ensuing success of her students made her satisfied with her efforts:

> When I see the generation I taught succeed, I feel very happy. I feel happy when I see my students going home understanding their lessons. After that they will go to higher grades and I will keep remembering them and they will remember my teaching. A good number of the students were successful in the General Secondary Education Certificate Exam, and they were my students: I will never forget them. (Sharefah, February 27, 2005)

In the first grade, quality teaching can be more visible and measurable because students come to the school without knowledge of literacy and numeracy and start to construct that knowledge. That can give teachers self-confidence and satisfaction in their abilities in teaching. One teacher commented:

> The best teaching is teaching the first grade students. I enjoy it because we can know the results and the benefits at the end of the school year. You have a child who does not know how to write and read and ... at the end of the year you find him writing and reading. Those who have never been in kindergarten know nothing about numbers and counting or even basic things such as the colours. That is the interesting thing. It's the results of what they have learned (Nada, February 14, 2005).

Another teacher considered quality teaching as a creative process by which teachers can construct their students' knowledge so that such knowledge stays with them and helps them in managing themselves in real life by using scientific approaches in learning.

Students acquire their skills by teachers who are happy, enthusiastic and enjoy their work as teachers. She went on to say:

> There is a difference when someone comes to the class and does not know anything and ends up being able to write and read. It means everything. They become able to distinguish, categorize, analyze and discuss. [Their teaching] is so enjoyable. ... the teaching itself is not a job, it's a hobby. ... for me the children are the enjoyment (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

Another teacher saw quality teaching in the extent to which students are able to achieve what he expected them to achieve by the end of the academic year. He connected what he taught and students learnt with the demonstration of the real-life skills such as reading and writing. He added:

> God willing, at the end of the school year the student will have good language skills and have more than 200 – 300 words and in mathematics will be able to answer and subtract and write the numbers up to 99. He will be able to read and write all the letters. There is nothing better than that feeling; I feel proud and satisfied because I have attained something and I like to transfer this to others (Jamal February 20, 2005).

School stakeholders, in particular teachers, regard that quality teaching can be implemented effectively by teachers who have high expectations of their students and are happy in their teaching profession.

Professional Growth

The school-based stakeholders in this study agreed that quality teaching comes from teachers who are eager and enthusiastic to develop professionally in all teaching aspects and be role models for teaching. Based on the teachers' comments, professional growth and development can be gained in different ways. These ways were expressed by one of those teachers as he said:

> My strength is that I do research. I search constantly for new teaching approaches. I am involved in teaching courses and using the Internet. A few weeks ago, I accessed teaching in Australia, Scotland and the United Kingdom and I obtained some useful information. I helped establish the computer curriculum for the first three grades and they gave me a certificate as curriculum designer. Now I have this certificate. Teachers who participate in courses, workshops will develop professionally. Anyone can benefit from these workshops and courses, you just have to be motivated to access them (Jamal, February 20, 2005).

Another teacher talked about other ways to develop her professionalism. She said: 'I think part of my self-improvement came from the courses and the workshops that we undertook.

Also, from my reading, following up lectures, TV programs, newspapers and journals'. (Maha, February 16, 2005)

It appeared that stakeholders expected a quality teacher's example to be followed by others and for that teacher to act as a role model for quality teaching practices. One teacher said: '[The Ministry of Education] asked me to develop a model of lessons for several schools in our area and after I had undertaken courses I became a trainer or master in teaching' (Jamal, February 20, 2005). He was selected to participate in a workshop on 'mathematics teaching methods' given by delegates from England. Jamal represented his directorate at the workshop. 'The participants were from four directorates (Amman, Ajlon, Madaba and Karaka); ... these directorates [were considered] as experimental directorates in effective teaching.' He was successful at the workshop and:

> ... they asked me to be videotaped. I was the first person, among many teachers in our directorate, to be videotaped by the British Council. It was a good lesson and they took it and applied it in England and those tapes were distributed by the Teaching Resources Department to the schools in the Kingdom here. Last year they selected me from within a team to publish a curriculum for computer use for the first three grades (ICT0). Another teacher and I, in cooperation with the Menhaj Company, published nine books including the teacher's guide and textbook and practice book (Jamal, February 20, 2005).

One principal described the professional development and the selection process of one of their quality teachers. She said:

> Recently, the Ministry of Education had a training course about the Knowledge Economy project. Ms [Hassnah] was nominated ... to attend this course with me and the assistant. I was gratified that her attendance was effective in the workshop and outside it, as she transferred her knowledge from the course to her colleagues. She talked about the positives and ignored negative things, such as the timing of the course being inconvenient for us (a principal, February 23, 2005).

Another principal discussed the positive influence, mentoring and helpfulness of one of the quality teachers:

> [Jamal] has a strong influence on the other teachers. First of all, they respect him, because he has extended experience in pedagogy, more than 20 years. Second, they consider him as a mentor for them in teaching approaches. I consult him about the teaching in the first three grades. When we need information about something, such as in reading and writing or any subject's needs, we consult him because he has attended courses, workshops and has experience in teaching the first three grades. Ever since he was first employed he has taught the first three grades, so he has great experience [in all aspects of teaching]. (a principal, February 20, 2005).

From the school stakeholders' perspectives, quality teaching is practised by teachers who are able to be models for quality teaching practices. They take initiatives and are involved in teaching and learning courses and workshops. Furthermore, they reflect what they have learnt in their teaching practices, helping other colleagues to gain and implement the same skills and knowledge.

Content Knowledge

While the participating teachers mentioned several approaches to mastering the content of their subjects, most of them still relied on study guides and textbooks. One teacher said: 'I have to know the guide, textbook and the subject content, as well as preparing teaching materials, teaching methods and activities to deliver the information to the student' (Sharefah, February 27, 2005). Another teacher said of preparing to teach a subject: 'First of all … [one] should read the textbook, … If you do not read and plan you will not get any benefit. As the Bedouin said "A shepherd without a stick is not worth anything" and similarly the unprepared teacher is not worth anything' (Jamal, February 20, 2005). The teacher (Jamal) used several resources for his lesson preparation ('… the Internet and … the work papers') and stressed that both teacher and students gained from this preparation. 'No work, means no success. How e se are you going to develop yourself and the student?' (Jamal, February 20, 2005).

Knowledge of Students and their Abilities

Most of the stakeholders in this study considered that every teacher should have a good knowledge of their students and their backgrounds, abilities and circumstances. They linked the quality of the teacher with knowledge of the students in the classroom. One teacher said:

> At the beginning of the school year … I give every student a card to [complete] This card includes information about every student; such as problems, diseases, social status of his father; if his father is married to one or two wives, financial status entertaining and luxuries … and so on (Jamal, February 20, 2005).

Having this information allows the teacher to deal with personal issues that may affect the learning of a particular student. The cards allow the teacher to be ready for situations such as students with learning difficulties. Another teacher said: 'I know most of the students because I am from the same area and I live here, among them, I know their parents' (Sharefaha, February 27, 2005). Another one said:

Of course, I know the students from my experience with them, so the students are classed as: gifted, very good, good and below the average. This year there was a girl who remained with me for three months without knowing how to write the numbers from 1 to 9. If you say that to people they will be surprised. I worked hard [with her] ... I know about them [the students], even if there are many [of them] because I live with them all the time (Samar, February 22, 2005).

Another teacher commented that knowing students was not a superficial process; it required the teacher to connect with students. The failure of a student could be due to some reason, such as mental, psychological or social problems, preventing the student from working to their ability. A deep knowledge of students and their abilities is a crucial element in the quality teaching and learning process. She went on to say:

I know them by their linguistc gains. For example, when I ask a question of the students, some students cannot answer and they cannot express themselves. Not only that, but some of them cannot answer, write or read (Maha, February 16, 2005).

The nature or personality of a student may affect their learning; so that a shy student may have difficulty in reading or may be hesitant to read. 'But if a student cannot connect the letters and cannot pronounce them that means she has [learning] difficulties' (Maha, February 16, 2005). Another teacher connected her success with her knowledge of hers students and their backgrounds. She said:

I know their home environment. I must know why the student became like this [has difficulties]: is it because of inadequacies in the first and second grade teaching or because her home environment is affected by special circumstances? There are many cases here [in this school] of children suffering from many issues related to their parents and of these influencing their level of learning (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

Therefore, knowledge, that is, content knowledge and knowledge of students and their abilities, is considered as an important part of the quality teaching and learning process from the school stakeholders' perspectives.

Ongoing Assessment

Most of the school stakeholders agreed that quality teaching is strongly correlated with ongoing assessment. Using appropriate formative and summative assessments and providing students with the proper feedback are fundamental issues in terms of quality teaching and learning, as well as encouraging student self-assessment and giving students opportunities to assess themselves. One teacher said: 'I have a goal; the student has to read the sentences of the topic. I have to read, and ask some of the students to read, and from

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that I can know if the goal has been achieved or not' (Sharefah, February 27, 2005). Another teacher talked about constant assessment and considered it an essential element in quality teaching and learning activities. She commented:

> I evaluate the students continually. Do you want the truth? I give evaluation [tasks] all the time; I give exercises as homework, and I have to know if somebody is helping them at home. Otherwise how could I know that this one understood [something] and that one didn't? I can't wait until the end of the month to do exams to evaluate the students (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

Another teacher added: 'I must know by assessment or evaluation if the learning has been achieved. There is assessment in the middle and also at the end of the lesson and there is a monthly and an annual evaluation to assess if my goals have been achieved or not' (Samar, February 22, 2005). Another teacher said:

> I know the learning has been achieved by assessment or evaluation at the end of each lesson. Not only at the end of the lesson but also at the beginning. The assessment is a continuous process from the beginning of the lesson until the end. Therefore, from such evaluation or assessment I can know whether my objectives or gaols have been achieved or not (Mahmmoud, February 21, 2005).

Participants agreed that organising records of assessment and using results of assessment to improve students' performance are important factors in the quality teaching and learning process. Also, they admired teachers who utilize assessment results diagnostically to prepare remedial plans and implement remedial activities. One teacher said: 'I develop myself through the students. If ten students have excellent assessment results, I feel my teaching was excellent. If my students don't learn properly I don't feel happy. ... if I have four students who do not achieve good results I have to repeat the topic again' (Jamal, February 20, 2005). One teacher explained her assessment methods by saying:

> I know that learning has been achieved by their verbal responses, by answers in their books, by exams, by work papers and by the immediate [same time as the class] and delayed [monthly exams] evaluation or assessment. (Maha, February 16, 2005).

Another one said: 'We constantly assess the concepts, phrases, knowledge and skills' (Nada, February 14, 2005). Assessment was seen by the school stakeholders as an essential element in quality teaching and learning practices. They considered it as the core of the day-to-day teaching and learning activities.

Section Two: Factors Influencing Quality Teaching

As mentioned in the literature review (chapter three), it is hard to separate quality teaching from its context. Various factors influence quality teaching and it is essential to identify the potential factors contributing towards aiding or weakening the quality teaching and learning process. These factors were extracted and simply conceptualized to provide the school stakeholders with possible priorities on which to comment during the interviews about their perspectives on quality teaching. It is essential to know what the stakeholders prioritized after their teaching practices had been observed. This was all part of the comprehensive grounded knowledge needed before considering a new model of quality teaching.

Infrastructure, Resources and Funding

Most of the teachers and principals' concerns related to funding, resources and their schools' infrastructure. They considered levels of funding to be the key influence. In terms of wages, teachers complained that ow wages can be a strong barrier to their developing more enthusiasm or working in a more demanding but progressive style. One teacher commented: 'The teacher works hard and they (people) [still] look down on them. Why, in Arab countries? I don't understand! Do they value them according to their wage or what? I don't know. The financial factor is very important' (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

In terms of resources and their availability to teachers, it seemed that the interviewed teachers were most concerned to have resources available when needed most. One of them said:

> I bought the heating stove out of my own money– I paid 30 JD to buy a gas cylinder for the stove – the students cannot hold their pens because they are cold. Of course if the classroom is warm it will make a difference. Sometimes the girls come to the school wet; all of these things have an influence on achieving teaching and learning goals (Maha, February 16, 2005).

Apart from the issues of providing a comfortable classroom, the teacher also spoke about insufficient teaching materials affecting 'teaching progress ... if they provided us with the materials it would make the teaching easier. Sometimes I buy these things from my own money'. She also mentioned she paid for her photocopying and brought teaching materials from home; 'they only provide us with a few simple things (Maha, February 16, 2005). Another teacher complained about her classroom size and the availability of teaching aids.

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She connected the availability of these resources with the quality of her and her students' work. She went on to say:

> You have seen the rooms. The classrooms are very small and I can't move between the students. If the classroom were bigger it would be better and the students could move easily and actively in the lesson ... I have many students and even the desks are poor quality. ... we [also] need a computer or projector. There are many things which can help us in teaching. ... These things are useful for us and the students and can make teaching easier. [With the computer of projector] I could use pictures to illustrate what I want to say and attract the students' attention (Samar, February 22, 2005).

It was clear that infrastructure plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. One teacher talked about her classrooms' conditions and to what extent these conditions can affect quality teaching. However, she demonstrated her persistence by working under these conditions and focusing more on her students' leaning. Even though the conditions affected teaching, she commented:

> If the school situation was better it would be great and the teaching would possibly improve and the teacher gives more. Wherever the school situation, administration and the classroom environment are good, the teaching will be good. Nevertheless we try our best to teach our students (Sharefah, February 27, 2005).

One principal described his school's infrastructure situation and needs as follows:

> This school needs more buildings. I have 40 – 45 students in each room and the school is small, and has too many demands upon it because of its residential location. We now have about 500 students. The land for construction is available.... It is possible to build a new wing and expand the grades up to ninth grade to meet the demands of other nearby schools, such as Al-bayader School. It has about 1200 students. Also by expanding the building, we could accommodate the maximum number of students in this area. Sometimes parents come and they need consent forms or acceptance forms; we have to apologize, because we do not have enough rooms, sets and books. Sometimes the books in the school are limited, so we cannot accept new students; we go to the stores and bring books for just two or three students and it is worrying. We apologize for having no space...The school needs maintenance. The school is very old. It was established in 1970. ... There are many rooms needing paving, painting, and it needs an internal electrical network, blacktop in the yards. It needs playing fields and extra classrooms. It needs toilets for the administration staff. The toilets are too far away for both the students and the teachers; more than 50 – 60 metres. It has a beautiful central location, but it needs an increase in its services and resources (a principal, February 20, 2005).

Another principal explained her concerns in terms of the availability of teaching aids for students and teachers. She said:

This school is very poor in terms of machines. We have no overheads or computers for students to use in mathematics. Also the classrooms should be healthier; thank God our classes are clean and open out to the environment and to fresh air, ... [but] the school is without walls; there is a feeling of fear. If it were fenced it would be better, so that our students could not be harmed by anyone passing the school. The classrooms and the school should be more secure. ... the necessities for effective teaching are lacking (a principal, February 23, 2005).

The dilemmas in these schools are about the shortage of funding affecting classroom sizes, classroom conditions, school maintenance, and teaching aids. However, the interviewed school stakeholders demonstrated an enthusiasm for, and insisted the focus should be, on the quality of their work and consequently students' outcomes.

Mentoring and Evaluation

Another factor that can influence quality teaching is the type of supervision, and, closely related to this, the quality of the principal–teacher professional relationship. One teacher expressed the view that since they lived in a democratic era they 'deserve to have our rights respected'. The annual principal's report is prepared and the teacher signs it 'without knowing its content. I did not know about my reports for nine years until I received the letter for the ICDL because I had got a promotion (Samar, February 22, 2005). She resented the 'secrecy' of the reports even though her own reports 'are always between very good and excellent. The Ministry of Education always gives the reports to the teacher, if the teacher has excellent reports. The supervisor's reports are more open, 'for the supervisor, the situation is different. The supervisor comes and attends the lessons and his report is excellent but they (Ministry of Education) rely on the school report' (Samar, February 22, 2005). The school principal's report is:

> ... part of the Civil Service Bureau system. This report determines promotion and the period to promotion can be reduced based on the report. For example instead of waiting 4 years to get a promotion; it can be cut down to 3 years. These are moral issues, I don't care about the money but I care about the moral aspect. If I hear another teacher has an excellent report I begin to have doubts about my own efforts. As long as the government is prepared to provide professional development and achievement of teachers, why is the principal able to exclude teachers from this opportunity (Samar, February 22, 2005).

Another teacher explained her story in mentoring and evaluation by her supervisor. She was concerned about the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of evaluation and monitoring. She criticised the way in which the supervisors evaluate her work and the lack of trust

between teachers and their supervisors. Furthermore, she addressed other issues that can influence quality teaching. She went on to say:

> The officers or the supervisors should recognise the teacher's evaluation. The supervisor visits the class once and judges the teacher from the response of one student. This is wrong; if the student on that day did not answer or did not demonstrate any contribution in the class, does that mean that it was defect of the teacher?!! They blame me and transfer the negatives to me, – no way! (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

Hassnah complained about one of her reports:

> Once they gave me 'Very Good' in their observation not 'Excellent'. The reason, according to them, was because when I had divided the class into groups and distributed the activities among all the groups; one of the groups finished their task quickly After that they started to have fun doing something else. According to the supervisor I should have given them extra activities to keep them engaged and at the same time I had to give them the second question!! (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

This teacher has provided some of her own teaching aids, 'my cards and the carton boards (instructional materials) are from my own money'. The school does provide material but 'we ran out of these materials. I need these materials in each lesson so I had to buy them'. Despite the work and pressures of timing, and planning being done by teachers, she feels 'They (the supervisors) are concerned about small things' and bureaucracy. She said:

> I am sorry to say this, but sometimes they care about silly things. They don't focus on essential things such as the curriculum. Our curriculum is good and explained properly and the teacher works hard. For example in Kuwait, when I was living there, everyone talked positively about our [Jordanian] curriculum and there is no curriculum stronger than ours. But there [in Kuwait] they appreciate and support the teacher; not only financially but also they appreciate everything. Here they do not care about the teacher (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

She felt:

> The supervisors should be more effective... they come once each semester and they should not judge from just attending one lesson; they should spend the entire day in the school and the classroom, because otherwise the students and the teachers will be under pressure (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

Evaluation and mentoring were considered by school stakeholders, particularly teachers, as the main factors that can hinder or enhance quality teaching and learning. It appears that the supervisors impose orders and instructions when they mentor and evaluate teachers without taking into account different variables, such as curriculum size, the time allocated for such a curriculum, school context and teaching approaches. Furthermore, there was no

consistency between the principals' and the supervisors' evaluations, creating confusion and uncertainty among teachers.

The Relationships among School Stakeholders and between the School and Community

Most of the participants commented that warm, friendly, cooperative and supportive relationships between the school stakeholders influenced quality teaching. One teacher said:

> The relationship between the administration and colleagues is very important. If the relationships between these people are good they will be great and productive. As for reinforcement, if the teacher is not acknowledged, they will be frustrated. The administration is good but the school as a building is bad and the classrooms are as well (Sharefah, February 27, 2005).

Moreover, school stakeholders raised issues relating to the relationship between their schools and the surrounding community and the influence of this relationship on the quality teaching and learning process. Some teachers mentioned that their knowledge of the social background of their students helped to make their teaching easier. One teacher said: 'I know most of the students because I am from the same area and I live among them so I know their parents. If I have any problem with any student in the classroom, I will tell his/her parents straightaway' (Sharefah, February 27, 2005). Another teacher discussed the parents' concerns and their cooperation with the teacher and the school and noted that collaboration made a difference. She said:

> If the parents collaborate with the teacher, the teacher will feel that the student will develop his skills even he or she has difficulties. Sometimes the student comes to the class without pencils and books or has lost his textbooks or did not study or was tired or had been up the whole night. If the parents are concerned they take care of that and they will influence their children's education (Maha, February, 16 2005).

Another teacher added that many parents are reluctant to acknowledge that their children may have problems socially or academically. She said:

> The parents' role in these issues is very important. For example, when we call the parents for issues related to their children, such as learning problems they should help us. They usually deny their children's learning problems. Where is the parent who admits his child has learning disabilities?!!!!! Nobody. ... most of them believe that their children are doing well at school (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

A perceived or real lack of support can affect a teachers' moral and efforts to do the best by their students.

I do not know... there is no communication. There are many frustrating factors. Not just the student's abilities, I can follow that up with the student, but who is going to empathize with me?! If I tell them (the school's administration) about what I need for this student they will stand by. In the end I persuade myself to cover this by extra help in my lesson as far as I can and in the end I am sure [the student] will achieve something (Hassnah, February 23, 2005).

Therefore, collaboration among the school stakeholders and between the school and the larger community can create a positive atmosphere for quality teaching and learning and consequently students' outcomes.

Curriculum Quantity, Professiona Training and Support

One of the biggest concerns for the school stakeholders was the quantity of content to be covered if syllabuses were followed closely. As the teachers mentioned, there is insufficient time given to cover the entire curriculum as set by the syllabuses. They were concerned about teaching important skills and content in too brief a time to allow teachers to have students practice newly acquired skills, to repeat information, and to give the students the time and opportunity to grasp basic knowledge. As one teacher stated 'The thing which distresses me is that we have a curriculum and we have to finish or cover all the aspects of the curriculum regardless of the students' levels of understanding' (Maha, February 16, 2005). She used the mathematics curriculum as an example, where there is insufficient time given to teach the four skills, addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. She said:

> Multiplication is the most important skill and everything will rely on multiplication in the higher grades: they give it one month. The student cannot learn that in one month and for us, we have to move to other skills or subjects because we have finished the time which is specified to finish this skill. I mean we must adhere to the plan (Maha, February 16, 2005).

Maha gave other examples:

> In winter there is no sports lesson; this is wrong because the students need to play. I teach them some skills, but the lessons for the goals are not sufficient. Even in science hey give us big topics in a small number of lessons. If I want to teach experiments and divide the students into groups and work with each one I don't find time (Maha, February 16, 2005).

She felt the school was more concerned with 'goals and the superficial things and ignore[d] the substantial things'. Students need time to understand the material being taught rather than the subject being treated superficially. In reading too, she felt students need more time, '... why cannot we give them extra stories to read? It would make the subject more

interesting; even if it is one or two sentences it would be beneficial' (Maha, February 16, 2005). She suggested that schools should 'decrease the subjects and increase the lessons for some subjects that need more training. For example, I gave some lessons about writing...but I have to start with a new lesson tomorrow according to their plan or the time frame!!!!!' (Maha, February 16, 2005).

Therefore, school stakeholders were concerned about the quantity of the curriculum. They want curriculum that presents quality teaching and learning activities, which challenge and meet students' needs, rather than exposure to meaningless textbooks.

The participating teachers appealed for more in-service and specialist teaching courses. They wanted to be trained by professionals who are able to update easily their teaching knowledge and strategies. One teacher said:

> I wish they could give us training courses. But the courses should not be taught by other teachers. I mean, they should be given by professional people, not someone who, if you ask them a question, will respond to a question you had not asked. We need people who are conversant and have experience; when you ask about something they will be able to give you the right answer and teach you properly and give the dimensions for such things. Maybe you think it is simple but if someone is professional, they will open your horizons. Previously we have attended some courses taken by colleagues, and they were poor (Samar, February 22 2005).

School stakeholders considered that quality teaching can only function with a reduced, focused and qualitative curriculum that can explore quality teaching and learning activities to meet students' future needs. They also appealed for training that employs quality teaching and learning activities and meets teachers' needs. Such training should be conducted by professionals who are able to update the knowledge of teachers and other staff rather than wasting time and resources in repeating obvious aspects of teaching and learning already known by teachers.

Content Knowledge

School stakeholders mentioned that a teacher's knowledge of their subject was very important and can influence the quality of teaching. One teacher argued that there were three main things influencing quality teaching, one of them being subject knowledge. He said:

> The first thing, which very important, is knowledge; the knowledge of the subject you teach. Therefore, if you know your subject you will find suitable

teaching approaches for this subject. The knowledge is the main thing. Secondly, clarity; clarity of vision for the teacher himself who will clarify this vision for the students. The third thing is something we call warmth and enthusiasm which affects the students. If you, as a teacher, are enthusiastic you will find your students are enthusiastic; this is very important and can contribute to the teaching and learning process (Mahmmoud, February 21, 2005).

According to the school stakeholders' perspectives, content knowledge was considered as an important factor that can influence quality teaching either positively or negatively. Teachers who have a good knowledge of their subject will enhance quality teaching and learning and this will ultimately reflect on students' achievement.

School Context

Most of the principals agreed that whatever the context, quality teachers will not be changed or influenced by it. They commented that quality teachers will be dedicated to their careers and will maintain the same level of quality work whatever the context. A few mentioned that a school's context can influence teaching to a limited extent, but not predominantly, because they believed that even if the school context did not assist the quality teacher, the quality teacher could still be expected to be effective and be able to change and/or modify the context around them to maintain and conserve the quality of teaching and learning. One principal, commenting on one of the quality teachers, said:

Of course she will be effective in any context. The effective teacher will be effective wherever she goes. The productive teacher will be productive in any place, even if the context was one of poverty or of wealth; the effective teacher will be effective. I know that from experience (a principal, February 16, 2005).

Another principal said: 'Honestly she is effective whether she is in Omm, al-qoutaine Basic School or out of Omm, al-qoutaine Basic School. I expect her to be effective, even if she is transferred to another school' (a principal, February 23, 2005).

It is worthwhile to stress that the school stakeholders insisted that, whatever the context, the quality teachers will produce quality teaching. They believe that quality teachers are able to modify the context in which they work, so that the context will help them and their students to produce quality teaching and learning, rather than keep complaining about the context around them.

Students' Social and Economic Background and Teacher Workload

Another factor that can influence quality teaching is the social and economic status or background of students. One teacher said:

> The student's status, their social and economic status has a big effect. You can find some students who don't have pocket money to spend and this impacts on the student when they see their peers buy something and they cannot afford it (Sharefah, February 27, 2005).

Beside the socio-economic status of students, there is the workload of teachers. However, there were a few participants who were concerned about their teaching load. Some of them mentioned that they were asked to do too many things in the school. One of them said:

> The basic grade teachers have too much work. These teachers need special consideration different to other teachers, because their job has special conditions, particularly in the first grade. The curriculum is good; I have no comment about that, but about the career in general. As a teacher of first grade, we have too much pressure, notably the teaching load; I have six lessons every day. The principal cooperates; she understands our situation, but that's not enough; the understanding should come from all the people – the local community and the school (Nada, February 14, 2005).

The above mentioned factors, particularly from the perspectives of the school stakeholders, can influence quality teaching and learning. Not all these factors have the same level of influence. Having said that, the infrastructure, resources and funding are the most crucial factors that can hinder or enhance quality teaching and learning.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented results extracted from the school-based stakeholder interviews and the researcher's field notes. The first section of this chapter presented the school stakeholders' perspectives on quality teaching. The second section highlighted the school stakeholders' assessment of the factors, prioritized by the researcher, as influencing quality teaching. The school stakeholders' perspectives revolved around the following themes as significant elements in producing quality teaching or what they discerned to be the characteristics of a quality teacher: determining the instructional objectives, varying the instruction, facilitating the acquisition and the implementation of knowledge, using teaching aids, having an acceptable physical and social classroom environment, having conscience and honesty in teaching, cooperating with colleagues and parents, having positive expectations of teaching and of students, and happiness, being able to access professional growth and role models for teaching, having content knowledge and

knowledge of students and their abilities, and having ongoing assessment for teaching and learning.

The factors assessed by the stakeholders for their influence on producing quality teaching were: infrastructure, resources and funding, mentoring and evaluation, relationship with colleagues and community, curriculum quantity, professional training and support, content knowledge, school context, students' social and economic background and instructional overload. The next chapter presents the discussions of the findings, implications and suggested future directions for research, policy and practices.