Higher Education Students' Experiences of Internationalization in Kuwait: The case of the Arab Open University

by

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ABSTRACT

When a Western curriculum is implemented in a non-Western context, some challenges may arise due to differences in the educational and cultural systems, including distinct perspectives, attitudes, approaches and objectives.

In order to contribute insight into these challenges and how they might be addressed, this case study investigates the internationalization of the business program at the Arab Open University (AOU) in Kuwait, focusing on the experiences of faculty members and students. Drawing on Steiner-Khamsi’s (2014) policy borrowing analytical framework, this study explores the following research questions: How did faculty members implement the imported business curriculum? How did students experience the imported business curriculum through, for instance, textbooks, learning activities, instructional methods, assignments and exams? How did the imported business curriculum influence students' self-perceived academic performance and contribute to their self-perceived personal and professional growth?

Mixed methods were used to collect data through a sequential explanatory design. First, quantitative data were collected through surveys (N=333) and analyzed regarding students' perceptions of the curriculum and how it affected their academic
Next, semi-structured interviews were employed in order to: (1) provide students with the opportunity to communicate their experiences and perspectives regarding the imported curriculum in their own words, and (2) provide in-depth insight into faculty members’ perspectives regarding the implementation of the imported curriculum.

Findings from the data suggest that in order to enhance students’ academic experience, there is a need to recontextualize the imported curriculum, from the original British version, adapted to the Kuwaiti and Arab context.

In order to develop a more contextually appropriate curriculum, a key recommendation is for the AOU to co-design the business curriculum in partnership with the original source, The Open University – United Kingdom (OU-UK), taking into consideration: international standards; the local context of the receiving country; and local students’ backgrounds and interests.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Globalization and the determination to develop knowledge-based economies have provided the impetus for both public and private sectors around the world to invest in higher education. Educational systems, and higher education systems especially, have been influenced by the effects of globalization, including a prioritization of learning from international experience. This has resulted in the internationalization of higher education in the first decade of the 21st century (Knight, 2008a), and consequently, a proliferation of new providers, delivery methods, and programs. One such internationalization initiative is the strategy of cross-border education through importing curriculum from the home country to the host country. This strategy works to simultaneously to expose students to global trends in their fields of study and addresses meeting the increasing demands in higher education at the host country. Importing curriculum, also known as ‘program mobility,’ essentially entails programs and curriculum crossing borders for the purpose of internationalization (Knight, 2006a).

For the purpose of this study, I use a combination of two definitions: from Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009):

Internationalization is defined as the variety of policies and programs that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization. These typically include sending students to study abroad, setting up a branch campus overseas, or engaging in some type of inter-institutional partnership; (p. iv)

and Knight (2012): “The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p.4).
Imported curriculum is a common practice in countries that "are interested in increasing local access to higher education, improving the domestic education sector [and] providing academic programs and pedagogical practices not otherwise available in the host country" (Lane & Kinser, 2011, p. 82).

Over the last couple of decades, the Arab region has experienced significant shifts in the availability and types of higher education, with imported curriculum as a major manifestation of the internationalization of higher education. The next section provides a brief background on how the modern educational landscape has evolved to prioritize internationalization in this region, followed by some of the gaps and challenges of this phenomenon, under the ‘research problem’ section.

Internationalization in Higher Education in the Arab Region

For centuries, peoples across the Arab region have held the belief that education is instrumental to advancing the public good through the development, improvement, and enhancement of both the nation-state and citizens (Kazem, 1992). As Gellner (1983) (as cited in Leuze, Martens, & Rusconi, 2007, p.4) explains, "during the second half of the 20th century, education turned into a valuable instrument of the welfare state by providing individuals with the human capital needed to become a productive member of the labor force." Beyond productivity, the attainment of higher education is generally valued as a key way to achieve high societal status and affluence (Kazem, 1992, p.113). Consequently, leaders of Arab countries tend to prioritize investment in the educational sector, believing that education has a crucial role in preparing future generations to succeed both locally and globally. In the era of competitive knowledge-based economies, a well-educated
population that contributes to the social and economic development of a country has become prominent on policy agendas across the region.

For instance, oil-producing Arab countries, also known as the Gulf States, view higher education as the key to their economic stability after the oil runs out (Birchard & Lewington, 2011; Issa & Siddiek, 2012). The recognition that it is unsustainable to depend on natural resources alone for a thriving economy has led to the prioritization of building a robust knowledge economy and developing the labor force (Issa & Siddiek, 2012, p.146).

Some scholars have endorsed the importance of higher education in providing the human capital knowledge required for social and economic changes in the Arab region. For instance, Acedo (2011) stated that,

The recent events [the Arab spring] in the Arab countries show how important education, information, and ICT communication can be in mobilizing young people and whole societies in seeking societal openness and justice, and in pushing further for social, economic, and political development and change (p.1).

Coupled with the pre-existing societal value placed on higher education and the more recent shift towards developing the knowledge economy, the Arab region has been experiencing a proliferation in the number of higher education institutions. Allani and Sharafuddin (2012, p.143) note that there are over 400 universities in the Arab world-10 times more than 40 years earlier.

In spite of this exponential growth in higher education institutions, however, the region is contending with a level of demand for access that exceeds the supply. In Allani and Sharafuddin’s (2012) words, "Arab countries have been witnessing a rapid growth in population to the extent that they cannot cope with the increasing demand for educational needs" (p.143). The reason is attributed to the pervasive perspective that post-secondary education provides the way to achieving and improving
employment opportunities and mobility in addition to enhancing income (Altbach, 2010).

While Arab countries differ from context to context and consequently face unique challenges in meeting the demand for higher education, Knight (2002) explains that the common barriers are, "budget limitations, the changing role of government, and increased emphasis on market economy and privatization" (p.2). Even among the higher education institutions available, however, quality is an issue, as there have been some concerns around graduates being adequately equipped with strong knowledge and skills for the labour market (e.g., Rugh, 2002).

As the UNESCO report (2003) titled *Higher education in the Arab region: 1998-2003* articulated it,

> The curriculum of the higher education institutions and its traditional systems fail to meet the demands of rapid transformation in the world of today, whether in terms of the needs of the labor market or the needs of the societies in which these institutions operate. (p.2)

To address these issues, new concepts and trends in higher education have arisen within the Gulf. Some of these trends, for instance, have included instituting private universities and new colleges and establishing foreign branch campuses (Rugh, 2002, p.401).

This drastic shift in the higher education landscape is characterized as an academic revolution known as the ‘internationalization of higher education,’ where new types of Western education providers have emerged in the educational sector. Specifically, universities from the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia (the largest exporters of higher education institutions worldwide) have been invited by Gulf governments to help upgrade their higher education systems (Davis, 2010).

Thus, the need to address the inadequate supply and quality of higher education in the Arab region led to internationalization, which has brought in a
proliferation of Western providers, along with their imported curricula and programs. However, this has brought upon a new set of challenges, articulated in the next section.

**Research Problem & Purpose**

When a Western curriculum is implemented in a non-Western context, some challenges and unintended consequences may arise due to differences in the educational and cultural systems, including distinct perspectives, attitudes, approaches and objectives. On the one hand, internationalization is considered to be a major solution to meeting the 21st century challenges faced by higher education institutions and systems (Knight, 2013). On the other hand, there are still many unanswered questions concerning the impact of internationalization. Some of these questions include "whether these new providers/programs have provided students with more discipline variety, or are successful in meeting the needs of students, society, the labor market and the global economy" (UNESCO, 2003, p.7).

For instance, curriculum irrelevance is cited as a major issue in higher education internationalization (Milszewska & Sztendur, 2012). In particular, course content in franchise programs is particularly prone to irrelevancy to local students' interests or backgrounds (Knight, 2013). Donn and Manthri (2013) point out that borrowed programs do not necessarily fit the domestic and local needs of a country's educational reforms or may not be relevant to students' backgrounds. It is often taken for granted that the best practices and supporting educational success stories of originating countries, where the curriculum and its materials were developed, will achieve similar success within host countries, without taking local context and needs into account.
Thus, while particular curricula may be of high quality and value in the countries of origin, they do not necessarily best serve the interests of higher education students in the new (host) countries. Students, teachers, institutions, and local environments can be drastically different from one country to another, in large part due to different cultural norms and beliefs about educational objectives, content and processes. These contextual factors affect curriculum delivery and student success or failure in it.

There are other studies on curriculum transfer from one cultural and socio-political context to another (Aydarova, 2012; Huang, 2006; Mok, 2007; Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg, 2012; Svensson & Wihlborg, 2010). However, Dumber (2013) points out the lack of attention to imported curricula specifically: "previous research focused on transnational education information relating to faculty and staff, students, and educational quality. However, there has not been much focus on curriculum" (p.5). Furthermore, there is very little knowledge available about the experiences of those who are affected: the faculty and students (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Green, 2005).

More recently, several studies have been done on students' experience of internationalization. Mazon (2009), for example, studied how students engage with internationalization through investigating the relationship between students' characteristics and campus internationalization. Her study was conducted at two university campuses, the University of Buffalo in New York, and at the Universiteit van Amsterdam (UvA) in The Netherlands. Mazon' study highlighted how the intentional and unintentional elements of campus culture and campus internationalization affected students' experience. Stephenson (2016) examined the experiences of students at Australian and British international branch-campuses (IBCs) in the UAE and Malaysia in order to understand the influence that enrolment
at an IBC has on students’ identities. However, none of these studies examined how an imported curriculum through its components affects students' academic experience and influences their academic performance.

In light of these cited challenges and evidence gaps, this study has two major objectives: 1) to understand from faculty members' and students' perspectives, how an imported curriculum is implemented in a new international context; and 2) to contribute knowledge on the internationalization of higher education by focusing on faculty members' and students' experiences with imported curriculum.

In order to explore the phenomenon of the internationalization of education through importing curriculum, this mixed methods case study investigates higher education faculty and students' experiences of internationalization in a private university business program in Kuwait. It seeks to understand how faculty members implement the imported business curriculum in their own context and how students experience it—specifically, how the curriculum influences students' self-perceived academic performance and personal and professional growth.

In short, this study examines business faculty members and students’ experiences and perspectives to identify whether any changes – namely, recontextualization - occurred at the implementation level, and if so, how these changes (or lack of changes) contributed to students' academic experience.

**Research Questions**

The main research question and sub-questions for this study are as follows:

**The main question: How is the Western business curriculum experienced by university faculty members and students at the Arab Open University in Kuwait?**
The sub-questions:

1) How did faculty members implement the imported business curriculum?

2) How did students experience the imported business curriculum? (in terms of: textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, assignments, and exams)

3) How did the imported business curriculum influence students’ self-perceived academic performance and contribute to their self-perceived personal and professional growth?

Significance and Contribution of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. Firstly, existing research relating to how students experience internationalization and its effect on their self-perceived performance and self-perceived personal and professional growth is negligible. Knowing how an imported curriculum affects students’ academic experience and performance and their personal and professional growth might contribute to understanding how the imported curriculum should or should not be revised to foster students’ experience.

Understanding how local faculty members implement imported curriculum and how they experience it will also provide valuable, much needed insight into the kinds of issues with internationalization of higher education that directly impact those affected by it. Given the importance of context, this study will add insight into whether and how re-contextualization occurred, and the issues surrounding design and implementation.

Secondly, this study will provide a meaningful opportunity for AOU’s faculty members and students to reflect on their experiences regarding curriculum importation. The resulting better understanding of faculty members’ and students’ experiences might help in designing curricula that more effectively supports both
faculty delivery of imported curricula and students' educational journeys. More specifically, learning how AOU’s imported business curriculum influences students' self-perceived academic performance and contributes to their self-perceived personal and professional growth will offer insights into changes that might be instituted at both institutional and departmental levels regarding the imported curriculum.

Thus, this study contributes to developing the field of higher education internationalization, addressing the proliferation of internationalizing efforts in higher education in the Middle East, the major challenges involved, and the scant evidence regarding how faculty members and students interact with and experience imported curriculum.

**Personal Motivation**

The student experience at Arab Open University (AOU) is an understudied area. There are a number of studies (Al-Fahhad & Alfadly, 2012; Allani & Sharafuddin, 2012; Al-Mutairi, 2011; Dahan, 2008; Shehab, 2007; Zakari & Alkhezzi, 2010) done by professors or branch managers who have worked at AOU’s branches. These studies focus on such issues as: student retention in distance education; learner perceptions of blended learning; meeting the demand of the private sector for qualified manpower; and the role of AOU in the Arab region. For example, Al-Mutairi (2011) examines the factors affecting business students’ performance at the Kuwait branch, evaluating student demographics such as the gender, age, marital status, nationality, and grades in high school. Unlike Al-Mutairi (2011), I am interested in exploring from students' perspectives how the imported business curriculum and its components, namely, textbooks, instructional methods, assessments, assignments, and language of instruction, affect their academic
experience, influence their academic performance and contribute to their personal and professional growth.

My personal experience as a former faculty member in the business department at the AOU-Kuwait drew me to the topic of imported curriculum and student experience. Throughout my time there, I received numerous complaints from business students regarding the imported curriculum, their struggles with it, and the detrimental effect of this curriculum on their academic performance overall. The recurring themes in their complaints were related to the materials, assessments, and language of instruction (English), but most predominantly, content irrelevance.

As these issues were brought to my attention, I noted the lack of research in this area, especially in the context of Kuwait. This experience led me to focus in my doctoral research on how faculty members and students experience imported curriculum at AOU in Kuwait.

**Thesis Outline**

There are nine chapters in this study. In chapter two, I present a review of the relevant literature and an exposition of the key concepts, focusing on internationalization, cross-border education, program mobility, curriculum, faculty experiences of internationalization, student experience, student performance, and theories on student development to establish the rationale for this study. The literature reviewed in this chapter illuminates the importance of modifying imported curricula to fit with students' backgrounds, interests, and needs in the local host context. Chapter three presents the conceptual framework for this research, based on Steiner-Khamsi’s policy borrowing analytical framework and systems theory, to understand: why educational transfer has occurred in the first place (externalization); how it is
locally adapted and modified (recontextualization); and the impact of educational transfer on existing educational systems (internalization/indigenization). The research design is described in chapter four, and details the context of the State of Kuwait and the AOU. Chapters five through seven present the data findings: in chapter five, the findings from faculty interviews; in chapter six, the quantitative findings from student survey data; and chapter seven, the qualitative findings from interviews with students. Chapter eight provides a comparison of the main findings and a discussion in relation to the conceptual framework and literature review. The final chapter offers practical recommendations and discusses future research directions.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

'It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.'
- Charles Darwin

Introduction

Globalization has brought upon a shift towards a knowledge-based economy, increasing the demand for higher education and information and communication technologies. This has created great pressures and challenges for universities to internationalize in order to remain relevant in the global knowledge economy, as these new delivery systems are expected to increase innovation and student access, while providing curricula suited for knowledge-based economies (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2008a, 2012; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005).

The trend towards internationalization is a major approach to overcoming the barriers and pressures facing higher education systems worldwide.

This chapter starts with definitions of the key concepts in globalization and internationalization in higher education and the relationships between them. The purpose of this literature review is essentially to understand the rationale for internationalization and the impact on students’ academic experience, understood through the lens of student development theories.

Globalization and Internationalization in Higher Education

The "Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution," a report prepared by Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) for the UNESCO world conference on higher education, presents the following definition to differentiate between globalization and internationalization:
Globalization is defined as the reality shaped by an increasingly integrated world economy, new information and communications technology (ICT), the emergence of an international knowledge network, the role of the English language, and other forces beyond the control of academic institutions. Internationalization is defined as the variety of policies and programs that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization. These typically include sending students to study abroad, setting up a branch campus overseas, or engaging in some type of inter-institutional partnership. (p. iv)

Thus, internationalization is both a response to and an agent for globalization.

Internationalization as a response to globalization is based on the need for higher education to prepare students to live and work in a globalized world (Knight, 2006b). It is an agent of globalization in terms of stimulating economies, increasing income generation through the recruitment of foreign international students and the increasing mobility of programs, providers and branch campuses (Knight, 2006b). Globalization and internationalization are thus different concepts but related processes, and these processes are intertwined (Knight, 2004, 2006b).

Internationalization for higher education occurs both at home and abroad (Knight, 2012). Internationalization at home allows students and faculty to increase their understanding and knowledge of international and global issues and gain intercultural understanding and skills without leaving their community or country. Internationalization at home can happen in the following ways:

The intercultural and international dimension in the teaching and learning process, curriculum, research, extra-curricular activities, relationships with local cultural and ethnic community groups, as well as the integration of foreign students and scholars into campus life and activities. (Knight, 2012, p.10)

Cross-border education, another term for internationalization abroad, involves the movement of students, faculty, courses, programs, or institutions across national borders (Knight, 2013).
For the purpose of this study, I focus on cross-border education and program mobility, which is discussed in the later part of this chapter.

**Rationales for Internationalization**

Scholars have emphasized the importance of understanding the rationales that drive countries and institutions of higher education towards investing in internationalization (e.g., Altbach & Knight, 2007; deWit, 2002; Knight, 2004; 2012; Qiang, 2003; Teichler, 2009). Different countries, and institutions of higher education within the same country, may hold rationales for internationalization that differ in content and emphasis (Qiang, 2003).

Knight and deWit (1997; 2004) established four general categories for internationalization rationales: political, economic, academic, and social/cultural that have been frequently cited by internationalization scholars (e.g., Callan, 2000; deWit, 2002; Qiang, 2003). Below is a brief description of the four classic rationales established by Knight and deWit (1997).

**Political Rationales**

Political rationales are linked to issues regarding a country's status, national sovereignty and security, identities, stability, peace and mutual understanding. Within this rationale, internationalization is viewed as an investment in building political relations between countries. Prior to the 1980s, the political rationale was dominant, but since then, it has decreased in importance (Knight, 1997).

**Economic Rationales**

Economic rationales are based on economic growth in the long and short-term. In the long-term, internationalization contributes the professional and skilled
human resources needed for the labor market, allowing the country to compete in the international marketplace (Knight, 1997). Revenue generation from foreign international students is considered a direct economic benefit in the short term. The economic rationale is considered the main rationale for internationalization; it has become a major driving force towards the internationalization of higher education (van der Wende, 2001). In recent decades, a shift has occurred from academic and cultural to economic rationales (Campbell & van der Wende, 2000). Education is considered to be a lucrative service for driving the economy via internationalization, as it is, "one of the 12 service sectors in the General Agreements on Trade and Services (GATS)" (Knight, 2008a, pp. 26-27). As a result, there has been an increase in exporting and importing education and training programs, especially in countries seeking to increase and generate more revenue.

**Academic Rationales**

Academic rationales relate to providing an international dimension to research and teaching, institution building, quality enhancement, and international academic standards (Knight, 1997). They may include personal growth and fulfillment of individuals, international cooperation among academic institutions, and ameliorating the academic standards for teaching and research (Qiang, 2003). For example, achieving international academic standards for higher education in Asia-Pacific countries is considered a major academic rationale for internationalization (Knight & deWit, 1997).

**Social/Cultural Rationales**

Social/cultural rationales emphasize developing understanding about diverse cultures and languages within and between contexts. Internationalization of a nation's educational system helps to build intercultural and mutual understanding among
countries and recognizes the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity in a nation's education system. Social/cultural rationales aim to prepare graduates with strong knowledge and skills based in intercultural relations and communications. Many academics consider this to be one of the strongest rationales for internationalizing the educational experiences of students in postsecondary education (Knight, 1997). Citizenship development, social and community development, and graduate development are additional motivations under the social/cultural rationale (Knight, 2004).

These four rationales, individually or combined, are considered to be the driving forces behind internationalization in higher education. However, while national and institutional level rationales may overlap (deWit, 1998), Knight (2008a) points out that they must be considered separately, as their distinctness is not captured by the four generic categories.

According to Knight (2004), national level internationalization rationales include: human resources development, strategic alliances, income generation and commercial trade, nation building/capacity building, and social and cultural development. Diverse stakeholders within both public and private sectors are involved at this level (Knight, 2004).

Rationales at the institutional level vary from one institution to another, and include: international profile and reputation, quality enhancement/international standards, student and staff development, income generation, strategic alliances, and research and knowledge production (Knight, 2004). Institutional internationalization is an institution-driven process, especially when national initiatives are absent. Several stakeholders are involved in or drive internationalization at the institutional level, including students, faculty members and stakeholders in the private sector.
These rationales differ from one nation to another and are also prone to change over time within the same context. A combination of rationales for internationalization exists based on a hierarchy of priorities; however, these priorities may change over time and might differ depending on available resources, content and context (deWit, 1998).

In short, across levels and contexts, rationales for internationalization are essentially "driven by the expectation of the internationalization ability to raise the status of the graduate, both economically and socially" (Naidoo, 2009, p.311).

**Cross-Border Education**

Cross-border higher education has grown considerably since the 1980s (UNESCO, 2005), and is characterized by, "the movement of people, knowledge, programs, providers, policies, ideas, curricula, projects and services across national or regional jurisdictional borders" (Knight, 2013, p.171).

New forms of cross-border education aim to provide development opportunities in the human, social, cultural and economic sector of the receiving countries through, "increasing and improving the skills and competencies of individual students and the quality of national higher education systems" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 8). In the Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education developed by UNESCO (2005), cross-border education is described as follows:

Higher education that takes place in situations where the teacher, student, program, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders. Cross-border education may include higher education by public/private and not-for-profit/for profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities in a continuum from face-to-face (taking various forms from students travelling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using a range of technologies and including e-learning) (p.7).
‘Cross-border education’ is a term that is often used interchangeably with *transnational education, offshore education* and *borderless education*. It refers to three types of mobility across national borders: 1) individuals (students and faculty), 2) educational programs/providers; and 3) education hubs.

The individual international travels of *students and faculty* in pursuit of learning and teaching were the earliest and initially largest form of cross-border education (Knight, 2013). The mobility of *programs and providers* "across borders began to increase substantially, and this has had an impact on the number of students who can access foreign higher education programs and qualifications without leaving home" (Knight, 2013, p.176). *Education hubs* involved in cross-border education are defined as "a planned effort to build a critical mass of local and international actors strategically engaged in cross-border education, training, knowledge production and innovation initiatives" (Knight, 2013, p.182).

In Knight’s (2005) conceptual framework for cross-border education, she captures four categories of who/what moves across borders, and the three different sets of conditions for cross-border delivery as shown in Table 1. This framework shows who is participating and provides explanations for the shifts from student mobility to program and provider mobility. Knight's (2006a, p.19) analysis places emphasis on what moves across borders —people, providers, programs, and projects, and under what conditions, be they development cooperation projects, academic exchange and linkage agreements, or commercial/profit-oriented initiatives. This framework suggests that two major shifts have occurred in cross-border education. The first shift involves a shift from student mobility to program and provider mobility, as more recent approaches to internationalization allow students to stay in their home country, acquiring international education experiences through imported
foreign programs. The second shift concerns the shift from aid to trade (Knight, 2006b, p.20). This change is driven by the shift from aiding developing countries to participating in a competitive commercial operation. This shift will be discussed further in the section on "issues and concerns of internationalization."

Table 1: Framework for Cross-border Education (Knight, 2006b, p.20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Forms and Conditions of Mobility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>People</strong></td>
<td>Semester/year abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Professors/scholars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers/Experts/consultants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Programs</strong></td>
<td>Twinning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course, program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-degree, degree, Post-graduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Providers</strong></td>
<td>Branch campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
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<td>Organizations</td>
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<td>Companies</td>
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<td><strong>Projects</strong></td>
<td>Research</td>
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<td>Academic projects</td>
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<td>Services</td>
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There are several reasons why host countries and ‘providing’ countries and institutions participate in internationalization and cross-border initiatives. Burgess & Berquist (2012) determined that providing countries and institutions pursue cross-border education because of "institutional strengthening and reputation; revenue generation; pathway opportunities to attract high-calibre students; in addition to changing social/cultural forces affecting student demand preferences" (p.7). As well, Burgess & Berquist (2012) articulated several reasons why host countries participate
in cross-border education, including, "student demand exceeding available places; opportunity to attract prestigious partners; collaborative research opportunities; staff development; access to Western curriculum and pedagogy; institutional strengthening and development; technology transfer" (p.7). Knight (2006a) similarly presented the following reasons for host country participation: the diversity of programs offered by foreign providers, the ability to study a foreign program at a lower cost without leaving the home country, and more flexible modes of study.

Although cross-border education holds many promises for both receiving and providing countries, not all countries welcome or encourage it. For example, China has tight restrictions on cross-border education, requiring cooperation between transnational higher education and Chinese institution in establishing programs and delivering education, as well the president of the institution should be Chinese (Fang, 2012, p.6).

**Program Mobility**

Cross-border mobility of programs is "the movement of individual education/training courses and programs across national borders through face-to-face, distance or a combination of these modes" (Knight, 2012, p.13). Students in this type of cross-border education are located in a different country than the provider (Knight, 2006b). There are six different modes of cross-border program mobility: franchising, twinning, double/joint degree, articulation, validation, and virtual/distance. The first four modes (franchising, twinning, double/joint degrees and various articulation models) are the more popular methods of cross-border program mobility (Knight, 2006a, Naidoo, 2009). Below is a brief description for each mode.
Franchising is an arrangement between two providers. One provider from country A (the franchiser) grants another provider in country B (host country) the delivery of the franchiser's educational programs. The students complete the entire program in the host country and the qualification is awarded by the franchiser (Knight, 2006a, p.23; Naidoo, 2009, p.315).

Twinning is an arrangement between a provider in source country A with another provider located in host country B. This arrangement allows students to take course credits in country B and/or country A, with the option to transfer credits between institutions and only source country A awards qualifications (Knight, 2006a, p. 24; Naidoo, 2009, p.315). These are commonly referred to as “2 + 2 programs” or “3 + 1 programs” (Naidoo, 2009, p.315). Western Michigan University is an example of an institution that is involved with this type of cross-border education, possessing twinning programs in foreign locations (Dumber, 2013, p.13).

Double/joint degree is "an arrangement whereby providers in different countries collaborate to offer a program for which a student receives a qualification from each provider or a joint award from the collaborating providers" (Knight, 2006b, p. 383). Students receiving joint or double degrees will receive two equivalent qualifications from two separate institutions (Knight, 2008b). For example, OU-UK and AOU offer joint degrees in most of their undergraduate programs (AOU, 2015).

Articulation programs are programs that permit students to gain credit for courses or programs offered by a provider in the host country other than the provider in the source country and the source country awards the qualification (Knight, 2006a, p.24; Naidoo, 2009, p.315).
The validation arrangement occurs between two providers; the provider in the host country is allowed to award the qualification of the provider in the source country (Knight, 2006b, p.383; Naidoo, 2009, p.315).

Virtual/distance learning is also considered a form of cross-border education. It occurs through an arrangement between the provider in the source country and students in different host countries. The delivery modes of courses and programs are made online via a communication interface and may include some face-to-face support through local support centers (Knight, 2006b, p. 383; Naidoo, 2009, p.315). Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are considered the latest version of distance and online learning (Knight, 2014a).

Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (UK) export most of their programs to the Asia Pacific region because of historical and linguistic ties between these three countries, geographical closeness, and the fact that many Asian countries lack the capacity and funds to absorb increasing local demand for higher education (Knight, 2006b). Malaysia and Singapore, the most popular destination countries over the last few decades (Knight, 2006b, p.377), established a variety "of new types of partnerships through franchising, twinning, and articulation programs between foreign higher education providers and local ones" (Knight, 2006b, p.377). The two countries have even started to export their own higher education programs to their neighbouring countries (Knight, 2006b). Cross-border efforts in the Gulf region are also on the rise, with the introduction of franchise and twinning programs in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman in the last decade (Knight, 2013).

**Issues and Concerns around Cross-Border Education and Program Mobility**

While the growth of cross-border education has the potential to contribute to the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and people across national borders, there are some
challenges and issues involved (Walsh, 2011). These issues are interrelated and are influenced by regulations of the sending and receiving countries, primarily related to the quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border education (Knight, 2006b, 2008a; UNESCO, 2005). Another issue raised in the internationalization literature is the shift in focus from cultural agreements to trade and political protocols (Knight, 2008a).

A major issue concerns the registration and licensing of foreign providers in receiving countries for the purpose of performance monitoring and accountability. It is critical for providers to be registered in the national system in order to ensure that the host country’s regulatory frameworks for quality assurance and accreditation can be applied (Knight, 2006b). Failure to do this allows cross-border providers to sell certificates or degrees of poor quality, which could lead to students facing barriers to future studies as well as job opportunities (Knight, 2006a).

Another prevalent issue articulated in the literature on cross-border mobility is quality assurance and accreditation (Coleman, 2003; Knight, 2006b; UNESCO, 2005; Van Damme, 2001). The absence of adequate quality assurance frameworks to guarantee the quality of the programs and services provided by (and through) foreign providers is considered one of the main threats to cross-border education (Knight, 2006a). This issue puts receiving countries at risk, given "the absence of well-established quality assurance frameworks and accreditation agencies which lead to increase the activities of rogue providers” (Youssef, 2014, p.106). Therefore, it is critical that attention is given to the quality assurance of education providers at institutional and national levels (Knight, 2012).

New national quality assurance and accreditation agencies were developed in over 60 countries to assure the quality of both domestic and foreign higher education
Wilkins (2010) noted that United Arab Emirates established regulatory bodies responsible for creating and enforcing policies and regulations in foreign higher education institutions. As source countries, the United Kingdom and Australia have also developed their own quality assurance systems for exported cross-border education to regulate the quality of their exported programs (Knight, 2006b, p.387).

Action has been taken by UNESCO and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to assure quality provision of cross-border education. UNESCO and OECD (2005) established *Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education* to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision and degree mills provided by rogue providers, as well as to encourage and urge the development of quality cross-border higher education that meets human, social, economic and cultural needs (UNESCO, 2005, p. 7). Six groups of stakeholders contributed to developing these guidelines from governments, higher education institutions, student bodies, quality assurance and accreditation entities, academic recognition bodies, and professional associations. This guideline aims to enhance the understanding of the importance of quality provision in cross-border education and to identify the roles and responsibilities of each of these groups in assuring quality in cross-border education.

Another prevalent issue in the literature is the threat to local cultures and indigenous traditions imposed by Western transnational education providers (e.g., Albach, 2004; Cichocki, 2005; Walsh, 2011). According to Knight (2014b), "internationalization of higher education was originally conceived in terms of exchange and sharing of ideas, cultures, knowledge, and value among countries" (p.78), with the benefit of this exchange intended to advance intercultural
According to Knight (2014b), internationalization is meant to build on and respect local context: "internationalization is intended to complement, harmonize and extend the local dimension, not dominate it" (p.83). Indeed, local factors in the receiving countries, such as cultural traditions, politics and the economy should be taken into consideration when foreign providers export their education to these countries (Edwards, 2003). However, Altbach (2004) argues that cross-border education initiatives, such as the delivery of programs and the establishment of branch campuses, "are dominated almost without exception by the partner institution in the north in terms of curriculum, orientation, and sometimes the teaching staff" (p. 22). Walsh (2011) affirms the notion that "there is often little effort to adapt foreign provider programs to the language, needs, or traditions of the receiving country" (p.40).

Another critical issue is the shift from international cultural agreements to trade; in other words, the shift from aid to trade (Knight, 2006a). While intercultural exchange is one of the rationales for internationalization, internationalization measures have shifted from the broader goals of intercultural academic exchange, to initiatives focusing on narrower objectives of economic and commercial gains made by some actors (Knight, 2006a). In this context, scholars are divided into two camps. Internationalization is seen by some as a favorable process involving trade and marketization. More innovation is expected through new delivery systems, increased student access, and curricula suited for knowledge-based economies.

Applying economic concepts to education," market optimists believe that the self-regulating mechanism of demand and supply will lead to an increase in efficiency and quality, as only high-quality education products will survive in a consumer market” (Apple, 2001; as cited in Leuze, Martens, & Rusconi, 2007, p.7). Benveniste
(2002) credits the marketization process with improving the quality of education as it preserves the reputation of universities and its market share. He states that, "the logic of market competition will support the educational system in driving educational actors toward greater allocative efficiency and the delivery of higher quality services" (p.115). Some scholars have argued that marketization has supported higher education in developed countries that received less public finding, as they relied on these private sources of funding through exporting services (Chen & Lo, 2013; Robertson, 2010). This is believed to have increased access to higher education for countries whose local institutions are unable to absorb the demand due to funding shortages. Moreover, the World Bank, the WTO and the OECD are actively promoting internationalization measures in both developed and developing countries globally to build their higher-education capacities (Robertson, 2010, p.196).

Whilst internationalization is seen by many scholars as a solution to increase access to higher education and to provide quality education, another group of scholars considers it a major threat to equity, and the educational values promoted by the social/cultural exchange academic rationales for internationalization. Internationalization that is largely driven by the concepts of commodification, commercialization, and marketization has a significant impact on universities and higher education institutions globally. Many scholars (e.g., Apple 2001; Chen & Lo, 2013; Lynch 2006; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005) argue that as a result of laissez-faire policy and neo-liberal interventions, public universities are threatened by the expansion of private universities. Education is increasingly framed and marketed as a private good and as a commodity that has an exchange value in the local and global market, where it can be bought and sold according to the market needs and conditions. Education has increasingly become framed and internationally traded as a market-
driven and profit-oriented product (Kezar, 2008). Various actors promoting the marketization of education pushed universities to shift from "social, cultural, and intellectual objectives and approaches to become producers of commodities that can be sold in the international marketplace" (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p.39). As a consequence, universities' academic success is increasingly being assessed according to narrow financial criteria rather than academic principles and factors (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p.39). Terming it 'academic capitalism', Slaughter and Leslie (1997) characterize the concept as the 'marketization' affects national higher education and in terms of research and institutional autonomy for commercial purposes, "they conceptualize these changes occurring across research as a shift from a public good knowledge to an academic capitalist knowledge" (p.8).

To achieve financial goals, most universities expand their recruitment of high-fee paying international students and export their programs to other countries through branch campuses and other cross-broader initiatives to target local students in different countries (Knight, 2012). Although these initiatives have increased universities' incomes, these initiatives limit higher education access to students who can afford the high-fees.

In addition to serious equity concerns, commercialization measures are also compromising the quality of education institutions. Sawir (2013) states "that international students in tertiary institutions have lowered academic standards and are allowed lower pass marks, in the efforts to accommodate them" (p.360), and retain universities' main funders. Other scholars have looked at the changing relationship between professors and their students due to various internationalization measures. The professor-student relationship is shaped by the market transaction of a
commodity, where the professors become the commodity ‘producer’ and the students become the commodity ‘consumer’ (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p.40).

Thus, tertiary education quality is compromised as universities operate in a competitive economic environment with decreased funding from state resources. As Chen and Lo (2013) state, "internationalization is only a means to survive instead of a pursuit of excellence to these universities" (p.33). Bok (2003) aptly points out that, “bit by bit, commercialization threatens to change the character of universities in ways that limit its freedom, saps its effectiveness, and lowers its standing in society” (p. 117).

The threats to educational access, equity and quality from commodification, commercialization, and marketization seem to outnumber the few expected benefits. On the one hand, commercialization measures in higher education allow universities to generate income from resources other than the public sector, resulting in less governmental intervention in universities’ plans, missions, and objectives. However, depending on funders such as private companies and international students, universities face pressures to follow commercial motives and strategies that compromise higher education access and quality. Depending on private companies for research funding, for example, shifts and narrows the research purposes from the academic benefit of society to the private companies' needs. If the commodification, commercialization, and marketization of higher education continue, the potential societal repercussions are serious: the lowering of academic standards and quality; increasing inequality in education access and employment; and a shift from capacity and nation building towards status building.

This section discussed concerns about the growth of cross-border education, including program mobility, registration and licensing, quality assurance,
accreditation, marketization and cultural imperialism. The following sections will discuss the issue of curriculum; faculty members' and students' experiences with internationalization; the impact on students' academic performance; and theories of the influence of internationalization on students' development.

The Curriculum

*Curriculum* is a complex and contested term with various definitions, where each definition serves a particular purpose and interest. The term has been used with different meanings since the field took form. For Dewey (1897) for example, curriculum is an educational process that produces personal growth and self-actualization for students, while for Tyler (1949), curriculum is the final product of a well-planned program. Eisner (2002) describes curriculum as, "a series of planned events that are meant to have educational consequences for one or more students" (p. 45). These events, according to Eisner, include the "intended curriculum–what is planned–and the operational curriculum–what transpires through interactions between the teacher and the students" (Eisner, 2002, p. 45). Similarly, Aoki (2012) makes the distinction between "curriculum-as-planned" and "curriculum-as-lived experiences."

The variations in the definitions show that curriculum is a contested field, being as narrow as a "subject matter to be learned and as broad as all the experiences students have in the school" (Macdonald, 1971, p.196).

Several theoretical conceptions of the nature and functions of curriculum have been developed by various scholars. For example, Schubert (1986) identifies the following three types of curriculum theories: descriptive, prescriptive, and critical. Pinar (1978) and Giroux, Penna, & Pinar (1981) classify curriculum theorists as traditionalists, conceptual empiricists, and re-conceptualists, while Miller and Seller
conceptualize curriculum classification as transmission, transaction, and transformation. I have grouped these theories according to their similarities in terms of how they respond to sociocultural, economic, and political needs for educational reform.

The first group includes descriptive theory and the traditionalist and transmission positions. The descriptive theory attempts to create frameworks for curriculum development that improve school practices (Schubert, 1986). Teachers under this theory are expected to enact the curriculum and students are to receive it without questioning it. Traditionalists such as Bobbitt and Tyler are interested in the concept of formal education that emphasizes basic knowledge and a definitive structure of instruction (Gay, 2004). In the transmission position, the main role of education is to transmit fixed facts, skills, and values to students (Miller & Seller, 1985). These theories use traditional and rote learning methods where students must memorize and recall skills, providing little room to develop analytical skills. Because teachers are transmitting information to their students, there is little or no place for reflexive learning as the knowledge flows only from the teacher to the student.

The second group contains the prescriptive theory, conceptual empiricists, and the transaction position. The prescriptive theory focuses on the reality of classrooms and incorporates student experience into the teaching and learning process (Schubert, 1986). Conceptual empiricists such as Taba and Schwab base their theorizing on, "data derived from research methodologies in attempting to produce general principles that will enable educators to predict and control what happens in schools" (Gay, 2004, p.37). Finally, the transaction position presents education as, "dialogue between the student and the curriculum in which the student reconstructs knowledge through the dialogue process" (Miller & Seller, 1985, p.6). The student is seen as
rational and capable of problem solving, so curriculum in this position emphasizes developing the student’s cognitive and rational skills. These three theories focus more on the students' capabilities and highlight the dialogue process between teachers and students.

The third group consists of the critical and the re-conceptualist theories, and the transformation position. Critical theory is primarily concerned with social justice and emancipatory education (Schubert, 1986). Critical educators have a view of the role of schools as institutions in leading a social and political change. McLaren, for example, highlights the role of schools in generating critical knowledge enabling students to become active citizens and critical thinkers socially and politically, willing to bring about social changes (as cited in Salehi & Mohammadhkani, 2013).

The re-conceptualists are a distinctive group of educators (e.g., Pinar and Greene), who criticized the existing modes of curriculum theorizing and attempted to "offset the relatively apolitical, ahistorical, and technological orientation that has dominated the curriculum field" (Giroux, Penna, & Pinar, 1981 p.7). The re-conceptualists highlight the notion of "currere" where the curriculum is a journey of teaching students, "as citizens aspiring to establish a democratic society and as individuals committed to other individuals, to think and act with intelligence, sensitivity, and courage" (Pinar, 2010, p.178). The re-conceptualists’ work is based on critical theory and pedagogy, but goes beyond to include post-structuralist and intersectional analyses of sexuality and gender. In this sense, they expanded the idea of curriculum in significant ways. Critical theorists such as Giroux and McLaren and re-conceptualists such as Eisner, Pinar, and Apple, suggest that current curriculum understandings and practices produce unjust outcomes, and they are therefore concerned with social justice and critical analysis of education.
Finally, the transformation holistic position (Miller & Seller, 1985) emphasizes both personal and social change, to achieve this target the curriculum and the student have to be interconnected.

Overall, scholars of these three theories acknowledge the role and agency of the teachers and students in enacting, shaping, and making personal meanings out of the curriculum. These theories generally focus on developing rational, social, emotional and cognitive skills to promote personal and social transformation and to develop students’ critical thinking skills, and teachers play a crucial role in developing these skills through engaging student actively in critical dialogue.

**Intended, Enacted and Achieved Curriculum**

Comparative educator Anderson-Levitt (2008) describes how scholars distinguish between three levels of curriculum. As she put it:

First, is the official or intended curriculum. Second, there is what is actually taught, that is, the implemented or enacted curriculum. The enacted curriculum includes the implicit or hidden curriculum. Third is the students' actual experience of the curriculum, that is, the attained or achieved curriculum (pp.351-352).

The *intended* curriculum can be generally understood as, "what every student is to know and what they are supposed to learn. This curriculum comes into view in national policies which reflect the social visions, educational plans, and formal and national documents certified for educational goals" (Çil & Çepni, 2014, p.3).

Null (2008, p.479) highlights Bobbitt's (1924) idea that educational institutions and curriculum planning should be in tune with the needs of society. According to this approach, curriculum is to serve the needs of a specific society and its population. Therefore, curriculum goals, objectives, textbooks, and assessments should fit the educational system and reflect the cultural context of the country where
the curriculum is designed and intended for delivery. Thus, in my research looking at imported curriculum in AOU-Kuwait, I examine whether the curriculum is "localized" or tailored to fit with the social and cultural environment of the country.

While the taught curriculum is at the level of teacher and class activities, focusing on the implementation of intentions and goals, the implemented (or, hidden) curriculum reflects the idea that schools do more than simply transmit knowledge, as they also produce changes in students' values, perceptions, and behaviors. For instance, based on the work of Goodlad, Klein, and Associates (1970), Schubert (2008, p.408) argues that the ways teachers teach the curriculum could be incommensurate with the intended curriculum. Along these lines, Anderson-Levitt (2008) states that "there is diversity in the curriculum-in-action, as decided by teachers and students in specific contexts, since what actually happens in classrooms varies widely around the world" (p.363).

The achieved or attained curriculum refers to what the students experience and learn. "It is the result of what is achieved at the end of the learning and teaching. The attained curriculum defines the students' competences, academic achievement, attitudes, and belief indications" (Çil & Çepni, 2014, p.3).

**Imported Curriculum**

While imported curricula/programs may be of high quality in the home countries, they do not necessarily travel well or serve the interests of higher education students in the host countries (Donn & Manthri, 2013). Conflicts of interest, quality of delivery, and issues between partners are some of the problems that occur at the implementation level of imported curricula (Altbach, 2000). Moreover, students, teachers, institutions, and local environments are different from one country to
another and these differences affect curriculum delivery and student success or failure.

Curriculum irrelevance is a serious issue in cross-border education (Milszewska & Sztendur, 2012). Rader and Meggison (2007) argue that "educators at all levels must work together to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and of high quality, and meets the needs of all stakeholders" (p.31). Curriculum should not only be globalized, but it should also be localized (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Smith, 2010). Specifically, it is important to make the Western curriculum relevant to the host country context by using local examples and material that allow local students to relate between their discipline and their environment (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003).

In Hoare’s study (2011), Singaporean students developed their own selective adaptation approach for their foreign course content. Hoare suggests that an effective approach might be for institutions to let "students re-contextualize course content for themselves" (p. 282) when it is needed, and keep the course content global.

In Hughes’ (2011) discussion of how faculty use imported curriculum in the host country, he presents a four-way matrix of curriculum content and delivery. As shown in figure 1, the vertical axis represents what is required to be taught. It ranges from fixed content versus evolving content; and the horizontal axis represents how the subject is taught, ranging from constrained delivery versus free delivery.
At one end of the continuum, the curriculum content is fixed and there are constraints on the topics to be taught in the host country. Changes to the content and delivery are restricted to the home institution (provider). At the other end of the continuum, faculty members are allowed and "encouraged to adapt the materials and the curriculum to the local needs of the students and allowed to deliver the material in whatever ways they regard as best" (Hughes, 2011, p.24).

With respect to quality assurance, Hughes (2011) suggests that the home institution and faculty at the host country can share the responsibility when there is a trusting relationship between them. When this is not the case, and changes to the curriculum content are restricted to the home institution, "considerable effort is required to maintain the quality of the provision and respond to local need" (Hughes, 2011, p.25). However, the United Kingdom’s (UK) educational code is not in line with this thinking, as it the UK Quality Assurance Agency’s Code of Practice states
that any movement away from UK standards, "could be deleterious to the partnership, institutional reputations and student learning" (Smith, 2010, p. 802).

In terms of standardization versus adaptation, there is not necessarily one “right” approach, as stakeholder preferences can differ from context to context. Willis’ (2004) study found that Chinese students preferred only a minor adaptation of teaching styles and course content in order to acquire the foreign university experience: “…if there was a perception that the program had been adapted too much for the overseas market, students would reject it as being unauthentic and bogus” (p. 27). With minor adaptations, Chinese students would still gain the benefit of studying in a foreign university and having a foreign educational experience. Thus, Willis suggests that foreign universities delivering courses in China should not over adapt their programs to satisfy local needs.

Willis (2004) notes that in the marketing and management sectors, "products and services adapt in varying degrees to the importer country depending on the nature of the market" (p.30). Along these lines, Bartlett and Ghoshal (1987) point out that transnational corporations adjust their products and services on both local and global scales to survive and succeed internationally. Shams and Huisman (2011) argue that transnational higher institutions should apply these same concepts in creating educational programs for the global market while allowing some space to adjust the programs to local demands. For instance, Willis (2004) suggests that course materials should be balanced between integration with the providers and responsiveness to the local environment. Dumber (2013) refers to a number of studies to demonstrate that the balanced adaptation could involve" altering textbook content for local relevance, providing local examples, and adjusting teaching approaches to the learning styles of the host culture" (p.26).
Yet another issue for consideration is that textbooks are written in English, which might be a problem for students who have difficulties with the language. Data from faculty perspectives in Dunn and Wallace’s (2006) study showed that students experienced difficulties understanding English textbooks. This example illuminates the need to explore issues around the design and implementation of imported curriculum from the perspectives of faculty members and students, as this will bring to bear important insights about the approaches that might be more or less beneficial for students.

**Faculty Experiences with Internationalization**

In a cross-border institutional setting, faculty members are hired either from the home institution or from the host country, and the faculty can be comprised of a combination of staff from the home institution and the host country. Those who are hired in the host country could be local faculty members and sometimes expatriates of various nationalities (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Hughes, 2011).

Hughes (2011) describes the relationship between faculty at the host country and the home institutions as being set on a continuum; from a fully integrated relationship with the home institution at one end of the continuum, to a validation agreement at the other end. It is worth noting that regardless of the nature of the relationship, faculty at the host country generally use and deliver materials and content that reflect the same academic standards as in the home country (Dunn & Wallace, 2006).

Studies have shown that faculty members hired from home institutions to teach students in an intercultural setting are not adequately prepared (e.g., Debowski, 2005; Dunn & Wallace, 2006). In response, a number of publications emerged to
show the importance of preparing faculty members with the required skills to teach internationally (e.g., Debowski, 2005; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Gopal, 2011; Teekens, 2013). Thus, Dunn and Wallace (2006) argue that preparing faculty members to teach abroad is necessary, "… if a university is to engage in transnational teaching, particularly by helping its academic and administrative staff to develop intercultural competencies that translate to pedagogy, curriculum and student support curriculum" (p. 358). In order to be successful in teaching and integrating in a cross-cultural context, it is crucial for faculty to develop intercultural competency (Gopal, 2011). Furthermore, understanding cultural differences "allows for the development of appropriate educational products, which are tailored to the needs of the students" (Heffernan, Morrison, Basu, & Sweeney, 2010, p.38).

Beyond simply preparing faculty to teach abroad, Hughes (2011) examined the extent to which faculty (from both the home and host institutions) can adapt the imported curriculum to the local context of the host country. Given that faculty members work on the front lines and have a direct relationship with the local students, he argues that the curriculum should be aligned to and reflect the needs of the local students and their environment. Hughes argues that the home institution should take into consideration faculty members’ experiences with implementing the imported curriculum and make any necessary changes accordingly. These changes could include a re-prioritization of student needs and different approaches to teaching and assessment. Dunn and Wallace (2006) found that other ways in which faculty adapt their teaching practices include incorporating local examples and case studies with the existing (Australian) curriculum materials. However, some faculty felt they required special training to support them in adapting the curriculum to the local context.
It should not be taken for granted that faculty members will be able to bring in the skills, competencies and attitudes required for cultural inclusivity and successful curriculum delivery in the host country (Dunn & Wallace, 2006). Local faculty hired from the host country also require professional development to teach imported curricula (Dixon and Scott, 2003; Dunn and Wallace, 2006; Sheehy, 2004). According to Dunn and Wallace (2006), local tutors and organizations are untapped yet potentially valuable resources for learning about adapting curricula for the local context.

In summary, ensuring successful implementation of imported curriculum requires well-prepared faculty, and a balanced adaptation to the local context. Successful adaptation of the imported curriculum depends largely on faculty members’ experiences with internationalization. Given the importance of knowing about the experiences of local faculty with imported curricula, this study contributes to understating local faculty experiences of internationalization.

**Student Experiences with Internationalization**

A number of student experience studies have attempted to improve curriculum to meet the needs of diverse students (Erickson et al., 2008; Erickson & Shultz, 1992; Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007). Thiessen and Cook-Sather (2007) identify three major areas of foci for studying students’ experience in school:

1) How students participate in and make sense of life in classrooms and schools;
2) Who students are and how they develop in classrooms and schools; and
3) How students are actively involved in shaping their own learning opportunities (p.8).

Dewey (1938/63) distinguished between internal and objective conditions in terms of students’ experiences in the school. According to Dewey, the internal
conditions are known as subjective experience; in other words, the student life world and the learning environment as experienced by the learner. In contrast, objective conditions are features of the learning environment itself:

It includes what is done by the educator and the way in which it is done ... It includes equipment, books. It includes the materials with which an individual interacts and, most important of all, the total social set-up of the situations in which a person is engaged (as cited in Erickson et al., 2008, p.200).

Dewey noted that, "it is the objective conditions of school learning environments over which educators have most direct control" (as cited in Erickson et al., 2008, p.200). Therefore, any changes in the objective conditions can potentially lead to changes in the school and curriculum experience among students. Dressel (1968) identifies five specific factors that influence student experience, and emphasizes the importance of planning them well:

- Materials (textbooks);
- Instructional methods (lectures, discussions, demonstrations);
- Assignments (papers, reports);
- Activities (field trips, independent study);
- Evaluation methods (essays, tests, participation).

Students' experience has long been a concern in curriculum studies literature. Major scholars in the field of education including Bobbitt (1918) and Dewey (1938, 1956) included student experience in their conceptions of curriculum (as cited in He, Phillion, Chan, & Xu, 2008, p.222). As well, a number of studies have been done on the diverse experiences (academic, social and professional) that students gain as a result of internationalization, both at home and abroad (e.g., Crosling, Edwards, & Schroder, 2008; Velayo, 2012). According to Velayo (2012), for example, the primary goal behind an internationalized curriculum is to "transform students' national perspectives into a broader and more informed view of the world in which students understand and appreciate the interdependence among nations and among world
cultures” (p.4). Other benefits of internationalization for students include developing cross-cultural skills, improving foreign language ability, and broadening belief systems, world views and assumptions (Mazon, 2009).

However, to a certain extent, these benefits are taken for granted, as little research has been conducted on students’ experience with cross-border education, and their voices are rarely included in the discourse. Thus, little is known about students’ preferences in internationalization/cross-border education (Dumber, 2013; Hoare, 2011).

**Student Academic Performance**

Student academic performance continues to be seen as an important factor in determining student success in education, and institutional reputation within the larger education system (Sarwar & Sarwar, 2012). Universities consider it to be a crucial factor in competing locally and globally because of its potential to attract both local and international students. High academic standards are viewed as essential to obtaining desirable jobs and high salaries, as employers tend to consider academic performance and institutional reputation as main factors in the recruitment of workers, especially new graduates (Ali, Jusoff, Ali, Mokhtar, & Salamat, 2009; Sarwar & Sarwar, 2012). Furthermore, academic performance is considered to be an important factor in predicting student success in universities, including the probability of students being admitted to graduate schools (Tinto, 1975). For government and education policy makers, student academic performance plays an important role in producing well-educated people "who will become great leaders and provide manpower for the country’s economic and social development" (Ali et al., 2009, p. 82).
The high stakes of academic performance for many stakeholders has led to a proliferation of studies in this area, and in particular, barriers and facilitators to success. For example, Musttaq and Khan (2012) examined factors influencing academic performance and found that students' socio-economic backgrounds, psychological factors, family responsibility, and learning facilities are major influencers. Harb and El Shaarawi (2006) found other determining factors such as competence in English, participation in class discussion, and class attendance. Daniyal, Nawaz, Aleem, and Hassan (2011) declare that beyond parental education, family income and family size, the role of the teacher plays a major part in the academic achievements of students.

In summary, student performance is affected by numerous internal and external factors. From the school perspective, internal factors include the physical learning facilities, textbooks, assignments, complexity of the course material, teacher's role in the class, and exam systems. External factors include students' socio-economic status, race, gender, parental occupation, and parental education. These factors might vary from person to person, and country to country. With imported curriculum, the culture, context, and relevance are also issues affecting student academic performance.

Student performance is a major indication of academic progress or regress and is typically measured using assessments indicators. Assessment results may demonstrate whether the curriculum or course content is understood fully by students, if it is too difficult, or too easy (Marsh, 2009, p.72). This information might lead to curriculum modification, rejection, or improvement. However, assessment results should not be the only indicator and other criteria should be taken into consideration, such as student engagement with the material, to fully understand student
performance (Marsh, 2009). An important factor is how students experience the imported curriculum, and how the imported business curriculum influences students' self-perceived academic performances.

A primary objective of internationalization is student development and individual personal growth. Such objectives are common motives among the different levels and categories of internationalization, particularly within social and cultural rationales. Thus, it is important to know how the imported curriculum contributes to students' self-perceived personal and professional growth.

**Student Success and Student Development Theories**

**Student Success: Persistence and Performance**

In 1975, Tinto developed a model of student departure to explain why students' withdrawal or departure from an institution occurs. According to the model, dropout occurs when an individual is insufficiently integrated into different aspects of college or university life. Tinto (1975) identifies academic and social integration as two aspects in the higher education that lead students to drop out due to insufficient integration in either or both of these two aspects. Tinto's theoretical model identifies five main factors that could lead to students dropping out of college: 1) pre-entry attributes (family background, individual attributes, pre-college schooling); 2) commitments (goal commitment, and institutional commitment); 3) institutional experiences and academic system (grade performance, intellectual development, peer-group interactions, and faculty interactions); 4) personal/normative integration (academic integration, social integration); and 5) dropout decisions.
In his model, Tinto aimed to differentiate between different types of dropout behavior, including academic failure and voluntary withdrawal. A forced withdrawal can be due to poor grades and not meeting expected levels of academic performance. Tinto (1975) considers students’ grade performance as a success factor that is useful to determining students' academic integration with the academic system, a determining factor for students' persistence within these institutions. Tinto refers to studies conducted by several researchers (e.g., Ammons, 1971; Astin, 1972; Blanchfield, 1971; Coker, 1968) who all agreed that grade performance is one of the important factors in predicting persistence in college. These scholars theorize that students who perform well based on grades are more likely to persist in their postsecondary studies.

**Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning**

Informed by early work on experiential learning (Dewey, 1958; Lewin, 1951; Piaget, 1971), Kolb's (1981) theory of experiential learning provides information that can be useful to academics, teachers, managers, and trainers in understanding different learning styles and knowing how to respond effectively. Kolb (1984) defines experiential learning as, "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). Four distinct learning styles (or preferences) are presented in his theory, based on a four-stage learning cycle.

The four stage cycle as demonstrated in figure 2 consists of 1) Concrete Experience (CE) – being involved in a new experience; 2) Reflective Observation (RO) – watching others or developing observations about one's own experience; 3) Abstract Conceptualization (AC) – creating theories to explain observations; and 4)
Active Experimentation (AE) – incorporating new ideas into action to solve problems and make decisions.

**Figure 2- Kolb's Cycle of Learning**
(Evans et al., 2010, p.139)

Each part of the cycle stands as a basis for the following one. For example, concrete experience provides a basis for observation and reflection. In turn, these observations and reflections are integrated into abstract concepts and theories, which can then be actively used in making decisions and creating new experiences (Kolb, 1984). The CE and AC compose a grasping dimension (how one takes in information), while the AE and RO form a transforming dimension (how one makes information meaningful) (Evans et al., 2010, p.139). Each of these four parts of the learning cycle has a major aspect of personal growth and the state of learning within the cycle is contingent upon the learning situation for the learners (Kolb, 1981).
Based on this learning cycle, four individual learning styles emerge (Kolb, 1984): 1) Diverger; 2) Assimilator; 3) Converger; and 4) Accommodator. Divergers (CE and RO) have unconventional perspectives, prefer to watch rather than do, gather information, and use imagination to solve problems. People with the Diverging style prefer to work in groups, to listen with an open mind and to receive personal feedback. Assimilators (AC and RO) are interested in ideas and abstract concepts and create theories by integrating different ideas. They prefer learning through readings, lectures, exploring analytical models, and having time to think things through. Convergers (AC and AE) can solve problems and use their learning to find solutions to practical issues. They enjoy experimenting with new ideas, to simulation, and working with practical applications. Accommodators (CE and AE), as Kolb defines them, are "doers." They are open to new experiences, try different ways to achieve their target and they prefer the trial-and-error approach to problem solving (Evans et al., 2010). As each of these learning styles have different learning preferences, it would be useful for instructors to be aware of these learning styles when creating and delivering instructional materials.

An additional consideration is the ways in which cultural context influences learning styles. In Yamazaki’s (2005) study, points out to the relationship between learning styles and culture showing that learning styles vary among cultures. He emphasizes "that the culture of country must necessarily be considered as a crucial factor so that we can understand individual learning styles" (p.545).

**Chickering's Theory**

Chickering (1969) presents seven vectors or stages of individual development that contribute to the formation of identity: 1) developing competence; 2) managing emotions; 3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence; 4) developing
mature interpersonal relationships; 5) establishing identity; 6) developing purpose; and 7) developing integrity.

Chickering explains that students move through the seven vectors at different rates, the vectors interact with each other and are not rigidly sequential, and students can go through more than one vector at the same time (Evans et al., 2010).

The third, fourth, and fifth vectors encourage active learning, respect for diverse talents and ways of learning, and cooperation amongst students. The first, second, sixth, and seventh relate more to emotional development, identity formation, and individual purpose. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), an individual's vectors can be influenced by the following seven key influences: 1) institutional objectives; 2) institutional size; 3) student-faculty relationships; 4) curriculum; 5) teaching; 6) friendships and student communities; and 7) student development programs services. Each of these key influences has different effects on the vectors of identity development. Key influences four and five are most relevant to the purposes of this study, as they are related to the identity and personal growth of the students.

Chickering's aim was to evaluate the impact of curricular practices on student development in order to provide faculty with ideas concerning the organization of educational programs to enhance student development. In order to help students make sense of what they are learning, Chikering and Reisser (1993) suggest making curriculum content relevant to students’ background and prior experiences, and to provide opportunities for students to challenge pre-existing information with diverse perspectives. Another way to support student learning is to encourage active learning to develop better interpersonal relationships and positive intercultural identities.
In summary, the imported curriculum as seen by Lane and Kinser (2011) is a solution to solve some local problems for the host country such as increasing local access to higher education, improving the domestic education sector providing academic programs, and to make local students aware of global trends. However, the delivery of courses and programs in the receiving country might be different from the methods of the source country. This may require some adaptation to the course materials and teaching styles to meet the specific educational needs of the new context within which the courses are delivered. Therefore, faculty who deliver and implement the imported curriculum assert that adapting and balancing the curriculum is crucial to ensuring successful transplanting and implementing of the imported curriculum. Willis (2004) and Hoare (2011) emphasize this point by suggesting that the imported curriculum requires some adaptation of materials and teaching styles to meet the needs of the local students in the new context where the courses are delivered. When faculty adapt the imported curriculum, it enriches students’ academic experience and learning journey. Dressel (1968) states that when particular curriculum factors (the textbooks, instructional methods, assignments, and evaluation methods) are well selected and planned, students will learn what they supposed to learn. These factors are presumably affecting students' academic experience and might influence their academic performance. Therefore, these factors within an imported curriculum should reflect the culture and context of the local students, in order to gain the anticipated benefits from the imported curriculum.

Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented a review and synthesis of the literature guiding this study, to provide a background and foundation that highlights the relationships
between internationalization and the students’ experience. The literature reveals a wide variety of topics associated with internationalization, including defining and distinguishing between globalization and internationalization (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley 2009; Knight, 2004); rationales for internationalization (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2004; Qiang, 2003); definitions, types and issues related to cross-border education and mobility (Knight, 2005; 2006; 2013; Naidoo, 2009; UNESCO, 2005); re-contextualizing the curriculum for local relevancy (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Hoare, 2011; Smith, 2010); faculty experience of internationalization (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Hughes, 2011); and student development theories relevant to this study (Chickering, 1969; Kolb, 1981; Tinto, 1975).

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested that imported curricula should effectively reflect and adapt to students' backgrounds. Despite the amount of literature that addresses internationalization in general, questions remain regarding how faculty members and students experience the imported curriculum. Little research has been done on students’ experience with cross-border education and students’ voices are rarely heard (Chapman & Pyvis, 2005; Hoare, 2011). Moreover, research on faculty members' experiences of internationalization is scarce, and little is known about the impact of imported curriculum on local faculty (Debowski, 2005; Dumber 2013).

This study is intended to contribute to filling the gap surrounding local faculty and student experience of internationalization, specifically as it relates to the imported curriculum. Informed by the current literature, however, the next chapter presents the conceptual framework of this study.
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework: Educational Borrowing and Lending

The conceptual framework for this study draws from the concept of ‘policy borrowing’ as a useful way of understanding issues in higher education internationalization. In this chapter, I will define policy borrowing, review the normative and analytical approaches, and discuss how Steiner-Khamsi’s conceptual framework of policy borrowing supports the aims of my research.

The first section presents a brief background on the emergence of Transnational Borrowing and Lending (policy borrowing) and its features. This section draws on the concept of globalization and its effect on education and educational policy to discuss the reasons behind policy borrowing. Section two discusses how local context must be considered to ensure success in transplanting policy. Section three defines policy borrowing and explains the normative and analytical approaches. Section four highlights Steiner-Khamsi’s framework of policy borrowing. This framework helps in understanding why a particular policy has been selected and how it is being implemented in a new context.

The final section discusses how these concepts are drawn upon to inform the conceptual framework of this study. As well it examines conceptualizing the imported curriculum in the wider policy borrowing context.

Globalization and Policy Borrowing

Globalization has brought upon a growing worldwide interest in higher education investment, drawing increased attention to policy borrowing for countries seeking to introduce new educational policies and reforms into their systems. Transnational Borrowing and Lending in educational policy (policy borrowing) is a
process intended to improve national educational systems and "to foster international competitiveness in a globalized economy" (Spreen, 2001, p. 41).

Before the spread of globalization and its effects on education, nation-states developed their educational policies based on internal concerns. However, the formation of education policies is now shaped more by global contexts than local ones (Al’Abri, 2011). Policy borrowing tends to reshape and reframe national educational policy systems. Through borrowed policies and notions of education, national systems in developing countries are influenced by Westernization. This borrowing strategy tends to have a unidirectional flow from the North/West (the center) to the rest of the World (the periphery).

Neo-institutionalist theorists (e.g., Francisco Ramirez, John Meyer, and John Boli) view globalization as impacting education through, "a process of homogenization of the politics of curriculum" (Pacheco, 2012, p.12), in which most national educational systems are converging. As they view it, globalization often leads to international convergence of systems, programs, curricula, and models of education toward a single global model due to borrowing similar policies worldwide (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). Neo-institutionalist theorists maintain that there is a movement toward common educational systems and policies regardless of the variation of national characteristics amongst countries (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000). For these theorists, schools, universities and educational systems are converging toward one typical model.

On the other hand, cultural anthropologists (e.g., Diane Napier, Kathryn Anderson-Levitt, and Lisa Rosen) in comparative education point to diverging educational systems as a result of national characteristics. Research by cultural anthropologists shows that national differences affect the type of delivery used to
implement global policies and curricula into the local systems (e.g., Anderson-Levitt, Ball, Spindler & Spindler, Tobin, Wu, & Davidson). According to this school of thought, "policy is less homogenous than world culture theory [neo- institutionalist theory] might imply" (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, p.4). Although the same policies and curricula are imported into local contexts, this similarity disappears to some extent when the borrowed curriculum is implemented in local classrooms (Anderson-Levitt, 2008). This diversity emerges through the interactions between teachers and students, "as decided by teachers and students in specific contexts since what actually happens in classrooms varies widely around the world" (Anderson-Levitt, 2008, p.363).

In summary, neo-institutionalist theorists argue that educational policies are converging among countries, while cultural anthropological theorists stress that homogeneity and similarity exist at the intended level (the planned curriculum/or policy), while, at the enacted level (the implemented level), diversity exists (Anderson-Levitt, 2008; Pacheco, 2012). For transplanted educational policy and curriculum, it is essential to acknowledge the difference between what has been borrowed, and how it is being implemented in a local context.

Recognizing the difference between what has been borrowed and how it is being implemented in a local context will help improve the process of transplanting educational policy and curriculum and make it more useful for the adopting country.

**Context and Policy Borrowing**

Context is crucial when studying transplanted educational policies (Cowen, 2000; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). For instance, local context impacts the application of policy borrowing and educational reforms in the classroom by different stakeholders such as students, teachers, and local educational policymakers (Spreen, 2001).
Steiner-Khamsi (2014) differentiates educational policy borrowing from simply copying because it is inevitably shaped by the political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts. Thus, she focuses on the processes of local adaptation, modification, or resistance that accompany the borrowed policy in a unique context. The level of acceptance or resistance by stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, and teachers) to the concept of policy borrowing plays a significant role in the success or failure of any borrowed policy. As Borjan (2009) put it, "if there is a conflict between policy-makers' intention and the local interest groups' expectations, a policy might not be implemented and the statesmen could be accused of being incompetent" (p. 29).

While educational transfer research characterizes policy borrowers as, "passive receivers of educational goods" (Spreen, 2001, p.20), this idea has been criticized by comparative education scholars, as they argue that policy borrowers seek international ideas, but they do not necessarily accept them as they are. Instead, they combine foreign ideas with local practices to create hybrid ones (Anderson-Levitt, 2008; Steiner-Khamsi, 2003). These policy borrowers re-contextualize and indigenize borrowed policies by taking the context of their countries into consideration.

According to Anderson-Levitt (2008) and Steiner-Khamsi (2003), educational borrowing, for global policies and curricula, is more useful to the adopting country if it takes the local context of the receiving country into consideration. Therefore, it is important not to impose the borrowed policy into the national context as-is, or ignore the contextual differences between the lender (home institution) and the receiver (host country). This is the perspective I take as I study the policy borrowing of the imported business curriculum at the Arab Open University in Kuwait.
Definition, Aim, and Significance of Policy Borrowing and Lending

Policy borrowing and lending are considered to be two trends of globalization (Popkewitz, 2004, p.vii). The concept of educational borrowing "is usually used to denote the process of conscious adoption of external education policies, philosophies and concepts, through which education is transferred to the domestic context" (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p.774). For comparative education scholars educational borrowing refers to a process, in which education models, ideas, and policies are taken from one context and transplanted into another (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). The aim of educational policy borrowing is to learn from foreign experiences, and to choose the "best practices" considering them as the best solutions for solving national educational problems. What could to be borrowed and transplanted from one country to another varies "from guiding philosophy, targets and goals, strategies, enabling structures, process, to techniques" (Ochs & Phillips, 2002, p. 330). Generally, Phillips and Ochs (2003) stated that educational products such as: curriculum, assessment, quality assurance processes, qualifications frameworks, and style of learning and teaching can also be borrowed.

Moreover, according to McDonald (2012) borrowing "occurs in a variety of ways including in-country training, student training/education in a foreign country, distance education programs, educational study tours, policy adoption, exchange programs and establishment of educational institutions across borders" (p.1817–1818).

Borrowed educational policy is usually dependent on what local policymakers intend to solve, reform, or upgrade in their national educational system. However, due to pressures related to timelines and complexity, national policy analysts tend to resort to redefining their local needs and problems to fit with existing global borrowing
reform packages (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). As a result, "borrowing could be selective, wholesale, or eclectic" (Borjian, 2009, p.15), contingent upon the purposes of the policy actors. "Best practices" could be selected from various systems, and not just selected from one country (Ball, 1998; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). In addition to knowing what can be borrowed, it is important to understand why policy borrowing is taking place and examine the impact of borrowing on the local level.

In the context of this study and referring to Phillips and Ochs' (2003) statement that 'curriculum can be borrowed' and to Aydarova's study (2012); I argue that policy borrowing includes borrowing of curriculum- imported curriculum, and that the policy borrowing frameworks introduced by Phillips and Ochs (2003) and Steiner-Khamsi (2014) used to analyze the policy borrowing transfer can also be used to analyze the curriculum transfer from one cultural context to another.

**The Normative and Analytical Approaches of Policy Borrowing**

Comparative researchers in policy borrowing are divided into two groups. The first group adopts a normative approach and focuses on what can be learned from elsewhere. The second group adopts an analytic approach and seeks to analyze and examine the cross-national policy borrowing process (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Schriewer, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

**The Normative Approach**

Within the normative approach, stakeholders rely on borrowing or learning the “best practices” from a different context to upgrade and reform their educational systems (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Normative approach researchers are interested in comparing educational systems worldwide and selecting the best system or practice
regardless of contextual differences. Rather than considering context, they focus on what has to be borrowed (Steiner-Khamsi, 2003). This group seeks what they consider to be “optimal” solutions and results, such as "the optimal class size, the optimal teacher salary, and the optimal standardized student test for effective and high-quality education" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014, p. 154). These optimal solutions and results are used as indicators for determining global benchmarks, as well as determining the success achieved in the receiving country (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, 2014). These "best practices" are generally lent from developed to developing countries in a center-to-periphery relationship. As Altbach (2004) explains it, "the transnational initiatives in terms of curriculum, orientation, teaching staff, and the language of instruction are dominated by the partner institution (home institution). There is often little effort to adapt offshore programs to the needs or traditions of the country in which the programs are offered" (p.22).

**The Analytic Approach**

The analytic approach focuses on examining the politics and process of educational borrowing, and the agents of transfer. This approach examines the impact of policy borrowing on existing educational policies at the local level. Analytical approach scholars are interested in understanding not just the *what* and *who* but also the *how* and *why* of educational transfer (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; 2012a; 2014). Researchers adopting this approach are against research that decontextualizes education from its environment (e.g., Anderson-Levitt; Steiner-Khamsi; Waldow). They advocate for the contextual study of educational systems and argue that borrowed policy has to be in tune with local contexts to perform properly and solve local problems. These researchers "draw attention to the local meaning, adaptation,
and recontextualization of reforms that had been transferred or imported" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012a, p. 4). Table 2 lists the main differences between the normative and analytical approaches.

**Table 2: Normative versus analytical questions in policy borrowing research**
(Steiner-Khamsi, 2014, p.154)

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<th>Normative</th>
<th>Analytic</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Best practices&quot;</td>
<td>Which are the “best practices” that should be adopted?</td>
<td>Whose practices are considered “best practices”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination</td>
<td>How can “best practices” be effectively disseminated?</td>
<td>Under which conditions is dissemination of a practice likely to occur?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact of lesson</td>
<td>What has been improved as a result of policy borrowing?</td>
<td>Who benefits, who loses in the act of lesson drawing?</td>
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In summary, countries and policymakers tend to choose and adopt "best practices" from elsewhere. However, due to the differences that exist in the "political architecture, national infrastructures, and national ideologies" (Ball, 1998, p.126), the same borrowed or adopted practice might be received and interpreted differently in each receiving country.

Next, I will review the frameworks used by the analytical researchers to study the process of policy borrowing within the local context.

**Steiner-Khamsi's Policy Borrowing Analytical Framework**

Analytic researchers interested in policy borrowing adopt conceptual frameworks to scrutinize why a particular policy is adopted and to emphasize the importance of understanding the local context. In her framework, Steiner-Khamsi (2014) adopts the concepts of reception and translation to understand why a particular policy has been selected and how this policy will be implemented in a new context.

The *reception* concept focuses on the selection process. It examines the
reasons driving local actors to select a particular policy, and identifies the problems
that the borrowed policy aims to resolve. The translation concept explains how the
imported policy is adapted and implemented in the local context and focuses on local
adaptation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012a, 2014).

**Reception**

Steiner-Khamsi and associates (2012a), examine the concept of reception to
"explore the contextual reasons for why reforms, best practices, or international
standards, were adopted" (p.4). They focus on understanding why a particular policy
is selected and transplanted. For them, the local context is "the main site for
understanding policy transfer" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012a, p. 8). They base their analysis
on the following two key concepts: the "externalization" concept introduced by
Schriewer (1990), and the "socio-logic" concept introduced by Schriewer and

"Externalization" is a concept coined by Juergen Schriewer (1990), referring
to "why and how references to elsewhere are used to advance local educational
reform" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2002, p.67). Externalization, for Schriewer, means "to
borrow models, discourses, or practices" from other educational systems (Steiner-
Khamsi, 2002, p.69). Referring to external reference systems occurs when internal
references (e.g., scientific rationality, tradition and values, and organization) fail to
provide the needed reforms, when domestic reforms are controversial, or when there
is ongoing public pressure to develop and introduce new educational reforms (Steiner-

Moreover, Schriewer and Martinez (2004) propose studying local contexts to
understand the socio-logic of externalization. To identify the "socio-logic of
externalization" and the causes of receptiveness, comparative scholars examine the
social, political, economic, and historical contexts in which educational transfers occur (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). According to the "socio-logic" concept, Steiner-Khamsi (2014) concludes that, "policy borrowing is never wholesale, but always selective and, by implication, reflects the socio-logic or context-specific reasons for receptiveness" (p.156). Based on the socio-logic concept, Steiner-Khamsi (2010, 2012b) introduces the octopus metaphor to "describe the cross-national policy attraction, resonance, and reception process" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014, p.155). This metaphor explains how "local actors reach out and grab the arm of the octopus that is closest to their particular policy agenda, and attach local meaning to a global policy" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b, p.459).

The "context-specific" reasons that affect the socio-logic and drive the receiving country to borrow from a particular system could be cultural, political or economic (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). These reasons differ among countries, and they are not stable within the same country. They might be driven by the state vision in a specific period of time. Some scholars (e.g., Spreen, 2001, Steiner-Khamsi, 2014) have presented case studies that show how some countries used the socio-logic concept to select a reference society that aligns with the state vision.

In summary, the reception concept, based on the work of Schriewer (1990) and Steiner-Khamsi (2014), explains why a particular policy has been transplanted from one specific "reference society" to another local context.

**Translation**

The translation concept addresses how a transfer has been implemented and/or adjusted at the local level. An approach suggested by Steiner-Khamsi (2002) is to
apply and expand upon Schriewer's theory (externalization) to understand how borrowed educational reform models are adapted within the new context.

The translation concept focuses on the local adaptation of foreign education policy, and examines whether resistance, modification, or indigenization to the educational import models have occurred (Steiner-Khamsi, 2003). As Cowen (2009) put it, “as it moves, it morphs” encapsulating how borrowed education policy can be adapted, modified, or translated in a specific context and highlighting the changing features of global education policies as they travel from one country to another. Although policy borrowing is spreading globally, what it means and how it operates varies within a given context.

Steiner-Khamsi (2014) policy borrowing analytical framework is drawn upon the system theory that takes into the local context in relation to translating borrowed policy.

*Systems Theory*

System theorists' work is based on the concepts of self-referential systems, externalization, and socio-logic, requiring a detailed analysis of local contexts. This theory focuses on understanding "why policies are borrowed (externalization), how they are locally modified and implemented (recontextualization), and what impact they have on existing structures, policies, and practices (internalization)" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014, p.162). The systems theory asserts that borrowing is not copying, and that educational transfer and policy borrowing always involves recontextualization and internalization/indigenization within their new context.

According to Steiner-Khamsi (2014), externalization is the first step in the policy borrowing process. Recontextualization and internalization are the next steps to
understand how the imported policy is locally adapted and what impacts it has on the existing policy. To have adequate results and solve local problems, policy analysts should pay attention to recontextualization to modify and implement the borrowing policy locally.

Once policy borrowing is implemented in a new context, two possibilities arise, as the new policy: "either completely replaces previous policies or generates a policy hybrid, reflecting select elements from old and new policies" (Steiner-Khamisi, 2014, p.162). Moreover, Steiner-Khamisi (2012b) states that the reinforcement of existing structures is a third outcome of internalization. For example, Silova (2005) examined the process of educational borrowing in Latvia to reform minority education during a time of political change in the 1990s. In the Soviet era, Latvia’s schooling system was segregated, with separate systems for Latvian speaking students and Russians speaking students. However, rather than referring to it as school segregation and recognizing it as “sites of occupation” by the Russians, the Western European policy discourse referred to it as a symbol of multiculturalism (Steiner-Khamisi, 2002, p.72). Booth (2006) states that Silova’s case demonstrates, "what is most important in borrowing is not necessarily the actual new policy implementation (or non-implementation) but rather the power of the discourse, which is often more lasting than actual implementation" (p.284).

Spreen’s (2004) study provides an example of a policy hybrid through examining the development of outcomes-based education in South Africa (through educational borrowing from Australia and North-America). Her study shows "how conscious decisions were made in South Africa at the initial level of borrowing (i.e. problem solving or demonstrating that it worked elsewhere) and how changes and adaptations were made to create a hybrid version of outcomes-based education"
(Spreen, 2004, p.295). Spreen's case shows that in the internalization process, the outcomes-based education was locally interpreted and differed from the original policy. Ultimately, a new hybrid policy was created that was "disengaged from foreign influence and localize reform in order to make it acceptable" (Booth, 2006, p.282).

Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) presents the example of teacher salary reform in Mongolia, and how the import of two global salary reforms did not lead to hybridization or modification to the existing bonus system; instead, the new systems have reinforced the local bonus system that had long existed in Mongolia.

In summary, systems theory seeks to understand why educational transfer has occurred in the first place (externalization), how it is locally adapted and modified (recontextualization), and what impact the educational transfer has on the existing ones (internalization/indigenization). Systems theory research draws attention to the local meaning, adaptation, re-contextualization and internalization of reforms that have been transferred or imported.

Steiner-Khamsi (2004) essentially demonstrates the importance of considering the local context as a unit of analysis while applying and understanding the borrowing policy process. She argues that policy borrowing scholars should look deep into the social, political, economic and historical contexts within which educational transfers occur.

‘Reception’ and ‘translation’ are two fundamental concepts that describe the processes of (selective) borrowing from the lender and local adaptation by the borrower. Steiner-Khamsi's policy borrowing analytical framework, which is based on systems theory, focuses on the local adaptation/recontextualization of foreign education policy through taking the local context of the receiving country into
consideration. It is important not to impose the borrowed policy into the national context as-is, or ignore the contextual differences between the lender and the receiver. Steiner-Khamsi (2004) demonstrates the importance of considering the local context as a unit of analysis in understanding the borrowing policy process. She asserts that policy borrowing scholars must look deep into the social, political, economic and historical contexts within which educational transfers occur.

Using Steiner-Khamsi's policy borrowing analytical framework helps us to understand how the imported Western business curriculum at Arab Open University in Kuwait is implemented to identify whether any adaptation occurred in the context of the borrower system and how it affected students' experience. The figure below illustrates the focus of this thesis, on the middle or implementation level of curriculum actualization.

**Figure 3. Three levels of the Curriculum**
Conceptualizing the imported curriculum in the wider policy borrowing context

As a way to learn from foreign experience through the concept of educational policy borrowing, most governments seek the opportunity to import educational policies and practices to improve their educational system (Romanowski, Alkhateeb, & Nasser, 2018). Most Gulf governments have invited Western providers to upgrade and improve their educational systems along with their imported educational curricula and programs. Internationalization, as a response to globalization, has brought these Western providers and programs to the Arabian Gulf states. Imported curriculum from the home country to the host country is seen as a major manifestation of the internationalization of higher education.

In her study, Aydarova (2012) examined "the processes of teacher education curriculum transfer and the impact of the significant actors' interpretations on their implementation and indigenization" (p.286). The teacher education curriculum was transferred one from American model and the other one from Singaporean model. She used in her study the policy borrowing framework developed by Phillips and Ochs (2003) to focus on the implementation and indigenization stage. However, she tackled all the stages of Phillips and Ochs (2003) policy-borrowing framework: cross-national attraction stage, decision-making, implementation, indigenization or localization, and evaluation stages.

In parallel to Aydarova (2012), I used Steiner-Khamsi’s policy borrowing analytical framework which is similar to Phillips and Ochs's policy borrowing framework, focusing on the recontextualization process to identify whether any changes occurred while implementing the business imported curriculum, which differentiates between the OU-UK design curriculum and the implemented curriculum by faculty members at AOU-Kuwait.
AOU does not only import its programs and curriculum from OU-UK; it has also borrowed the open learning system policy from OU-UK. In the next chapter, I will briefly highlight the stages of Steiner-Khamsi’s policy borrowing analytical framework: the externalization stage that led AOU to borrow and import its program from OU-UK, and the internalization stage characterized by the impact of the OU-UK educational policy system and its curriculum on the existing policies and practices of AOU and Kuwait.

Phillips and Ochs (2003) stated that educational products such as curriculum can be borrowed and imported from one context to another, in this context; I see the imported curriculum from OU-UK to AOU, more precisely focusing on the recontextualization process, as a component within the larger educational policy borrowing framework.

**Summary of the Chapter**

My research is guided by key concepts drawn from policy borrowing theory: the process (what), causes (why and how), and agents (who). Drawing upon Schriewer and Martinez’s (2004) "socio-logic” concept, I will briefly discuss the idiosyncratic nature of the State of Kuwait and its educational system to explain the reasons for the receptiveness that led the country to borrow educational policy, and identify the societies exporting curriculum to the Kuwait. The main focus of this research is to investigate from faculty and students' perspectives how the Western imported business curriculum is implemented.

The imported curriculum is seen as a solution to solve some local problems such as increasing local access to higher education, improving the domestic education sector providing academic programs, and to make local students aware of global
trends (Lane & Kinser, 2011); however, according to Steiner-Khamsi’s framework, recontextualization has to take place while implementing the imported curriculum to make it useful for the receiving country.

For my thesis, I use Steiner-Khamsi’s policy borrowing analytical framework, focusing on the recontextualization process. I seek to learn if local adaptation is taking place in the imported business curriculum from faculty and students' perspective to fit and represent the social and cultural environment of the country and students.

The next chapter presents the methodology that was used to conduct this research, including a description of the context, sample, instruments used, the research design and procedures, and the methods for data analysis.
Chapter 4: Research Context and the Methodology

This chapter provides the research context and background on the selected country and university for the case study, as well as the mixed methods research approach, details of the research methodology design, the methods for data collection and analysis, the development of questionnaire and interview protocols, and the criteria for student and faculty member participants' selection.

Research Context

This research aims to explore how non-Western undergraduate students experience an imported Western business curriculum, and how local faculty members implement it where the context of the receiving country is entirely different than that of the lender. Thus, the ideal research site is a country where local faculty members teach a Western curriculum to non-Western students in their home country.

Numerous Western providers offer their programs either through their branch-campuses or local universities in the Arab Gulf. In the Arab Gulf region context, notions of cultural context, students' background and policy borrowing provide an appropriate setting in which to address and answer the research questions. I selected The State of Kuwait (Kuwait) and the Arab Open University (AOU) for this study for two reasons:

1) Cross-border education is an important approach that has emerged recently in the higher education system in Kuwait. Kuwait adopts different modes of transnational education. Program mobility/imported curriculum is one of the modes used in Kuwait and contextually matches with my study.

2) My experiences as a former faculty member at AOU prompted me to present a systematic study that seeks to understand the educational experiences of the
faculty and the post-secondary students in AOU-Kuwait, to determine how the imported curriculum is implemented, and whether it promotes students' academic experience.

The State of Kuwait

Brief Background

The British colonial invasion to the Gulf area began in the 1820s through the signing of treaties with local representatives in each of the Gulf countries. In 1899, Britain signed treaties with the Kuwaiti local sheiks and princes; from that time Kuwait became a British colony. In the late 1930s, oil was discovered, and in 1953 the country's economy prospered as it became the largest oil exporter in the Middle East (History of Kuwait, 2017). During this period, oil revenues were divided between the Kuwaiti government and British oil companies. In 1961, Kuwait became independent, but the Kuwait government did not acquire sole control over the oil industry and its revenues until 1976. Beginning in 1971, and in subsequent years following the departure of the British from the Gulf region, the United States became the dominant power through investing in different sectors (Davis, 2010).

Kuwait’s economy depends on the oil industry. The oil reserve of Kuwait is 94.8 billion barrels, about 9.6% of the world's total, placing Kuwait oil production in third place globally behind Saudi Arabia and Iraq (Embassy of the State of Kuwait, Ottawa, 2017). The total population of Kuwait is approximately 4,000,000, with expats making up to 60% of the population. Thirteen percent of the population is aged between 15 to 24 years, while 22% of the population is aged 14 years and younger. The adult literacy rate is 95%, the youth literacy rate is 99%, and the government expenditure on education as a percentage of the GPD (2006) is 3.76% (UNESCO, Kuwait profile, 2016). The gross enrolment ratio within tertiary education is 27.03%.
The Educational System

Informal education in Kuwait commenced during the nineteenth century in mosques, wherein students, who were mainly male students, studied the Arabic language and religion. By the end of the century, primary religious private schools teaching only the Koran and mathematics started in Kuwait. The first private school to teach subjects in addition to the Koran and mathematics was established in 1912. In 1937, two government schools were established: one for boys and one for girls. In 1942 and 1946, secondary education for boys and for girls was implemented respectively (Safwat, 1993).

The British and French invasion, and subsequent contact the West through trade and cultural missions, influenced Arab interest in Western education. By the end of the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries had arrived in Kuwait (Davis, 2010).

Education in Kuwait is divided into pre-university education and university education. The former is divided into the following four types: general education, vocational education, religious education, and education for the handicapped. The latter is divided into applied colleges, Kuwait University and some private universities (Safwat, 1993). The Kuwaiti pre-university schooling system is comprised of public and private schools administered by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Higher Education oversees public and private universities. Restrictions are imposed on co-education and is only permitted the University of Kuwait and some private schools (Safwat, 1993, p.1).

The Evolution of Higher Education and Internationalization in Kuwait

The State of Kuwait recognizes that knowledge and education have a vital role in its development and progress. In 1955, the State of Kuwait started sending its youth to higher education institutions in Egypt before Kuwait University was established in
1966. Kuwait University was the only public university that restricted acceptance to only Kuwaiti students (Al-Atiqi & AlHarbi, 2009). The country struggled to achieve growth while successfully accommodating an increasing demand for higher education from both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents. As a result, a large number of students –Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaitis– travelled abroad to acquire a university degree from different countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe, the Middle East and Far East (Al-Atiqi & AlHarbi, 2009).

However, the events of 9/11 caused difficulties for Arab students in acquiring visas to travel and study in the United States in particular, and Western countries in general. Coupled with the high demands for higher education inside the country, the travel restrictions imposed on the Arab students pushed Kuwait to invest in higher education reform through internationalization. Knight (2003, p.12) outlined the possible rationales or motivations for the importation of higher education services by host countries:

- limited domestic capacity to meet growing demand for higher education;
- greater access to specific knowledge or skilled-based education and training;
- improvements to the quality of higher education provision by allowing market access to reputable foreign providers;
- building cultural or political alliances;
- securing trade-tied aid development projects and funds;
- developing human capital and stem "brain drain";
- the potential for foreign competition to improve cost-effectiveness in domestic institutions; and
- imported programs may offer better value than studying abroad.

These rationales led the State of Kuwait towards internationalization of higher education. Al-Atiqi and AlHarbi (2009) report that, "until 2002 the higher education establishments in Kuwait were limited to two types of public institutions, with enrolment not exceeding 45,000 students in both" (p.10). They claim that there has been an evolution in the country's higher education system as it has experienced a rise
in the number of private universities. Al-Atiqi and AlHarbi (2009) articulated the main reasons behind allowing higher education privatization in Kuwait:

- establish more higher education programs with an emphasis on vocational education and training in order to accommodate the annual-increase in student populations (local students and expatriates) going into higher education, and to check the increasing number of students going abroad to study;
- expand the scope of the higher education programs to adapt international provision that both drive and sustain rapid economic as a globally-competitive economy. (p.11)

The Private Universities Council licenses and accredits all private institutions and establishes relationships between domestics and foreign partners. Under their rules and regulations, all private universities established in Kuwait should have an affiliation with foreign providers (Al-Atiqi & AlHarbi, 2009; Clark, 2013). This privatization shift has been an attempt to respond to the socioeconomic interests and demand for a highly skilled workforce within a rapidly developing country.

Thus, externalization (using external resources – the first step in the policy borrowing process) occurred in Kuwait when the increasing number of higher education students could not be accommodated within the local infrastructure. Kuwait adopts and selects different modes of cross-border education from different countries, especially from the countries where Kuwait used to send its students to study abroad, and from different home institutions that provide education and specialties that meet the market needs.

The first mode is the affiliation mode. The following universities in Kuwait have adopted the affiliation mode:

- The Gulf University for Science and Technology (the first private institution established in Kuwait in 2002) in partnership with the University of Missouri in St Louis;
- The American University in Kuwait, built in 2003 in collaboration with Dartmouth College;
- The American College of the Middle East affiliated with Purdue University;
• The Arab Open University, established in 2002, is operating under the academic guidance of the British Open University (Knight, 2013 p.186).

The second mode of cross-border education is branch campuses. Kuwait hosts two branch campuses: 1) Kuwait Maastricht Business School was established in 2003 and offers an MBA program on a part-time basis; and 2) Algonquin College-Kuwait, which is a branch campus of the Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology-Canada (Knight, 2013).

All branches and affiliation programs are Western-based, and each of them offers different degrees and specializations to fulfill the needs of students and markets. In this context, Kuwait is an appropriate place to conduct my research and explore how the concepts of the policy borrowing process (externalization, recontextualization, and internalization) are applied.

**The Arab Open University (AOU) - Kuwait Branch**

The AOU is one of the Open University-United Kingdom’s (OU-UK) largest partners and validated by the Open University Validation Service (OUVS). Due to its relations with the OU-UK, AOU is considered a pioneer for Western education partnership in the Arab world. Currently, AOU has eight branches in different Arab countries and offers programs in three academic disciplines: computer science, business administration and language studies. The curricula, including the relevant materials and course assessments, are imported from OU-UK.

*Arab Open University (AOU) Background*

Prince Talal Bin Abdul-Aziz, Chairman of the AOU Board of Trustees, selected the State of Kuwait to host the Arab Open University (AOU) headquarters in October 2002, and the Kuwaiti branch of AOU in 2003. The establishment of these
two centers of education is considered a major contribution to the process of privatization of higher education. Similar to other private universities in Kuwait, the AOU-Kuwait branch works according to Private Universities Council (PUC) rules and regulations. The AOU is a non-profit private Arab university and has eight branches in different Arab countries in Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Oman, and Sudan. AOU is "a pan-Arab project supported by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Gulf countries' governments, operating under the academic guidance of the British Open University" (Al-Atiqi & AlHarbi, 2009, p.12).

**AOU Mission and Aim**

Prince Talal Bin Abdel Aziz, the president of the Arab Gulf Program for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), has promoted the Open University concept as a personal initiative to serve the Arab populations. AOU aims to overcome the common challenges faced by Arab students and to provide greater access to learning opportunities. Thus, AOU adopts a flexible and open admission policy to allow a broader range of higher education seekers to become students regardless of their age, gender, nationality, and socioeconomic status. The mission of AOU is to "build expertise according to international quality standards without time or geographical barriers for the sake of contributing and preparing manpower for development needs, and to build a science and knowledge society in the Arab countries" (AOU, 2017). The objectives and goals of the AOU reflect its mission, and are as follows (Zakari & Alkhezzi, 2010, p. 277):

- Offer opportunities of quality higher education to a large and diverse population of students;
- Develop a center of excellence for open and distance learning;
- Provide a forum for continuing education across the region to meet the needs of individuals and local society;
- Provide opportunities for professional training in response to market demands;
• Provide special opportunities in higher education to disadvantaged group of potential students;
• Practice, as a contributor partner, in promoting research and scholarly activities deemed useful in development areas which are of special concern to the Arab society; and
• Promote humanistic and Islamic values and ethics.

AOU has a significant role in most of the countries where its branches are located; as it promotes and enhances the educational, social and economic sectors of these countries. As a result of its objectives and unique learning system, "AOU plays an effective role in development and, in turn, contributes to societies’ social, economic, capacity building, and democracy development" (Zakari & Alkhezzi, 2010, p. 283).

The following information was collected through personal correspondence (January, 20, 2018) with the director of the quality assurance and accreditation department at AOU, based on the quality assurance guide (AOU, 2014):

**AOU and Open University- United Kingdom partnership**

AOU is one of the Open University-United Kingdom's (OU-UK) largest partners, approved and validated by the Open University Validation Service (OUVS) as of December 2003. AOU is keen on its strategic partnership with the OU-UK, as synergies exist between the OU's mission and its own widening participation mission. AOU also regards the OU as a supportive validating partner for its progress in increasing its presence in the Arab World. In addition, the dual award arrangement with the OU-UK provides AOU with a competitive edge in comparison with similar Higher Education Institutions in the Arab region. This partnership covers the licensing of material used by AOU faculty and students; consultation services provided to AOU in different areas, including student services, course material design and production, and faculty training. Through this partnership, AOU students receive an OU-UK graduation certificate in addition to the local certificate issued by the Ministry of
Education of the host country. All undergraduate courses validated by the OU-UK are taught and assessed in English. AOU offers OU-UK based honors degree programs in Business Studies, English Language and Literature, and Information Technology and Computing. Students study 120 credit points of General University Requirements (which are not validated by the OU-UK) in addition to 360 OU-UK-validated credit points. In the majority of programs, the curriculum for validated courses is based on OU-UK modules, with some modifications to meet local cultural and market variances. These modules, which make up the greatest part of the program, are taught under license from the Open University including all textbooks and instructional materials (audiovisuals).

*Local and Foreign Accreditation/Validation Conditions*

AOU’s Branches are subject to international accreditation by Open University Validation and Partnership (OUVP) and local accreditation by the relevant Ministry of Higher Education and/or Higher Education Quality Assurance bodies within the eight Arab States.

Every five years, AOU is subject to both institutional and academic programs review by the Open University’s Validation and Partnership. This is a rigorous process encompassing all aspects of the institution and its academic programs, and includes both academic and administrative audits of the University’s infrastructure, administration, student services and support as well as the learning and teaching provision. The University’s contribution to the process includes the production of a self-evaluation document and other supporting documentations (AOU bylaws, policies, strategies academic programs critical appraisals, programs specifications and students’ handbooks, etc.) for consideration by the Institutional Approval Panels. The administrative audit entails branch visits by the panel. The AOU has undergone four
accreditation and validation cycles so far, most recently in May 2017, when the AOU was granted institutional approval and program revalidation for another five years without any conditions.

Similarly, the AOU branches must meet the local accreditation requirements set by the Accrediting bodies in each branch country. The criteria set by those bodies are generally in line with the international standards and quality codes with some variations to ensure consistency with the local norms and practices. The accreditation and validation takes place every four to five years depending on the country in which the branch is located. At any given time, AOU systems and procedures are subject to both internal and external monitoring systems.

**The Role of Quality Assurance in AOU**

High quality provision has been one of the key aims of AOU since its inception. Consequently, this has led to an increasing focus on quality assurance (QA) structures that will ensure robust quality assurance systems and common academic standards across its branches. To this effect, AOU has worked closely with OU-UK to identify institutional processes and structures that support the development of an internal quality system that will fit in with the OU-UK quality measures and validation criteria. At the same time, the partners must consider the complexities involved with being a multi campus University operating in different countries within the region. The Quality Assurance system ensures that the teaching and learning environment and University’s’ overall provisions are fit for purpose and applies to all branches and faculties as well as academic and support staff.

**Curriculum/Subject Review**

Despite its centralized approach in the management of programs across its eight branches, AOU makes provisions for the branches to exercise a degree of
independence within the parameters set by the University. AOU has clear and defined
channels of communication at all levels within the branches and with HQ, to maintain
consistent standards of academic quality across the institution. One of the main
feedback channels are survey questionnaires for students and tutors, administered
regularly to elicit feedback on curricula/courses, assessment and teaching and learning
provision. Subject reviews, feedback from faculty council meetings and discussions
with regard to curricula and courses is also considered by the Academic Affairs office
and the Program Deanship. Input from external examiners and academic reviewers
play an important role in the subject review process. Proposed changes or
amendments to text materials are discussed and approved by the Open University and
AOU University Council.

The Role of External Examiners

For academic institutions, the quality of pedagogical knowledge and academic
growth is gauged through student learning outcomes. The assessment policies and
systems therefore form a crucial component of the University’s teaching and learning
activities. AOU has a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system that examines
assessment practices at all levels, including assessment design, grading, external
examining and other compliance to examination rules.

As per the QAA Quality code and the partner institution quality requirements,
AOU adopts an External Examining system for all its offered academic programs.
The University deals with the appointment of the external examiners as per the
regulating policies and procedures and in consultation and approval of the OUVP.
External examiners are appointed for a maximum period of four years. The AOU
follows the same criteria of the OU-UK in appointing its external examiners. External
Examiners are selected from Academic staff members of other British Universities
with sufficient years of experience and familiarity with the external examining system. They are appointed for a specific period of time towards assessing specific modules/programs and/or awards. External examiners are responsible for endorsing tutor marked assignments, mid-term assessments and final examinations. This includes approval of the assessment questions and curriculum covered, as well as marking guidelines. In addition, external examiners provide feedback on assessment practices and students' performance to the respective examination committees. External examiners are expected to provide carefully considered advice on the academic standards of the awards, programs and/or courses to which they have been assigned, and they can offer advice on good practice and opportunities to enhance the quality of these courses. They are also expected to offer informed views on how standards compare with other higher education institutions (primarily in the UK). Quality enhancement of programs and assessment procedures is assured through external examiners’ feedback on good practice and innovation relating to course assessment as observed by the external examiner. The University’s Exams Boards (Central Examination Committee, Faulty Examination Committee, and Course Assessment Committee) are responsible for the consideration of external examining outcomes. At the end of each academic semester and upon receiving the external examiners formal written reports, the Academic Programs Deanships provide a response to each external examiner report including action plan to address any issues raised in the external examiner reports. The quality assurance department monitors external examiners reports and actions taken by the Deanships.

*Learning System and Tutoring at AOU*

The learning system offered by AOU is a blended learning approach comprised of:
1) A self-study package, which contains printed and audio-video study material that facilitates independent study skills, active learning, integration and application of knowledge; 2) Tutorial Hours: students are required to attend 25% of face-to-face sessions (tutorials) and 75% self-study distance learning; 3) Learning resources integrated into blended learning: Learning Management System (LMS), e-library and physical resources such as physical library and laboratories; and 4) Office hours (Two office hours for each two hour tutorial to provide extra support to students).

As a blended learning institution, AOU requires student attendance only 25% of the time. This provides opportunities for students who have time constraints and other commitments such as family obligations. Instead of following the online learning system of OU-UK, AOU has adopted the concept of blended learning which is a combination of self-study distance learning and face-to-face instruction for the following reasons: 1) to secure approval and recognition by the local Ministries of Higher Education; 2) Arab educational systems are not supportive of e-learning concepts; 2) some practitioners still doubt the effectiveness of e-learning; 3) a lack of recognition of the value of e-learning by employers and industry, and 4) for national accreditation purposes.

The concept of blended learning, and the requirement for students to allocate 25% of their time to face-to-face learning, I see them as outcomes of policy borrowing on the existing structures and policies of the current Kuwaiti higher educational policy system. According to Steiner-Khamsi (2014), this effect is the internalization process, which generates a hybridization policy containing selected elements from the existing educational policy in Kuwait (face-to-face) and new elements from the borrowed policy (on-line).
**Tutorial sessions at AOU**

Tutorial sessions are scheduled on a weekly basis and are conducted by highly qualified and well-trained tutors. These sessions are meant to be discussion forums covering the main topics for the study week ahead as identified in the course calendars.

**Academic Staff**

The appointment of any academic staff member is supervised by the program deanship in coordination with the respective AOU Branch.

*General Course Coordinator (GCC)/ Course Chair:* The GCC is generally an academic staff member with considerable years of experience and preferably a PhD holder. Whilst this position lies within the Deanship structure, the GCC could be physically located in any of the AOU branches. The GCC works in close association with the Deanship, External Examiners and the Program Coordinators with respect to examinations, course assessment and grades. All assessment components are centrally prepared by the respective Course Chair/GCC and are validated internally by the Dean and externally by the course External Examiner. The GCC/Course Chair is responsible for preparing the coursework assessments and final examinations for their courses.

*Branch Program Coordinators (BPCs):* The BPCs are responsible for managing their programs at the branch level. The BPCs, in consultation with the Deanship, implement program and specific course delivery modules. The PCs also provide feedback on program delivery based on the feedback that they receive from students and tutors.
Branch Course Coordinators (BCC)/ Staff Tutor: The BCCs coordinate all aspects of a specific course/module at the branch level. They work in close association with the GCC for that particular course/module and co-ordinate with the GCC through the relevant Program Coordinator. BCCs or staff tutors are responsible for monitoring the delivery of a specific course/module, tutorials, tutors and adherence to the course calendar etc. They, along with the PCs, also engage in the peer monitoring of tutorials and Assignments.

Course Tutors: AOU uses the term tutor in a similar way to the OU-UK. The tutor can be of any academic rank i.e. lecturer, Assistant or Associate Professor. Tutors are the academic staff members who conduct and manage tutorials. Tutorials refer to face-to-face meetings where they are expected to facilitate student learning through interactive tutorial sessions, student participation and discussions rather than lecturing. The primary responsibility of a tutor is the delivery of the course tutorials and management of his or her allotted students. Tutors report to the BCC on the progress and challenges in the delivery of their courses/modules. Tutors are entrusted with the responsibility of encouraging students to understand the University’s blended learning system and helping them to develop self-learning skills. They track students’ academic progress, and provide them with constructive feedback on the course work and assessment. Tutors are the first contact point between the student and Program/course Presentation team. They engage with staff tutors in students' support activities such as academic advising, orientation and induction sessions.
**Classes**
In principle, male and female students attend mixed classes and interact socially at the Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Oman and Sudan branches. However, in some Gulf countries such as KSA, Kuwait and Bahrain, the Ministries of Higher Education do not allow mixed classes in all local universities. Males and females are segregated in class and on campus.

**Students’ Characteristics**
Kuwait University accommodates under 8000 students, with the majority being Kuwaiti students and a limited number of non-Kuwaiti students (Clark, 2013). AOU is considered the largest private university among the 14 private universities in Kuwait in term of enrollment (Clark, 2013). Due to its Open University concept (open to everyone), AOU has drawn many students who wish to continue their higher education studies, regardless of their age, gender, nationality and socioeconomic status. Therefore, the AOU student composition is distinct from a traditional university, with higher proportions of non-Kuwaiti and female students. The majority of AOU’s students work full time, have family responsibilities, or are recent high school graduates seeking to obtain a higher education degree and upgrade their professional status (Allani & Sharafuddin, 2012). AOU attracts a large number of students because of its unique offerings. The majority of these students are non-Kuwaiti students from over 40 different ethnic groups (Allani & Sharafuddin, 2012). In addition to AOU being open to all students, the comparatively lower tuition fee at this non-profit university (20-30% of other private universities’ tuition fees) is a main draw for students (Allani and Sharafuddin, 2012). According to Sharif and Ismail (2010), "it is expected that by 2020, one out of five persons in the Arab world will know someone who is a student or graduate of the AOU" (p.16).
University general courses for all programs

AOU offers its students a range of compulsory and elective courses to meet the local accreditation requirements. The language of instruction of the general compulsory and elective courses is Arabic. Compulsory courses are considered as general requirements for all its programs (AOU, 2017, p.24). However, students do not need to take them all, it depends on their performance on the placement tests especially for Arabic and English, any student may take only three course and these are GR101, TU170 and EL112. These courses are not counted for the OU degree but for AOU award, this is way that they are offered at the first year of the program which is not included in the computation of grades and GPA for OU award.

I see these compulsory courses and the elective ones such as Arab Islamic Civilization, Issues and problems of development in the Arab region, History and civilization of the state, and Arabic communication skills reflect elements of the internalization stage, where the elements of local context have been incorporated into the borrowed imported curriculum from OU-UK.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandatory General University Requirements (18 credit hours)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Code</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR111</td>
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<tr>
<td>AR112</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL112</td>
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<tr>
<td>TU170</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elective Courses (12 credit hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Code</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR111</td>
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<tr>
<td>GR112</td>
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<tr>
<td>GR115</td>
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</table>
Faculty of Business Studies (FBS)

This research focuses on one academic program offered at AOU-Kuwait branch: the Business Studies curriculum. The primary objectives of the FBS are to:

Provide students with the knowledge to succeed in their chosen field and ensure the development of skills in problem-solving, ethical decision making, communications, teamwork, and leadership. Increase students' abilities and confidence to handle managerial, financial and administrative activities. Besides, to develop the skills of independent learning through activities of face to face and distance learning (AOU, 2017).

The FBS offers a bachelor degree in Business Studies within the following five tracks: Accounting, Economics, Management, Marketing, and Systems.

According to OU-UK and the local accreditation agency, “these tracks have been validated through a process of external peer review by OU as being of an appropriate standard and quality to lead to the OUVA award” (Al-Fahhad & Alfadly, 2012, p.596).

BA (Honours) in Business Studies Program (new study plan): The language of instruction at the AOU Business department and tracks is English. During tutorial sessions tutors and students have to communicate in English.

All the following information is from the students' prospectus for undergraduate degrees for the academic year 2016-2017 prepared by AOU.

Business degree requirements: The Business degree comprises 128-132 credit hours (as per local accreditation requirements) which can be completed over a four-year period of full-time study. The breakdown of credit hours and courses needed to complete the program are presented below (AOU, 2017, p.20):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General University Requirements/ Mandatory</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Requirements / Mandatory</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Specialization/ Mandatory</td>
<td>40-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Specialization/Elective</td>
<td>6-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>128-129</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The concept of blended learning, and the requirement for students to allocate 25% of their time to face-to-face learning, which replaced the online educational policy system adopted by OU-UK, I see them as outcomes of policy borrowing on the existing structures and policies of the current Kuwaiti higher educational policy system. As well the incorporation of some courses as general requirements introduced by AOU to reflect the local culture led to internalization of the borrowed imported curriculum from OU-UK. According to Steiner-Khamsi (2014), this effect is the internalization process, which generates a hybridization policy containing selected elements from the existing educational policy in Kuwait (face-to-face) and new elements from the borrowed policy (on-line), and a limited hybrid curriculum contains basic general courses as university requirements taught in Arabic to reflect the local culture besides the Business core and electives courses imported from OU-UK. However, the hybrid curriculum remains distinctly Western because the business degree requirements courses are imported from OU-UK.

All of AOU's programs' curricula, their relevant materials, and the course assessments are imported from the OU-UK. For AOU, promoting social and personal development is a primary rationale for internationalization of higher education at the institutional and national level. This makes AOU an ideal case study for assessing the policy borrowing process.
In the previous section, I discussed the reasons behind Kuwait’s move towards internationalization; the reference systems (externalization); and how the learning and attendance policies at AOU are hybrid policies as a result of internalization. In the next section, I will present the research methodology that I adopted to conduct my study.

**Mixed Methods Research Approach**

The objective of my research is to understand how faculty members and students experience the imported curriculum, and how the imported curriculum might influence students' self-perceived academic performance and contribute to their self-perceived personal and professional growth. My study implemented a mixed methods research design to fulfill this purpose.

The majority of studies looking at faculty and student experience of internationalization apply qualitative research methods, while studies on factors affecting student academic performance use either quantitative or qualitative research methods. When both quantitative and qualitative data are included in a study, researchers may enrich their results in ways greater than just one form of data allows (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The rationale for using a mixed methods research approach is articulated by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) as follows: "the limitations of one method can be offset by the strengths of the other method, and the combination of qualitative and quantitative data provide a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach by itself" (p.8).

Mixed methods research "is becoming increasingly articulated, attached to research practice, and recognized as the third major research approach, along with qualitative and quantitative research" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007,
p.112). Johnson et al. (2007) analyzes more than nineteen definitions of this method provided by leaders in the mixed methods field. They offer the following definition as a summary: "mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (p.123).

My rationale for using mixed methods research is that qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other in ways that are important to examining students' experiences of the imported curriculum and its influence on self-perceived performance as well as personal and professional growth.

**Research Design**

I use a sequential explanatory design to answer the research questions, whereby quantitative data are collected and analyzed first from students (phase one), followed by qualitative data (phase two). This design approach is mainly useful for "explaining relationship and/or study findings" (Hanson et al., 2005, p.229).

In order to understand how students experience the imported curriculum and how it influences their self-perceived academic performance and self-perceived personal and professional growth, a quantitative approach is used. A closed-ended questionnaire was developed for consistency: "all participants fill out the same questionnaire, and all of the questions or items provide the possible responses from which the participants must select" (Johnson & Turner, 2003, p. 304). Moreover, closed-ended questions are easy to fill out, save time and keep the respondents focused on the subject (Johnson & Turner, 2003).
The design of the questionnaire was based on five factors that influence student experience (Dressel, 1968): textbooks, learning activities, instructional methods, assignments, and exams; the National Survey of Student Engagement questionnaire (NSSE, 2015 version); and a questionnaire titled "Factors influencing students' academic performance," developed and used by Principe (2005) for his dissertation. Principe’s questionnaire was adapted for the purposes of this study, including the characteristics of its study's units, such as the imported curriculum, AOU, and students.

The resulting questionnaire was divided into three major sections. The first section covered students' demographic information and the second section covered students' perception/experience of the curriculum's factors (textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, assignments, and evaluation methods). This section contained questions, consisting of statements about textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, assignments, and exams. Using a five-point Likert scale, the business students indicated their perceptions about each factor of the curriculum, and how each item influences their self-perceived academic experience and self-perceived academic performance. They indicated the degree of agreement or disagreement by selecting from the following options: "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neutral", "agree", and "strongly agree". The third section covered students’ self-perceptions in terms of the skills they gained from the business program. For each skill, students indicated the level of benefit that they felt they gained from the program. The level of benefit ranged from: "very much", to "quite a bit", "somewhat", and "very little". This section concluded with having students evaluate their experience of the British courses in general. Lastly, students were asked if they would
like to participate in the follow-up interview, which is part of the second phase of analysis.

To assess the validity of the questionnaire, a pilot was conducted with a small number of students first (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2008). In order to determine whether the questionnaire was meaningful and understandable, the Ph.D. students who assessed the instrument were both native and non-native English speakers. In order to confirm the questionnaire’s appropriateness for AOU students, it was assessed by the head of the quality assurance department at AOU’s headquarters. As this department is responsible for developing their own surveys to evaluate students’ opinion regarding AOU’s courses, it was determined to be a suitable source for advising on relevancy. Subsequently, my thesis committee members reviewed the questionnaire for English proofreading and statistical review. The questionnaire was written in both English and Arabic (all instructions and statements were written in English, followed by Arabic - see Appendix A). An Arabic teacher provided the review for the Arabic translation.

In the second phase, I interviewed a sub-sample of students from the larger sample of phase one survey respondents. This qualitative method was employed to give students an opportunity to discuss their experiences and perspectives regarding the imported curriculum. Faculty members were also interviewed in this phase for insights into their experiences with the imported curriculum.

**Samples and Participants**

In phase one, I used a purposive sampling strategy for selecting student survey respondents. Purposive sampling is used to access people who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 1990). I selected upper (3 or 4) year
undergraduate business students from AOU-Kuwait, as they were in the position to reflect on their two-three years of experience with the imported OU-UK core curriculum. The participants were of different ages, ranging from 19 years old and older. The number of students who participated in this study comprised 30% of the total students registered in the second semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. The total number of registered students was 1107 and there were 333 respondents. The questionnaire was distributed in person during class time to the undergraduate students who fit the sample profile and only interested students filled out the questionnaire.

In phase two, participating students who agreed to be interviewed were selected randomly. Simple random sampling was used to "avoid bias and to ensure that each student has an equal chance of being selected" (Collins, 2010, p. 357). Another reason for choosing a random sample was to include students from different cultural backgrounds (both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti) in the effort to capture diverse student experiences of curriculum and academic performance. In total, 16 students were interviewed. This sample of students included students with a range of GPAs, different nationalities, fresh graduate students, mature students, students with and without work experience, and male and female students. Students' profiles are discussed in further detail in chapter 7.

For the faculty interviews, I used a convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is used "where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study" (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim; 2016). I used the convenience sampling to reach faculty members who were willing to participate in my research. I met 14 faculty members in person
from the business department and explained the purpose of my research. Six male full-time faculty members out of 14 (male and female) who teach British core courses for business students in their third and fourth year agreed to participate in the interviews.

Data Collection and Analysis

The research data was collected sequentially. The quantitative data from student questionnaire responses were collected first, followed by the qualitative interview data.

Phase One - Quantitative Data

The questionnaire was distributed in person during class time to the undergraduate students who fit the sample profile. The faculty members introduced me to the students and left the classroom to provide privacy to the students. I then explained the purpose of my research and assured the students that their identities would remain anonymous in both the questionnaire as well as the interviews (for those who agreed to interviews). I ensured that the participants were aware of their rights to not participate in the study and could withdraw at any time without any negative consequences to their relationships with the instructors, the department or the university.

The collected data were organized for analysis by "scoring the data and creating a codebook, determining the types of scores to use, selecting a computer program, inputting the data into the program for analysis, and clearing the data" (Creswell, 2008, p. 183). The data were statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, Version 23 for Windows. Cronbach's alpha was employed for each set of items to provide "a coefficient of inter-item
correlations; that is, the correlation of each item with the sum of all other items” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 506). The criterion used for reliable scale was Cronbach's alpha =>.70.

I used the research questions to provide the general framework for the data analysis, dividing each research question into sub-questions to select the precise statistical test that best matched with the relevant information. A number of statistical tests were used:

1) Frequency tables were used for preliminary analyses to identify the demographic characteristics of survey respondents, as well as to measure students' perception of the imported curriculum for items where Cronbach's alpha is <.70;

2) Descriptive statistics for the items where Cronbach's alpha is =>.70 was used to measure students' perception of the imported curriculum;

3) Independent-samples (t-test for demographics) with two categories were used to determine if students' perception of the curriculum was related to their demographics;

4) One-way ANOVA for demographics with three+ categories were used to determine if students' perceptions of the curriculum were related to their demographics;

5) One-sample t-test with three as a test value was used to determine if students believed that the imported curriculum aids their self-perceived academic performance;

6) Chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to investigate students' overall evaluation of the imported curriculum;

7) Chi-square test of independence was used to investigate whether there is a relationship between the students' perception on the items where Cronbach's alpha is <.70 and their demographics status;

8) Kendall's Tau B correlation was used to analyze the relationship between students’ self-perceived academic performance and the reported academic performance;
9) Multiple regression was conducted to evaluate how the curriculum factors predict students' self-perceived academic performance; and

10) Ordinal regression was conducted to evaluate how the curriculum factors predict students' reported academic performance.

**Phase Two - Qualitative Data**

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to explore issues in depth on topics of interests and provide the flexibility to encourage participants to express their ideas freely (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Esterberg, 2002). Patton (1990) states that by using interviews, we can understand the experiences and perspectives of others.

All the interviews were semi-structured and conducted face-to-face and were sixty minutes in length. I followed the interview protocols and asked follow-up questions when clarification was needed. For student interviews, I conducted the interviews in English and Arabic depending on the students' choice and their comfort levels with effectively communicating their perspectives. Of the six faculty interviewees, four interviews were conducted in English, and two were a mixture of Arabic and English. All the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, coded and categorized in themes.

After the data were collected and transcribed, I assigned pseudonyms to each of the participants (faculty members and students) prior to the analysis. I reviewed and analyzed each interview transcript individually in the first stage, assigned meaning to the responses, and constructed themes based on those answers. Some themes were pre-determined on the interview protocols while other themes emerged from the interview responses. In this stage, I created a table containing three columns: 1) the interview question and students' responses; 2) constructed themes; and 3)
meaning. Next, I created a new document for each student, containing all the meanings belonging to the same theme, and I organized them according to the main research question and sub-questions. Within the main themes, I included the sub-themes that were constructed from the data and assigned the meanings belonging to the relevant sub-themes. After organizing all the data into themes and sub-themes, I wrote a case study for each student in order to understand how the responses from individual students supported and/or challenged the theories presented in the literature review and the conceptual framework.

In the second stage of analysis, I consolidated the data from all the documents belonging to the same theme and sub-themes into one document and subsequently organized them according to the main research question and sub-questions. I followed the same procedure for the analysis of faculty members' interviews.

I selected and examined quotations from students and faculty members' interviews that represented common responses among the participants and represented the constructed themes. To ensure inclusiveness, balance and reliable data, I also examined extreme opinions that differed from the rest of the participants (Marshall, 2005).

In the final stage of analysis, I connected my findings from the quantitative and qualitative data in order to examine the extent to which the findings were in line with each other. I then discussed my findings in light of the literature and conceptual framework; based on the case studies in the first stage.

In mixed methods studies, data analysis and integration may occur by analyzing the data separately, by transforming them, or by connecting the analyses in some way (Caracelli & Green, 1993; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003; Tashakkori &
Teddlie, 1998). In this study, the integration of the data analysis was connected to the interpretation and discussion stages. Results from the quantitative analysis were integrated with the qualitative analysis to understand how faculty members' and students' experiences, connect with statistically significant factors.

**Interview Protocol**

Creswell (2007) suggests that interviews should start with descriptive questions to determine the phenomenon under investigation and then move on to questions that explore the process and causal relationships. Thus, I began by building a trusting relationship with student interviewees through engaging students in a conversation. They were asked to describe their experience of the imported curriculum and the influence it has on their self-perceived academic performance as well as their self-perceived personal and professional growth.

Students were then asked to relate curriculum factors to their performance, in order to draw out the relational process of curriculum and performance. Four aspects of the curriculum were addressed including textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, assignments, and evaluation method (see Appendix C- Student Interview Protocol).

Similarly, I also built a trusting relationship with faculty members. The faculty interviews (Appendix D- Faculty Interview Protocol) were designed to address how they had implemented (and/or adapted) the imported curriculum, and the challenges they faced at the implementation level. Finally, faculty members were asked to discuss the roles that they believed they and the curriculum played in students' academic experience, as well as their role in students' personal and professional growth.
Both faculty members and students were asked questions about their experiences with the imported curriculum; specifically, the textbooks, instructional methods and activities, assignments, and the evaluation methods. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss other aspects of their curriculum experience.

Ethics and Recruitment

An ethics protocol was reviewed and approved by the University of Toronto’s ethics review board prior to commencing recruitment of student and faculty member participants. The informed consent form specified that participation is voluntary, participants would remain anonymous and records would be kept secure at all times. It also specified that participants could withdraw from the study at any point with no negative consequences.

Upon obtaining approval from the ethics review board, I contacted the vice president of academic affairs at the AOU headquarters in Kuwait via email, requesting permission to conduct the research and recruit participants.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I presented the research context and methodology. First, background information on the State of Kuwait and AOU was discussed to set the context and provide the rationale for selecting AOU-Kuwait as the case study. I outlined the research design: phase one (quantitative - questionnaire) and phase two (qualitative – semi-structured interviews); the process for sample selections and the data collection and analysis. I described the procedures used for interpreting and analyzing the data, and selecting the quotations. I then explained how I used
integration by combining and analyzing the quantitative and qualitative results.

Finally, I presented the ethical considerations of the study.

The findings chapters are presented according to the sequence of the sub-research questions, and according to the sequential explanatory design. The next chapter presents the findings from the faculty members’ interviews regarding their experience teaching the imported business curriculum.
Chapter 5: Faculty Members' Interviews Findings

"Think globally, act locally."

This chapter examines the findings from six faculty member interviews. I explored their experiences with the imported business curriculum to determine whether and how they had recontextualized the imported curriculum as they implemented it.

The chapter starts by profiling each interviewed faculty member to provide context about the interviewees’ professional backgrounds, including years of teaching experience at AOU and/or other universities, types of international experience and international education, if any, as well as a summary of one course they teach.

Next, the chapter presents the themes that emerged from the interview analysis. The first section of the findings covers the faculty members' perceptions of the four facets of the imported curriculum (British textbook, learning activities and instructional methods, Tutor Marked Assignments, and exams). The second section examines how the faculty members viewed their own roles in students' academic experience, performance, and personal and professional growth. The third section examines how faculty members view the current and required modifications to the imported curriculum. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the major findings from faculty members' perspectives.

I use the terms faculty members and tutors interchangeably, as students use the term tutors to refer to faculty members. While, ‘faculty member' is the term used in a traditional university setting that follows the face-to-face learning system, ‘tutor’ is the term used at AOU to reflect the tutoring and blended system applied at AOU (25% face-to-face and 75% divided between self-directed learning, attending office hours (not obligatory) and learning management system).
Faculty Member Profiles

Dr. Majdi, in his late 50s, is an assistant professor of economics from Yemen and has been teaching in the department since 2009. Before that, he taught for about 15 years at Sana'a University in Yemen and at other universities, for a total teaching experience of 23 years. He completed a bachelor degree at Sana'a University, a Master degree from the United States, and a Ph.D. from Cairo University in Egypt. He taught a variety of business courses at AOU covering a wide range of topics including, business math, data analysis, finance, and all elective and mandatory core economic courses. Currently, he is the General Course Coordinator (GCC) for one of the advanced mandatory economic courses titled, "Doing Economics." Dr. Majdi said that the content of the latter course includes many economic theories; it is a mix of microeconomics and macroeconomics. At the end of this course, students are expected to understand the changes happening today due to globalization, and the consequences of financial and economic crises. Dr. Majdi uses textbooks from OU-UK and designs supplementary materials with the consultant of the external examiners to support the students with these textbooks.

Dr. Ashraf, in his late 40s, is Canadian-Kuwaiti. He has been an assistant professor in the department since 2005. He taught for more than 20 years at different universities, including Saint-Mary's University in Canada, GUST University in Kuwait, and AOU in Kuwait. He obtained his Ph.D. from a Canadian university, specializing in company management. At AOU, he taught business courses and is currently General Course Coordinator (GCC) for the advanced mandatory business course titled, "Managing Complexity." Dr. Ashraf said the aim of this course is to help students understand how an individual can handle various business situations as a system practitioner using different tools and methods. This course is considered to be
an application course; it gives students a chance to apply what they have studied during the course by submitting a project at the end of the semester. The textbooks used in this course are from the OU-UK and based on Western contexts.

**Dr. Adnan**, in his late 50s, is an assistant professor from Kuwait and has taught at AOU-Kuwait since 2011. He obtained a bachelor degree from Kuwait University, a Master degree from Saint-Louis University-USA, and a Ph.D. from Bradford University-UK, with a specialization in human resources management. Before starting his academic career, Dr. Adnan worked in the public sector for 15 years, followed by a period of work in the private sector. He worked as a trainer by giving workshops and seminars to the public and private sector, government departments, the banking sector, and the investment sector. His rich experiences impact his teaching. At AOU, he has taught many business courses. He is currently teaching one introductory business course titled, "Introduction to Business Studies" and one mandatory business course titled, "Making Sense of Strategy."

**Dr. Nabil**, in his early 50s, is a business program coordinator from Kuwait and has been in this position for two years. He obtained a bachelor degree in accounting from Kuwait University, a Master degree in the USA, and Ph.D. in accounting in the UK. Before starting his academic career, Dr. Nabil worked in the public sector for more than 25 years. This experience allowed him to recognize that there is no alignment with imported curriculum and the local environment, especially the governmental sector.

**Mr. Qassem**, in his late 30s, is a faculty member from Kuwait and has been in this position full-time for three years. Prior to this, he worked part-time at AOU for two years. He also taught part-time at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training. He has a bachelor degree in engineering from the USA, and a Master degree
from Kuwait University. He taught several courses at AOU, such as introduction to
business studies, small business, and discovering mathematics. He is currently
teaching a course titled, "Business Function in Context," a compulsory course for all
students enrolled in all majors in the business program. This course is divided into
two parts: "A" and "B." In part A, students learn about marketing, operation
management, and information management. In part B, students learn about accounting
and finance, human resources management, and information management.
According to Mr. Qassem, the accounting textbooks are based on British standards
whereas the accounting system in Kuwait is based on American standards. The
difference between these two systems, no matter how slight, could confuse students
due to the mismatch between theory and local practice.

Mr. Saleh, in his late 30s, is a faculty member from Kuwait. Mr. Saleh holds a
Master degree, and is pursuing his Ph.D. studies at a British university. He is
teaching two introductory business courses titled, "Introduction to Business Studies,"
and, "Managing in the Workplace." Typically, students in their first and second year
take these courses, but some students take these courses in their third and fourth year.
Mr. Saleh explained that the "Introduction to Business Studies" course provides a
general understanding of the different functions of business: marketing, accounting,
finance, and human resource management. The introduction to business studies is an
introductory course that helps students in choosing the major they want to specialize
in. The managing in the workplace course introduces management ideas, and uses
activities to build on the existing knowledge and skills that students have. It provides
practical managerial skills and helps students develop their critical thinking in
applying analytical approaches to managerial concepts.
In summary, four faculty members out of six are Ph.D. holders, ranked as assistant professors (Dr. Majid, Dr. Ashraf, Dr. Adnan, and Dr. Nabil). Of these four, two (Dr. Majdi and Dr. Ashraf) are the GCCs and tutors for core courses; and one (Dr. Nabil) is the business program coordinator and tutor for accounting courses, and one (Dr. Adnan) is a tutor. The average age of these four tutors is 50. The two remaining faculty are in their late 30s and are tutors; one holds an MBA degree and one is pursuing his Ph.D. in the United Kingdom. The six faculty members obtained at least one of their degrees either from the United States or from Canada. They are all Kuwaitis except for Dr. Majdi who is from Yemen. Their teaching experience varies between six and 23 years.

The following sections present faculty members’ perceptions of and experiences with the four facets of the imported curriculum.

**Faculty Members’ Perceptions of British Textbooks**

Two themes emerged from faculty members’ perceptions of British textbooks: 1) the relationship between topics and students’ background, and 2) Advanced textbooks

**The Relationship between Topics and Students’ Background**

The six faculty members acknowledged that students face some difficulties in understanding and engaging with the materials when subjects are not related to their background, and when they cannot apply the knowledge in the Kuwaiti market. For example, Mr. Saleh, who teaches two introductory mandatory courses, said that in general, textbooks contain general business concepts not limited to one country or one market. However, applying these concepts might differ from one country to another depending on the context, and not all concepts apply in Kuwait. Dr. Ashraf, Dr. Nabil,
and Dr. Adnan agreed with Mr. Saleh that the textbooks are based on Western contexts and do not reflect the students' culture.

Dr. Ashraf, who teaches and coordinates an advanced mandatory course for the systems major, shared that some concepts do not apply in the Kuwaiti market due to its unique characteristics. For instance, unlike in the Western world, the Kuwaiti market is based on a governmental and family business market, where the monopoly is greater than the competition, and is not represented in textbooks. Dr. Nabil, the business program coordinator for two years, affirmed Dr. Ashraf's opinion, and explained that all the accounting courses such as auditing, financial accounting, and managerial accounting are based on the Western economic model. While he felt it is beneficial to have international knowledge, he also argued that it is more important to gain local knowledge first and to understand how the accounting aspects work in the Kuwaiti economy. Dr. Nabil added that when the imported curriculum does not reflect students' backgrounds, disengagement appears between students and the curriculum, resulting in students studying only to pass the exam and not to become long life learners. Therefore, in order to fill the gap that exists between textbooks and students' backgrounds, Dr. Nabil included a lot of local and practical examples to simplify the material and make it more relevant to students.

Dr. Adnan, who teaches two mandatory courses for all majors, said, "the content of textbooks is a high standard, but it is preferable to contain examples that reflect students' backgrounds to allow them to understand and engage more with the materials as well to know how things can be applied in their local market." He added that non-relevant examples might not help students as much as the relevant ones. Therefore, to overcome these discrepancies and challenges, he and his colleagues work on clarifying the differences between Kuwait and Western markets, through
relating and applying theories and concepts presented in textbooks to local examples and case studies. He argued that comparing Kuwaiti and Western markets would help students engage with the imported curriculum. Dr. Adnan stated that he intended to show local and global cultural differences through giving examples in the classroom, especially for concepts presented in the "Introduction to Business Studies" course that relate to leadership, beliefs, customs and traditions, and women’s roles in choosing and selecting jobs. He noted that when presenting examples related to students' society, customs and traditions, they interact better with the materials as they participate more in class.

Mr. Qassem, who currently teaches a mandatory advanced course for all majors, highlighted the kind of examples he used in different class settings. He shared that the kinds of examples that he provides in the classroom to support students' understanding can vary. Sometimes the examples are general, and other times they are related to students' interests and gender. He explained his experience with using local examples by saying, "I try to give examples that students live with it every day, for example, if I am dealing with a female class, I try to give examples of makeup, dresses, and cooking. While, when I am in a male class, I talk more about soccer, team players, and cars."

Dr. Nabil took one step further than his colleagues regarding his perception of textbooks, in the context of the role of educational policy borrowing for developing students and society:

If the educational policy borrowing does not reflect the local environment, development will not appear in the society, students will be provided with education but not quality of education that will help them to make real and important changes in their society.
Thus, faculty members from diverse backgrounds were consistent in their views that the British textbooks did not include appropriate examples from students' cultural and social backgrounds, and some of the concepts were not relevant or applicable in the Kuwaiti market. This creates difficulties for students in engaging and interacting with the materials. Dr. Nabil encapsulated these concerns:

When curriculum does not reflect the local environment, the output of the learning process will be unqualified and incapable students and citizens who cannot develop their economic and social sectors. Students’ identity is lost between West normalization and local particularity.

In their attempts to fill this gap, faculty members said that they included a lot of local and practical examples to simplify the material and make it more relevant to students. Each faculty member used different types of examples, depending on the course content, on his previous working experience, and in one case, depending on the students' gender.

**Advanced Textbooks**

Five faculty members felt that the textbooks are advanced in terms of content and English language, especially the ones used in mandatory courses. Dr. Adnan, however, commented that in general, the English level used in textbooks is good and aligns with students' capabilities. According to the other five faculty members, students cannot interact with and understand the material of the textbooks easily by themselves. According to Dr. Majdi, a typical voice from a faculty member who teaches mandatory courses said that economics textbooks focus on advanced global issues rather than local ones. Some examples of advanced global issues are game theory, pollution problems, the hidden economy, and the corruption economy. He added that the local economy has some specific characteristics and problems that
students prioritize as more immediate issues to address. However, Dr. Majdi believes that students need to first learn fundamental theories in order to understand how they can solve their local problems (inflation, unemployment, problems in the labor market, problems in the state markets, and the relationship between the government and firms). From Dr. Majdi’s point of view, once students learn how to solve their local economic problems, they can move forward to learning global problems, albeit in a way to understand how global issues can affect their economy. Dr. Majdi concluded by saying,

We should not assume that students in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia are the same as in Europe or in England. No, our students are still lacking the basic concepts, the research methodology in writing the TMAs, they still lack the necessary background in mathematics and statistics also. I think it is essential to teach them first the basics before having intensive courses.

For Dr. Adnan, who teaches a mandatory course, the content of his course is not difficult, but the language is a problem. The English language level in the textbooks is challenging for students who are not as advanced in their English language skills. In his opinion, the language gap creates disengagement between the students and the learning materials, which in turn affects their experience with the imported curriculum. With the exception of Dr. Adnan, the other faculty members agreed that textbooks are too advanced in content and language, especially the ones used in mandatory courses.

In summary, regardless of the courses and years of teaching experience at AOU, the faculty members generally confirm that British textbooks do not reflect students' culture and backgrounds and do not take the uniqueness of the Kuwaiti system into consideration. Except for Dr. Adnan, the other faculty members felt that the textbooks were too advanced for students in terms of content and the English language. As a result, students were not as engaged with the material.
To fill these gaps in the short term, faculty members used local examples, to simplify the contents of the material and drew connections between students' environments and the concepts presented in the British textbooks.

Faculty Members' Perceptions of Learning Activities and Instructional Methods

Two themes emerged from faculty members’ perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods: 1) lack of practical activities; and 2) active pedagogies and students' resistance.

Lack of Practical Activities

According to the six faculty members, most of the imported curriculum courses lack practical aspects. They stated that AOU works on compensating this lack of practical content by organizing seminars and workshops conducted by professional speakers from various sectors in the market. However, these initiatives are not necessarily effective. Dr. Majdi’s explanation was reflective of the typical views of the interviewed faculty:

We encourage our students to attend those seminars organized by AOU, but the attendance rate is not that high especially for the ones who work, and we cannot enforce the rest. As a consequence, students who do not attend do not gain the essential benefits from those seminars.

Therefore, in order to meet students’ needs, it would be more beneficial to develop the course content rather than offering optional seminars and workshops that require extra time and effort for students.

Active Pedagogies and Students' Resistance

The six faculty members shared that they try to make their tutorials a mix between discussion-based and lecture-based, to encourage interaction and active
learning through discussion and participation. However, they face two main problems in this interactive approach: First, limited class time due to the ready-made course calendar that faculty are required to respect and follow. As Mr. Qassem, a young faculty member who teaches a mandatory course with five years of teaching experience at AOU, expressed views that were in line with the other senior and young faculty interviewees:

One of my favorite methods is role-playing. It is very educational, but we do not have much room for that. Unfortunately, there is no room also for presentation and debates. Through these kinds of activities, students can develop their intellectual and interpersonal skills; however, these activities are not included in the course syllabus and course calendar.

As he summarizes it, "our students will graduate with a good academic and theoretical base, but they lack the skills, which are the essential criteria in getting a decent job."

The second problem is related to the unwillingness of some students to participate in class discussions. As the faculty members see it, the age differences among students (ranging from recent high-school graduates to mature students), distinguishes AOU from other universities and is an advantage. Students bring in a variety of different work experiences, and this is considered an asset to the institution. Faculty members declared that class discussion is enriched when students are able to share their practical experiences. However, having less motivated and inactive students in the class created difficulties for facilitating discussion-based tutorials. In terms of classroom engagement, Mr. Qassem categorized students into several groups: 1) students who are only focused on passing the exam, attending the class just to listen and receive information from the tutors without any interaction and participation; 2) students who are too shy to participate; 3) students who consider participation to be a waste of time; and 4) students who are active and engaged participants, seeking information and knowledge through sharing their experiences and turning the class
into a discussion tutorial. According to Mr. Qassem, however, it is rare to have students who are actively engaged. Dr. Adnan added another group of students: the working student. Working students tend to be exhausted when they attend class, and this affects their participation and motivation.

Mr. Saleh, a young faculty member, said that because students are generally not accustomed to discussion-based learning, he uses a semi-structured discussion tutorial. Dr. Adnan, a senior faculty member, shared a similar approach: "not all students participate in the class, but I keep encouraging them, and I try to use different learning approaches that match with the variety of the students that I have in the class." Dr. Ashraf, a senior faculty member, also shared that he encourages his students to participate in the class because they learn more through discussions and retain the information longer when they engage with their classmates.

There was general agreement amongst the faculty that the students are generally not comfortable with this active form of learning because they are unfamiliar with it. Dr. Ashraf pointed to the issue as a larger systemic challenge: "the concept of participation and presentation is missing not only in AOU but also in our schools." Dr. Nabil concurred with this point, explaining that, "students are not used to be independent learners, they depend on their teachers, and this fact is embedded in the culture and students’ mentalities, and it is hard to get rid of it." Dr. Nabil added that students resist the idea of becoming independent learners because they are not used to it, and because they are not equipped with the necessary skills. Consequently, there is an educational and cultural clash between AOU's educational system and students' mentality. Dr. Nabil concluded by saying, "some courses might be easier than others to apply independent learning, accounting is hard to be a self-directed
learning course because students cannot differentiate between accounting concepts and math concepts."

Therefore, to encourage students to participate in class discussions, Dr. Majdi, a senior faculty member, uploads the class’ PowerPoint presentations ahead of time, which allows students to review the material and prepare some questions in advance. However, Dr. Majdi said that students rarely come prepared because they were not taught to be self-motivated learners.

As Mr. Saleh articulated it,

As a further step, schooling system should work on changing students’ mentality from receivers to participants, as well changing the delivery process adopted by teachers. This will help students to be self-learners when they reach the university; otherwise, they will face an educational system shock.

The six faculty members were in agreement, regardless their age, about the challenges around facilitating discussion-based learning: limited class time and students’ low levels of engagement as active learners (for various reasons).

In summary, the faculty members’ perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods confirmed that the imported curriculum lacks a practical aspect. Consequently, to address this weakness, AOU organizes seminars and workshops conducted by professional speakers in the business fields. With respect to instructional methods, regardless of age and years of experience, faculty members reported that they would use a combination of discussion-based and lecturing-based methods whenever possible. However, two major limitations to incorporating discussions were: the limited class time (as the curriculum allocates the majority of class time to lecture-based tutorials); and student's unwillingness to participate in discussions.
Faculty Members' Perceptions of Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)

Three themes emerged from faculty members’ perceptions of TMAs: 1) local applications; 2) developing students' intellectual skills; and 3) developing students' interpersonal skills. It should be noted that only general course coordinators (GCCs) develop the TMA for their assigned courses and send it to the faculty members to distribute it to students (upon approval from the external examiner from OU-UK). Therefore, of the interviewed faculty members, only Dr. Majdi and Dr. Ashraf are involved in developing the TMAs for their courses.

Local Applications and Engagement with TMAs

Dr. Majdi and Dr. Ashraf, who are the GCCs for two different courses in economics and systems, said that British textbooks provide examples and case studies from the British context only; therefore, to fill this gap, they developed and designed TMAs that reflect students' environment and backgrounds through presenting case studies from the local and regional Arab market. Dr. Majdi, the GCC for the "Doing Economics" course, commented,

The textbook is written in England, but the case study in the TMA will be within the Middle East, from the country of each AOU’s branch. We support students to link textbooks to the local industry, to understand what is going on in the society and how they can apply theories into their assignments. We teach them the theory, but in the assignment, we give students cases relate to their local.

Dr. Ashraf, the GCC for the "Managing Complexity" course, declared that providing case studies based on students' background made them feel connected and engaged with the materials. He stated that it would be easier for students to search for information related to local case studies than international ones. He said, "we provide
students with local case study in the TMA which aids them to absorb and understand better the materials because the case study is related to their societies."

The rest of the faculty members agreed with Dr. Majdi and Dr. Ashraf’s position to develop TMAs in a way that is relevant to students’ backgrounds. For example, as Dr. Nabil explained it, "students engage more with the TMA when it reflects and presents local examples because students are more familiar with local companies than the international ones." However, the content of TMAs and whether they incorporate local examples depend on the GCC’s approach and context. For instance, if the GCC is from OU-UK, then the TMA will likely focus on international examples that are not culturally relevant to AOU’s students.

According to the faculty members, students prefer it when the TMAs ask them to apply textbook theories to local organizations because it gives them a chance to draw relevant connections between abstract concepts and their local environment.

**Developing Students' Intellectual Skills**

With respect to learning outcomes and the usefulness of the TMA in general, Dr. Ashraf said that, "the goal from the TMA is to practice the methods, the tools, and concepts. It seeks to know how to apply what students have studied in the materials in real life." The six faculty members said that the aim of the TMA is for students to apply theory to real organizations and develop students’ intellectual and business skills in areas such as: decision making, goal setting, and evaluating best alternatives, which they will benefit from in their personal and professional lives.

Dr. Majdi and Dr. Ashraf stated that in their courses, students are required to complete a graduate project instead of a TMA. Dr. Majdi explained that a graduate project allows students to select their own topics, as opposed to a typical TMA, which
is a standard assignment for everyone. It is an independent project that encourages students to take ownership. As Dr. Ashraf explained, the graduate project, "allows students to choose the company and collect secondary and primary data to discover the problem and analyze the situation. The graduate project develops students' skills especially the intellectual ones." Dr. Majdi affirmed this, saying that the graduate project, "helps student to be prepared for the real market life."

Mr. Qassem said that the current TMA design of his course is not helping the students to develop any of these skills, as it contains generic questions and rarely asks for application on a real case study. Mr. Saleh stressed that another criterion that prevents students from developing their skills is that most students do not solve the TMA by themselves; instead, they use a third party to complete the TMA for them. Mr. Qassem affirmed this point, saying that, "the TMA's concept is encouraging students to plagiarize. They outsource it, and it is an open secret." In Mr. Saleh's opinion, some students are not well prepared to write TMAs as they do not have the required research and writing skills that help them in the writing process; therefore, students either submit a poor TMA, or they choose the easiest way, which is "buying their TMAs."

According to faculty members, the TMA provides students with the opportunity to apply what they have learned from the course on real business organizations and it helps to develop students' intellectual and business skills.

However, Mr. Qassem commented that the current TMA of his course prevents students from developing their skills; therefore, he suggested that the TMA must be designed in an appropriate, relevant way for students to develop these skills. Furthermore, Mr. Saleh pointed up that students require basic skills to solve the TMA or they will ended up by outsourcing their TMAs.
Developing Students' Interpersonal Skills

Faculty members Dr. Majdi, Dr. Adnan, and Mr. Saleh, asked students to present their TMAs/Projects. Dr. Majdi had two main objectives for student presentations: first, to help prepare students for the job market through developing their interpersonal and communications skills; and second, faculty members can have a better sense of whether students completed the TMAs themselves or if they used a third party through discussions during office hours or class presentations. Based on these reasons, Dr. Adnan and Mr. Saleh evaluated presentations as part of the TMA grade for the same mandatory courses they teach.

Dr. Majdi indicated that, "such academic practice [presentations] gives students a chance to learn more and encourage them to become tutors in the future. It encourages them also to participate in conferences and gives them confidence in themselves.” However, Dr. Majdi shared that not all students are comfortable with presentations as they are not accustomed to them. They tend to be underprepared as they are ill equipped with effective presentation skills. Regarding plagiarism, Dr. Majdi commented,

I ask students to provide 15 minutes of presentation, or sometimes they come to the office, and I discuss with them individually their project because there is not enough time for that in class. I do this to make sure that students wrote their projects by themselves.

Rather than presentations, Dr. Adnan approached interpersonal skills development through the TMA using an alternative method. He said, "I divide students into groups to discuss the main points of the assignments, in doing so, students exchange opinions and points of view, which help them to better understand and engage with the TMA." He added that there is no chance for students to present their TMAs during class time because it is not included in the course calendar and is
not a requirement within the curriculum. Dr. Ashraf and Mr. Qassem affirmed this point, saying that the course calendar does not include presentations and time is very limited to such a practice. Dr. Nabil did not address the TMA’s interpersonal skills.

According to Dr. Majdi, Dr. Adnan, and Mr. Saleh, the TMA helps students to develop their interpersonal skills when they deliver presentations. However, students do not have opportunities to develop their interpersonal skills if the presentation is not part of the TMA’s grade and when it is not included in the course calendar.

In summary, the faculty members’ perceptions of Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) show that students prefer it when TMAs require them to apply textbook theory and concepts to a local organization of their choice, because it gives them a chance to draw connections to their local environment. Some faculty members agreed that the TMA allows students to develop their intellectual and business skills. However, Mr. Qassem found that the current TMA design of his course contains broad questions and rarely asks for practical applications and thus does not support students in develop these skills. Furthermore, Mr. Saleh commented that because students are generally not well equipped or prepared to solve and write TMAs, they tend to outsource their TMAs. Finally, presenting their TMAs provide students with a rare opportunity to develop their interpersonal skills but the program is not necessarily conducive to these opportunities.

**Faculty Members' Perceptions of Exams**

Only GCCs are involved with developing the exam for their assigned courses and they are sent directly to the business program coordinators at the AOU's branches on the day of the exam. Therefore, of the faculty interviewees, only Dr. Majdi and Dr.
Ashraf develop the exams for their courses, subject to approval from the external examiner from OU-UK. Students within each branch taking the same courses complete the same exam at the same date and time for standardization purposes.

The faculty members explained that exams questions are drawn from textbooks. Students are tested on their abilities to define, explain, discuss, compare, summarize, graph, and calculate. The majority of the exam questions are based on memorization and students are asked to provide some examples either from their own experiences, or from other sources such as e-learning. Exams are drawn from textbooks in order to accommodate students who were unable to attend the tutorial.

While Dr. Adnan was supportive of these types of questions for standardization purposes, the other five faculty members preferred that exams contained critical analysis. For example, Dr. Majdi, who, as a GCC, designed the exam for his course, said that in some courses (depending on the GCC who prepared the exam), the exam might include critical analysis, but this would make up less than 1% of the exam. With respect to the exam that he made as a GCC, Dr. Majdi stated that "the major questions are from the textbook, but there are some critical [analysis] questions, and this is what makes a difference between the C, B and A students. I give only one or two critical [analysis] questions just to differentiate between students."

Dr. Majdi explained that in practical courses such as economics, students cannot only depend on memorization. The majority (75%) of the questions require students to apply, calculate, and present ideas into graphs and diagrams. In Dr. Majdi’s opinion, critical analysis questions help students become self-learners. However, Dr. Majdi said the majority of students rely only on what is given to them in the class. As he explained,

We are just applying 25%, we are looking forward from the student to apply the other 75% from outside the textbook, and we call this blended
learning. We can control the 25% no problem, but what about the 75%, we do not know whether the student is doing this amount or not, so we provide one or two questions just to check whether the student is doing his part or not.

Dr. Ashraf, who designed the course exam as GCC, said his exam included 2 parts: The first part was theoretical and made up 50% of the grade. The second part was an application of a case study and was allotted the remaining 50% of the grade. According to Dr. Ashraf, this kind of exam not only depends on memorization but also gives students the opportunity to make connections between the concepts being tested and real life.

For the accounting courses, Dr. Nabil explained that the exam allocates 40% of the grade to testing theory through a written essay, and 60% are application questions. For students who have difficulties writing in English, only 5-10% of their grade is allocated to the written essay.

Mr. Qassem also takes English language ability into account. Based on his five years of experience teaching at AOU, he observed that, “…the exam is from the book but still, students get poor grades…most of them have English problems; they memorize, try to memorize the words without knowing what do they mean.” He said that if exam questions were written to encourage critical analysis, students would be unable to answer because they depend on memorization and not on understanding.

In short, exams for all the courses are based on the textbooks. Dr. Majdi and Dr. Ashraf, GCCs involved with designing the exam, included some critical questions that provide opportunities for students to express their opinions and apply their knowledge. However, Dr. Nabil and Mr. Qassem felt that application and critical analysis questions might be a problem for students who have difficulties.
communicating in English. Thus, they felt that the current format of the exam (direct questions based on memorization) might be more suitable.

In summary, the faculty members felt that the content and approach in all areas of the imported curriculum posed major challenges for students because they do not reflect their culture and backgrounds and do not take the uniqueness of the Kuwaiti system into consideration. To overcome this challenge, faculty members made their own modifications at the implementation level. They suggested that more modifications should be done at the design level in all aspects of the imported curriculum to make it more accessible for the students. These modifications will be discussed more in-depth later in the chapter.

Faculty members were in agreement that the business program is based on advanced academic standards and a high English language level that are incompatible with students’ abilities. According to faculty members, mastering the English language as a first step is required for successful outcomes in the program.

The next section sheds light on the faculty members’ role in students' academic experience and performance.

The Role of Faculty Members in Students' Academic Experience

Two major themes emerged from the faculty interviewee data, in terms of their roles in students' academic experience:

Faculty Members' Perspectives

The faculty interviewees agreed that their role is not limited to explaining course materials and grading assignments and exams. They also simplify the academic materials, relate the theories and concepts presented in the textbooks to
students' society and environment, facilitate students' understanding, and increase their engagement with the content of the curriculum. These roles help students enhance their academic experience with the imported curriculum. Through their explanations, faculty members move from the local to global and vice versa; they show students how things are connected and interrelated, and how international knowledge might be beneficial in conducting local matters. Faculty members consider themselves as the bridge between the imported curriculum and the students. This bridge helps them overcome the language and content difficulty, narrowing the gap through local representation. Representing the faculty interviewees’ views, Dr. Majdi, explained,

When students start studying economics, they hate it, and they found difficulty in statistics, mathematics, and economics. So, students panic from this, but we start to discuss and to relate the global economic problems to their society and their lives, and then they start to understand.

Only Dr. Majdi and Mr. Saleh mentioned that of the level 3 and 4 students who take mandatory and specialization courses, most of them already work and have practical job experiences. Their role as tutors in this case, is to help those students acquire the theoretical and academic knowledge to enhance their experiences. This type of student is considered valuable to the class, especially when they enrich class discussions with their work experiences. Dr. Majdi and Mr. Saleh also shared that level 1 and 2 students who are still taking elective and introductory courses, tend to lack knowledge about the concepts and basic study skills. For these students, the faculty’s role is to concentrate on cultivating basic knowledge.

In order to enhance students' academic experience with the imported curriculum, the GCC Dr. Ashraf, said he encourages them to attend classes. In class, he explains the materials in a simple way and relates it to students' culture:
I try to simplify the material and explain it differently to make it clearer for the students. This is what I can do for them, at the end my responsibility is not to spoon-feed students, because it is an open learning, instead I have to help them to become life-learners. We have to explain, facilitate and they have to work on their own.

All the interviewed faculty members felt they were the bridge that connected the content in the British textbooks to students’ learning.

**Active Learning Pedagogies**

The faculty members used active learning pedagogies in their tutorials and tried to include students in the delivery process through encouraging them to participate in class discussion. Mr. Qassem, a typical voice of the other five faculty members, shared that students clearly benefit from class discussions, and this is especially apparent when they make reference to the discussions in their exams. He elaborated on this by saying,

> I tend to find that those who got higher marks are those students who are active in the class and they show up during office hours for inquiry and asking questions and so. Those are students who get higher marks A and B, others are barely here to pass, most of them just want to pass, and they are very contained to the C+ and C.

Mr. Saleh took a different approach to encouraging his students to participate in class by dividing students into mixed group discussions. The groups included students with and without work experience. At the end of the class, Mr. Saleh asked his students to read one or two pages of the material that had not been covered in class. His intention was to help the students become independent learners. However, not all courses are conducive to this type of learning. Dr. Nabil pointed out that in accounting courses, it is challenging for students to participate in discussion in comparison to other business courses such as marketing or management.
All the interviewed faculty members said they used active learning pedagogies whenever possible, through including students in the delivery process and encouraging them to be part of the classroom discussion. The faculty members believed that this approach helps students understand and interact with the imported textbooks.

Although the faculty members attempt to take on a proactive role in students' academic experience through facilitating and encouraging active learning pedagogies, faculty members were in agreement that in spite of their efforts, the majority of their students were not ready to be self-learners. Moreover, the content difficulty and context irrelevance of the textbooks did not support active learning. Consequently, blended learning is not carried out as intended at AOU.

The Role of Faculty Members in Students' Personal and Professional Growth

The faculty members who taught advanced and mandatory level courses, such as Dr. Majdi and Dr. Ashraf, credited their courses (in particular, the TMA component) with providing students with some intellectual and business skills that support them in developing personal and professional growth. As Dr. Majdi explained,

Advanced economic courses give students more chance to write their reports, to start writing their research, to participate in conferences, to think critically using their mathematical background, and to express their ideas using diagrams. This practice will improve their jobs; and their relations with their managers, of course, it will also develop their personal and professional skills, which in turns augment their self-confidence.

Regarding his role in students' personal and professional growth, Mr. Qassem was a typical example of the six faculty members who tried to develop students' skills through participation, said he encourages students to share their experiences and be
part of the learning process, because he believes that discussing and sharing ideas helps not only in understanding and interacting with the materials but also in developing their social skills for future work. Mr. Qassem also provides personal guidance during office hours to students who seek advice on their professional growth. As he explained, "my job is not limited only to teaching those students but also on providing the advice they need to enrich their academic experience and personal growth." Mr. Saleh similarly said, "my role is helping students to build up their knowledge and some skills that they can use later in their personal and professional life, and provides them with advice that help them to become self-learners."

Dr. Nabil, who has numerous professional connections in the auditing field in Kuwait, provided students with training opportunities to gain practical experience and skills.

Regardless of the efforts made by the faculty members to develop students’ skills, not all students take advantage of these supports. Mr. Qassem shared that many of the current students work in the public sector, which is based on degree completion and not on skills competence. Consequently, those students do not have much incentive to develop their skills. However, students who work in the private sector tend to work hard to learn and develop their skills because they want to compete in the market.

In summary, faculty members were in agreement that the business courses provide students with the academic knowledge to help them develop their personal and professional skills. Faculty members used varied approaches to support students in enhance their skills for the job market, including: discussing and sharing ideas,
personal guidance during office hours on students’ professional growth, and providing accounting students with training opportunities to gain practical experience and skills.

The next section presents the curriculum modifications that were implemented and are recommended by faculty members to overcome the challenges that their students face with the imported business curriculum as designed.

**Current and Future Modifications to the Imported Curriculum**

This section presents current and future (recommended) modifications to the designed imported curriculum, including two themes for recommendations that emerged from the interview data. The first theme is related to modifying the current acceptance policy at AOU, and the second theme is related to building relationships between AOU and its students.

Faculty members agreed that the imported curriculum in the bachelor business curriculum program contains advanced levels of information and knowledge. In Dr. Majdi’s opinion, who had a total teaching experience of 23 years, the imported business program is at a higher level of difficulty than a master degree curriculum. As he explained it, this is evident based on students' reported experience: "when our students continue their master studies they came to us to say that they are very proud that they have graduated from AOU and that they have studied very heavy and more complicated British courses in their bachelor program." He added, "We the faculty members are proud of the courses that we teach here at AOU; we equipped our students with a solid academic background and intellectual skills." Nevertheless, the faculty interviewees were in agreement that certain issues should be addressed for students’ benefit. For example, while Dr. Nabil affirmed, the Business Program Coordinator, that the imported curriculum contains valuable knowledge, he reiterated
that it does not consider the local environment. To address this, he offered the following advice to increase relevancy:

Local educational decision-makers should consider the local environment before importing any curriculum. Adaptation to the curriculum has to take place before transplanting any educational policies and curriculum to ensure their success in the hosted countries.

To overcome the challenges faced by some students, some faculty members made their own adjustments to the curriculum, summarized in the next section. The six faculty members further suggested that further adjustments and modifications must be done in the long run to the imported curriculum. These recommendations are subsequently discussed.

Current Modifications

This section summarizes the modifications to the curriculum undertaken by some of the faculty interviewees. As these were personal efforts, they differed from one course to another and from one faculty member to another.

Designing supplementary materials: To improve students' academic performance and experience, GCCs Dr. Nabil and Dr. Majdi developed and provided their students with supplementary materials. Dr. Nabil developed a booklet containing questions and answers to help students study all accounting theories in simple written English to help them prepare for the exam. Dr. Nabil also provides extra lectures at the end of the semester to review the materials with students who have difficulties with the English language or struggle with understanding the materials.

Dr. Majdi designed supplementary materials with the consultant of the external examiners to support students in studying from the textbooks. These supplementary materials drew connections between the textbook content and the local industry in Kuwait. The supplementary materials explained the textbook content in a
simple way that helps students to understand the advanced information presented in textbooks.

Use of local examples and additional sources: As previously discussed, faculty interviewees work on simplifying the materials to make them relevant to students' culture and backgrounds through providing local examples, and helping students make connections between the examples and the textbook theory. For example, Dr. Majdi asked his students to refer to outside resources, such as local newspapers, that tackle local economic problems. He shared his experience by saying, "students are happy when I ask them to refer to additional resources, such as local newspapers, than their textbooks that deal with local economic problems because they feel that what they study can be also related to their societies and not only related to the American or British economy."

Not only did faculty interviewees feel the need to make the textbook content more relevant to students, Mr. Saleh also felt it needed to be supplemented with current information:

I develop and supply students with updated information, based on my information and my research, and more current to what is happening in the market. This is a personal effort, but one challenge might face this effort, is that not all students are interested in receiving and reading extra information because from their point of views this information is not covered in textbooks so they think it is an extra load reading for them.

According to Mr. Saleh, the imported curriculum should be more reflective of the current trends in business as well as local examples from students' contexts.

It is evident that some of the faculty interviewees made individual efforts to adjust the imported curriculum according to students’ needs. Providing supplementary materials and making the content more relevant to the local context were two main
strategies undertaken by some of the faculty. However, in Mr. Qassem’s view, the attitudes of unmotivated students, who form a more significant number of the student body in comparison with their motivated counterparts, pose an additional challenge.

**Future Modifications Recommended by Faculty Members**

The faculty members suggested future modifications at the design level for the long term, primarily to reflect the local context. Modifications were recommended by faculty interviewees for each of the four facets of the imported curriculum.

**Textbooks and Additional Content**

The faculty interviewees recommended a few different approaches to address the lack of Kuwaiti culture and context reflected in the British textbooks. For example, Dr. Majdi emphasized the importance of introducing students to the basics of economic theory in relation to the Middle Eastern context:

> Textbooks have to reflect students' backgrounds by introducing first the basics of the economic theory. To keep some chapters that introduce global concepts, but at the same time to include few chapters that provide core economics theories that reflect the Middle East issues, which help student to interact with their local problems.

The faculty members consistently noted that students want to feel represented in textbooks. Dr. Majdi explained that the personal efforts from faculty members to draw connections for students are not enough, especially when students do not attend classes. As Mr. Qassem put it,

> We are providing local examples, but we prefer to have this in the book, it will be much easier for students to read the book and relate to it, and this, in turn, affects in a right way their academic experience and performance.

Dr. Ashraf echoed Dr. Majdi by saying,
Textbooks need to be more concentrated on the Middle East issues, to provide examples from students’ environment, examples that are more familiar to students which make the materials more understandable and relevant to them.

In summary, faculty interviewees were in agreement that including local examples and case studies from the Middle East in the British textbooks would help to increase student engagement and improve their learning experience as a whole. Their recommendation is to add local connections rather than replace the current content, as local relevancy was viewed as being equally important and complementary to knowledge about global theories and concepts.

**TMAs Modifications**

As previously discussed, the faculty members consistently expressed two main reasons for the importance of adding presentations to the TMA component: 1) students can develop interpersonal skills through sharing knowledge and experiences with their counterparts; 2) to reduce outsourcing and plagiarism. Presenting the TMAs helps faculty members to assess whether the students completed their TMAs on their own or outsourced to a third party.

However, some challenges to implementing the presentation component must first be overcome. The challenges are primarily related to students demonstrating unwillingness to participate in presentations. The main reason for this is attributed to the fact that it is not customary practice in school systems in Kuwait to incorporate participation and presentations in student learning. As a result, students are not accustomed to participation and presentations and lack the skills and confidence in this area.

Nevertheless, the faculty members see the value in including presentations into the course calendar, even as an optional and non-marked component. They
expressed the motivation to continue working on equipping students with the necessary skills to build and deliver their presentations.

It was also suggested by Mr. Saleh and Mr. Qassem that the current format of the TMA change from generic, individual projects to group projects related to local organizations. Mr. Saleh said, "teamwork aids students to upgrade their intellectual and interpersonal competence; as well it helps tutors to monitor step by step students' progress."

In summary, in spite of the challenges related to students’ lack of motivation and confidence, faculty members expressed their desire to include presentations into the course calendar as part of the TMA whenever it is possible (even as optional and non-marked component) in order to support students in developing interpersonal skills.

**Exams and Grading Modifications**

Dr. Majdi, the GCC for "Doing Economics" course, believes that the students are over-assessed. As he put it, "our students do not need that many assessments, the final exam, the midterm exam, the TMA, the project, most of the universities give one type of assessment only, so why do we need to give all these assessments." He suggested replacing all these assessments with one exam and one TMA.

However, Dr. Ashraf, the GCC for the "Managing Complexity" course, and Mr. Saleh, who teaches 2 business courses, feel that the current evaluation percentages (50% on final exam, 30% on midterm, and 20% on TMAs) encourage students to outsource their assignments. They suggested changing the percentage distribution of the TMA to a more practical grading system that improves students’ academic performances and experiences. For example, they recommended that the
TMA grade be replaced by seven small exams with the best five exams selected for the final grade. This would encourage students to study more consistently and be better prepared for the final exam. Another proposed percentage distribution was to have 20% on midterm, 20% for presentation and discussion, and 10% for the best 2 of 5 quizzes.

Mr. Qassem, who teaches the "Business Function in Context" course, emphasized that the current format of his course exam encourages students to depend on memorization instead of understanding. He suggested using case studies in the exam as it makes students think, study, and answer differently than only writing information drawn from the book. This kind of exam, in Mr. Qassem' opinion, helps students think outside the box and develop their intellectual skills. He elaborated on this by saying,

*If the exam provides case study, in this way student will think differently, will study differently, memorization does not do any good because they have really to understand in the class and to ask questions, to engage more in class explanation. Otherwise, they cannot take grades; maybe they have to use other resources to develop their understanding because this kind of exam is not testing their memorization ability rather it is testing their understanding.*

In summary, three faculty members recommended some modifications to the exams and evaluations methods, although the suggestions ranged. The issues to address with exams and evaluations, however, focus on facilitating more meaningful learning—whether this would entail changing the distribution of grading system or the content of the exam, moving away from memorization to case applications.

*Adding New Courses*

Four of the six faculty members, Dr. Majdi, Mr. Saleh, Dr. Ashraf and Dr. Nabil, who teach different courses, suggested adding new courses, primarily at the
introductory level, and preferably designed jointly with OU-UK and AOU faculty members.

The intentions for adding new courses included efforts to reduce plagiarism. For example, Dr. Majdi, Dr. Ashraf and Mr. Saleh suggested an introductory research methodology courses to teach and equip students with the skills to complete their assignments. They suggested a compulsory methodology course for all students to teach basic research methodology.

Dr. Nabil expressed concerns that the accounting courses are only offered in English, in spite of the fact that in reality, the government requires all accounting statements and disclosures to be submitted in Arabic. He recommended making accounting courses available in Arabic to reflect the reality of the market and government requirements. In his view, this would lead to several benefits, including: increasing student engagement with the materials; preparing students better for the job market without having to extend their training; and making the program accessible to more students, which would reflect AOU’s vision of opening learning opportunities to all students, and would, in turn, increase student registration numbers.

Modification in the AOU’s Acceptance Policy

Dr. Ashraf was the only interviewee to suggest modifications to AOU’s acceptance policy. The current acceptance policy admits students with less than 60% GPA, if they have 2 to 4 years of work experience. In addition to the work experience requirement, Dr. Ashraf recommended that a faculty member committee should interview these students. In Dr. Ashraf' opinion, the primary aim for interviewing the prospective students would be to inform them of the AOU blended system and the amount of work that is expected from them to do in their learning process. It would
give these students the chance to consider whether they fit with the university system and might help to reduce drop-out rates and failures.

The Relationship between AOU and its Students

Mr. Qassem and Dr. Nabil pointed out that an important component missing from the AOU's educational puzzle is the relationship between AOU and its students. Mr. Qassem said that there is no campus life at the university and no extra-curricular activities, which he feels makes students less motivated and less interested in coming to the university. He emphasized the importance of providing students with opportunities to enrich their academic experience through extracurricular campus involvement and professional development opportunities. Dr. Nabil offered some suggestions to strengthen the relationship between AOU and its students, and to provide students with a chance to develop and upgrade their skills beyond academics. He suggested that the business department and AOU should offer training workshops and presentations by guest speakers from different business fields and sectors to share their practical experiences with the students. In his opinion, these types of training sessions and seminars equip students with the needed skills required in the job market, adding a practical aspect that is missing from the imported curriculum.

In summary, the faculty recommended the following modifications for the imported curriculum: Adapting the British textbooks to reflect the Middle Eastern, adding to the Western content, in order for students to simultaneously gain both local and Western knowledge and broaden their perspectives; add presentations and group work as components of the TMA even as optional, to help students develop their interpersonal skills; and changing the current grading and the evaluation methods in
order to make more beneficial for students (suggested by three of the faculty interviewees).

Overall, faculty members felt that these recommended modifications to the four components of the imported curriculum, coupled with the addition of extra courses, would aid students in improving their academic experience with the imported curriculum. These modifications would also address equity issues for at-risk students. As Dr. Nabil explained, "the disengagement with the curriculum as well the language difficulties faced by some students lead either to a volunteer drop out or forced withdrawal. 20 to 30% of AOU students are on the warning list due to their low GPA." Thus, the modifications he suggested for his course and other modifications presented by the rest of the faculty members might support students in completing the program.

Mr. Qassem and Mr. Saleh also pointed out that these modifications and adjustments would allow "some room for teachers' faculty creativity in delivering the materials which permit to improve students' achievement." Mr. Saleh said that some faculty members should be able to have some authority with course materials, especially in designing the TMAAs and exams to fit with their students. However, Mr. Saleh explained that such would be challenging to implement, as they would contradict the OU-UK system and it is standardization concept.

From the faculty members' points of view, they are the front line people who deal directly with students, and they know more than anyone else the challenges and difficulties that their students face. They can consequently shed light on the best solutions to fit students' needs. Faculty members also felt that they are the connection between students and the upper level of the university. All faculty members suggested that if the curriculum could be jointly designed between AOU and OU-UK, it would
make a huge difference in students' academic experience and performance. Changes to the imported curriculum would require a joint effort between international organizations, the local authority, and the local educational organizations. Mr. Saleh elaborated on this, saying,

What is needed is to have a vertical and horizontal collaboration between all the educational parties to have a successful and beneficial educational process. If we are looking for a quality of education, it will not be the right thing to apply the imposed imported curriculum as is without considering the local environment. What works in the UK and considered as a success story might not work here in the same way.

Achieving vertical and horizontal collaboration, however, comes with its own set of complications. For example, Dr. Majdi, shared that unfortunately, the deanship of the business department is not on board with a movement towards modification and major changes are not in the foreseeable future due to the high deanship turnover at the headquarters.

It is clear that the faculty have important insights into the imported curriculum and how it can be improved to enhance students’ experience and outcomes. However, the issues are multifaceted and complex, with some of the challenges associated with deeply ingrained, larger systemic issues. Next is a summary of the faculty interview findings.

**Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter aimed to develop an insight and better understanding of faculty members' perceptions and experiences with the four factors of the imported business curriculum. As well, this chapter sheds light into faculty members' sense of their own role in students' academic experience, and personal and professional growth. Moreover, the chapter examined any reported differences between the curriculum as
designed and the curriculum as implemented, to align with (what they perceived to be) students' needs and the Kuwaiti environment.

The key findings related to the faculty members' perceptions and their experiences of each factor of the imported curriculum were as follows: The advanced content and English language level in the textbooks, as well as the lack of local examples, created some difficulties for some students to engage and interact with the materials. To overcome this challenge, all the faculty members simplified the materials and made them more relevant to students' background through utilizing a variety of local examples. Two of the interviewees designed and provided students with supplementary materials to facilitate understanding.

Concerning the instructional methods used by faculty members, all six faculty members tried to use active pedagogies through mixed tutorials, based on lecturing and discussion to encourage students to participate in class discussion and be an active part of the learning process. According to faculty members, discussions aid students in understanding the materials correctly, although there are some challenges with this approach, such as student resistance. Regarding TMAs, faculty members agreed that students engaged better when local organizations were included as case studies. However, faculty members shared that the majority of the students were not well-equipped with the necessary skills to submit a high academic standard TMA. Finally, few faculty members felt that the current format of the exams should be modified to have students demonstrate critical thinking rather than purely memorization.

The interview results have demonstrated that faculty members used different strategies to address students' academic challenges with the imported curriculum. The
main strategies were the active learning setting in the classroom and providing students with supplementary booklets that simplify the content of the textbooks.

Faculty members' roles ranged from explaining materials, to students' skills development, to offering individual advice to support students in their personal and professional growth. Faculty members concluded that regardless of the efforts that they employed to elevate students' academic and personal levels, not all students responded to these efforts similarly for several reasons. First, students are not always ready to be self-learners, as some lack the right skills; second, the content and the language difficulty do not facilitate engagement; third, unmotivated students tend to focus on passing the exam only and are not invested in developing further skills.

The last point that this chapter tackled was to explore whether any adaptations had occurred in the imported curriculum. Only two faculty members were involved with designing and providing students with supplementary materials, as they were the only ones given the authority to do so as GCCs. The textbooks are inadequate on their own as an instructional tool. To address this, faculty members recommended jointly designing (with OU-UK), if possible, an updated Middle Eastern/Western version of the imported curriculum, and including new courses based on students' needs and the Kuwaiti and Arab market demand.

The key future modifications to the imported curriculum suggested by the faculty members are as follows: add local examples to the textbooks content to represent the Middle Eastern environment alongside the Western one; include group projects and presentations as part of the TMA component to allow students to practice and apply the theoretical aspect; and replace the exam setting to include several small tests instead of one final exam.
Faculty members' proposals to modify the imported curriculum are in line with Dressel's (1968) perspective that students will learn what is anticipated from the curriculum, and have a positive academic experience when the materials, instructional methods, assignments, activities, and evaluation methods are selected and planned well.

The next chapter presents the quantitative findings from students' questionnaire related to their self-perceived experience with the imported curriculum.
Chapter 6: Quantitative Analysis

This chapter presents the findings from the quantitative data analysis. The quantitative analysis aims to investigate students’ experience with the imported curriculum and their self-perception of its impact on their academic performance, and personal and professional growth. This chapter will also highlight the relationship between students' self-perceived academic performance and their self-reported GPA, and the predicted impact of each of the four factors of the curriculum on students' self-perceived academic performance and on their self-reported GPA.

The preliminary and primary analyses of the data are presented based on the research questions. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the significant findings from students' perspectives.

The Survey Results

The data are presented as follows: first, a preliminary analyses provided the characteristics of the survey respondents, and next, the computed reliability for each set of items (perceptions of: British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods used by their tutors, Tutor Marked Assignments, exams, the overall program, and the gaining skills from the business program) of the questionnaire; second, I discuss the process of assessing whether to analyze each item by itself or to compute the total score of these items in the analysis; and third, the findings are presented in relation to each of the research questions.

The third section is organized as follows to answer the research sub-questions: 1) students’ experience of the imported business curriculum; 2) the influence of the imported business curriculum on students' self-perceived academic performance and
students' self-perceived personal and professional growth; and 3) students’ overall evaluation of their educational experience of the business program.

**Preliminary analyses: The Characteristics of Survey Respondents**

**The Population and Demographic Data of the Research Subjects**

**The population**

The questionnaire was distributed to undergraduate business students in levels three and four of their current level of study, in the second semester of the 2015/2016 academic year. The total number of these students was 1107. The number of students who responded to the survey was 333, representing 30% of the population. These students were in a position to reflect on their perceptions and experiences with the imported business curriculum.

**Students’ demographic backgrounds**

**Majors:** Responses were received from all five majors (accounting, economics, management, marketing, and systems) within the business department, with the majority of respondents belonging to the accounting and systems major. The number of registered students in each of these two majors was almost identical. The results showed that 30.2% (100 out of 331 students) of respondents were in the accounting major and 29.3% in systems (97 out of 331 students). The rest of the students were distributed as follows: 23% in management (76 out of 331 students), 11.8% in marketing (39 out of 331 students), and 5.7% in economics (19 out of 331 students). Two individuals did not indicate their major.
**Level of study:** Most of the respondents were in their third level, reflecting 69.8% of the study’s population (229 out of 328 students) in comparison to 30.2% in their fourth level (99 out of 328 students). Five individuals did not indicate their level of study.

**Students' self-reported GPA at Arab Open University:** Students’ GPA is divided into four categories according to AOU’s rules. These categories are as follows: 1) from 2.00 to 2.32; 2) from 2.33 to 2.99; 3) from 3.00 to 3.66; 4) 3.67 to 4.00. The majority of the students’ self-reported GPAs were within the third category (medium high) reflecting 39.3% of the population (131 out of 333 students). 32.4% (108 out of 333 students) were within the second category (medium low). The rest were distributed almost equally between the first category (very low): 13.2% (44 out of 333 students), and the fourth category (very high): 15% (50 out of 333 students). This frequency demonstrated that the responding students believed they were performing well in their studies overall. However, 44 out of 333 students believed they were performing poorly compared to their counterparts, and they might be at risk of failure out of the program.

**Students' nationalities:** The majority of the respondents were Non-Kuwaiti; 68.1% (224 out of 329 students) compared to 31.9% who were Kuwaiti (105 students). Four individuals did not indicate their nationality. This percentage was not surprising, as the only option for non-Kuwaiti students is to attend a private university, whereas Kuwaiti students also have the option to attend Kuwait University—a public university—or to attend the public authority for applied education and training.

**Gender:** 66.7% (212 out of 318) of respondents were female, and 33.3% (106 students) were male. Fifteen individuals did not indicate their gender. The majority of
business students were female with a percentage of 55% as compared to 45% for their male counterparts.

**Type of high school:** 61.9% (205 out of 331) of respondents came from private schools, as compared to 38.1% (126 students) who came from public schools. Two individuals did not mention their high school type. These percentages reflect the previous represented demographic related to nationality (31.9% Kuwaiti and 68.1% non-Kuwaiti), as public schools are only available to Kuwaiti students.

**English as a mode of instruction in high school:** 72.2% (239 out of 331) did not have English as a mode of instruction in their high school, as compared to 27.8% (92 students) who did. These percentages reflect the Kuwaiti educational system. Since public schools and some of the private schools (non-foreign schools) in Kuwait only teach English as a second language, the majority of the school materials are taught in Arabic.

**Reliability**

To test the reliability (internal consistency) of the scales used, I calculated the alpha coefficient for each set of items. The alpha coefficients were as follows: 0.761 for the five variables of perception of textbook, 0.809 for the seven of perception of learning activities, 0.849 for the six variables of perception of tutor marked assignments, 0.771 for the two variables of perception the program, and 0.840 for the seven variables of program contribution to student’s knowledge skills and personal development. This suggests a high internal consistency for these scales. In comparison, the alpha coefficient for the four variables of perception of exams was 0.611, which suggests that these items have a relatively acceptable internal consistency. As all constructs (with the exception of exams perception) have
Cronbach's alpha above 0.70, the total scale scores will be computed for them and used in running the analysis. The four variables measuring perception of exams will be analyzed separately.

**Main Analyses**

**Students' Experience of the Imported Business Curriculum**

One of the research sub-questions I wanted to investigate was related to knowing how students experience the imported business curriculum. I divided this question into two sub-questions, including 1) questions that tackled students' perceptions of each of the four curriculum factors, and 2) questions that dealt with students' perceptions of each factor according to their demographics. I used descriptive statistics to answer sub-question (1), and I used independent sample t-tests for demographics with two categories (level of study, nationality, gender, type of high school, and English as language of instruction), and one-way ANOVAs for demographics with three and plus categories (major and self-reported GPA), to investigate whether there was a relationship between students' perceptions and their demographics status to answer sub-question (2).

**Students' Perceptions of British textbooks**

*Descriptive statistics:* 333 students responded to the five statements of the perception of textbooks scale. The minimum and maximum scores on that scale were 1 and 5 respectively. The average score of the students was 3.57, just above the midpoint of the scale with a SD of 0.71. On average, students tend to agree with the statements related to the perception/experience of British textbooks. These statements are intended to ascertain if students found the British textbooks: accessible in terms of
language and content; culturally relevant and applicable; and applicable to their self-perceived academic performance (see Appendix A).

**Students' perceptions of the textbook based on demographics**

**The results of ANOVAs analyses were as follows:**

**Major:** A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between students' majors and their perceptions of British textbooks. The independent variable, the major, included the following five types: accounting, economics, management, marketing, and systems. The dependent variable was the total score of students' perceptions of British textbooks. The ANOVA was significant, $F(4.326) = 2.720, p=.030$. This indicates that the Means across the population of students from different majors are not the same. Multiple comparisons were performed using the Tukey procedure. However, Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test did not confirm the difference between majors. This indicates that students' perception/experience with British textbooks is similar regardless of their majors.

**Self-reported GPA:** A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between students' self-reported GPAs and their perceptions of British textbooks. The independent variable, the self-reported GPAouro, included the following four levels: from 2.00 to 2.32, from 2.33 to 2.99, from 3.00 to 3.66, and from 3.67 to 4.00. The dependent variable was the total score of students' perceptions of textbooks. The ANOVA was significant, $F(3.329) = 13.702, p=.001$. This indicates that the means across the population of students from different self-reported GPA levels are not the same. Multiple comparisons were performed using the Tukey procedure. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that there were significant differences between the different self-
reported GPA levels. The results of multiple comparisons showed that students with higher (very high and medium high) self-reported GPAs tended to have higher mean scores on perceptions of textbooks. This means that self-reported GPA does influence students' perceptions of textbooks and students with high (very high and medium high) self-reported GPAs had positive experiences with British textbooks in comparison with the students with low (medium low and very low) self-reported GPAs.

**The results of the independent samples t-tests analyses were as follows:**

**Type of high school:** An independent-samples $t$-test was conducted to compare students' perception of British textbooks related to the type of high school they attended. The test was significant, $t(329) = -2.490$, $p=.013$. Students who attended public school ($M=3.45$, $SD=.75$) had a lower mean score than those who attended private school ($M=3.65$, $SD=.67$). This indicates that for students who attended public school, their perceptions regarding the British textbooks were lower than students who attended private school, and this former group was consequently less comfortable with British textbooks than the latter. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was quite wide, ranging from -.35649 to -.04179.

**English as the language of instruction:** An independent-samples $t$-test was conducted to compare students' perception of textbooks related to the English as the language of instruction at high school. The test was significant, $t(329) = 4.073$, $p<.001$. Students who had English as the language of instruction ($M=3.83$, $SD=.69$) had a higher mean score than students who did not have English as the language of instruction ($M=3.47$, $SD=.70$). This indicates that for students who had English as the language of instruction at their high school, their perceptions regarding British textbooks was higher. Consequently, they felt more comfortable with British
textbooks than the respondents who did not use English in high school. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was quite wide, ranging from .18048 to .51764.

According to the independent-samples t-test analyses however, there was no significant association between 3rd and 4th level students and their perceptions of British textbooks (p = 0.075). Similarly, there was no association between nationality (Kuwaitis vs. non-Kuwaitis) or gender (men vs. women), and their perceptions of textbooks (p = 0.064 and 0.127 respectively).

In summary, responses to the statements related to British textbooks (intended to ascertain whether students found the British textbooks accessible in terms of language and content, culturally relevant and applicable, and applicable to their self-perceived academic performance) were significantly associated. The most significant association was students’ self-reported GPA, followed by English as the language of instruction, type of high school previously attended, and major. In contrast, responses were not significantly influenced by the year of study, nationality, or gender of students. This indicates that self-reported GPA is more influential in students’ perceptions about the British textbooks than area of study. As well, students who had English as the language of instruction in high school felt more comfortable with British textbooks than those who did not use English in high school. In addition, students who attended public high schools felt less comfortable with British textbooks than those who attended private high schools. There was no relationship found between students’ perceptions about the textbooks and the current level of study, nationality and gender. The summary results are presented in tables 3, 4 and 5 (Appendix B). P-values with asterisks indicate that the relationships between students’ perception of British textbooks and their demographics status were statistically
significant. Tables are presented in order from the most to least significant relationship, to the extent this was possible.

Students' Overall Perceptions of Learning Activities and Instructional Methods Used by Tutors

Descriptive Statistics: 333 students responded to the seven statements that assessed perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods. The minimum and maximum scores on that scale were 1 and 5 respectively. The average score of the students was 3.85 above the midpoint of the scale with a SD of 0.66. On average, students tended to lean more towards agreement with the statements related to learning activities and instructional methods perceptions. These statements are intended to ascertain whether students found the learning activities and instructional methods to be appropriate and accommodating of their learning styles and individual differences (see Appendix A).

Students' perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods used by tutors based on demographics

The results of ANOVAs analyses were as follows:

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate: 1) the relationship between the students' majors and their perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods; and 2) between the students' self-reported GPAs and their perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods. According to the one-way ANOVAs analyses, there were no statistically significant relationships between the perception of learning activities and instructional methods and the two independent variables, student majors and self-reported GPAs. The results of the ANOVAs were ($F(4.326) = .493, p=.741$) for the major, and ($F(3.329) = 2.357, p=.072$) for the self-reported GPA. This indicates that the means across the population of students from
different majors and different levels of self-reported GPA are the same regarding the perception of learning activities and instructional methods. These findings indicate that students’ perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods were not influenced by their majors and self-reported GPAs.

The results of the independent samples t-test analyses were as follows:

Current Level of Study: An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare students' perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods in terms of accessibility, and whether these perceptions are related to their level of study (3rd and 4th level). The test was significant, $t(326) = 2.109$, $p<.036$. Students in their 3rd level of study ($M=3.89$, $SD=.65$) had a higher mean score than the 4th level students ($M= 3.73$, $SD=.69$). This indicates that students in their 3rd level of study have higher perceptions regarding learning activities and instructional methods. Third year students were more likely to feel that learning activities and instructional methods were accessible in comparison to their counterparts in the 4th level. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was quite wide, ranging from .01130 to .32436.

English as the Language of Instruction: An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare students’ perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods used by tutors related to the language of instruction in high school. The test was significant, $t (329) = 2.027$, $p=.044$. When English was previously used as the language of instruction ($M=3.97$, $SD=.66$), the average score was higher than when it was not ($M=3.80$, $SD=.66$). This indicates that for students who used English as the language of instruction at their high school, perceptions regarding learning activities and instructional methods were higher; they subsequently felt more comfortable with the learning activities and instructional methods used by their tutors than the
respondents who did not use English in high school. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was quite wide, ranging from 0.00482 to 0.32379.

However, according to the independent samples t-test analyses, there were no significant associations between students' perceptions of learning activities and nationality (Kuwaitis vs. non-Kuwaitis) (p= 0.363), gender (men vs. women) (p=0.760), or type of high school, whether private or public (p=0.769).

In summary, perceptions of the statements related to learning activities and instructional methods were intended to ascertain whether students found the learning activities and instructional methods: accessible in terms of pedagogical styles; whether they facilitated their learning process; and whether they provided practical examples. Current year of study was most influential in this area, as well as whether English was their language their language of instruction in high school. In contrast, self-reported GPA, nationality, major, gender, and the type of prior high school were not significant influencing factors. The summary results are presented in the following tables 6, 7, and 8(Appendix B). P-values with asterisks mean that the relationships between students' perception of learning activities and instructional methods and their demographics status were statistically significant. Tables are presented in order from the most to least significant relationships to the extent this was possible.

**Students' Overall Perceptions of Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)**

**Descriptive Statistics:** 333 students responded to the six statements relating to perceptions of tutor marked assignments. The minimum and maximum scores on this scale were 1 and 5 respectively. The average score of the students was 3.7698, above the midpoint of the scale with a SD of 0.78293. On average, students tended to agree with the statements related to TMAs. These statements were intended to ascertain
whether TMAs were appropriate assessments and aligned with the curriculum content and context (see Appendix A).

*Students' perceptions of TMAs based on demographics*

**The results of ANOVAs analyses were as follows:**

**Major:** A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the students' majors and their perceptions of TMAs. The independent variable, the major, included the following five types: accounting, economics, management, marketing, and systems. The dependent variable was the total score of students' perceptions of TMAs. The ANOVA was not significant, $F(4.326) = .423$, $p=.792$. This indicates that the means across the population of students from different majors are the same, indicating that there was no relationship between the major and students' perception of TMAs.

**Self-reported GPA:** A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the students' self-reported GPAs and their perceptions of TMAs. The independent variable, the self-reported GPAs, included four levels. The dependent variable was the total score of students' perceptions of TMAs. The ANOVA was significant, $F(3.329) = 5.894$, $p=.001$. This indicates that the means across the population of students with different self-reported GPAs are not the same. Follow-up tests were conducted to explore this difference further. The Dunnett C multiple comparisons were used because the significance in the test of homogeneity of variances is .016 less than .05. Post hoc comparisons using the Dunnett C test indicates that students with the highest (very high and medium high) self-reported GPAs had higher mean scores on perceptions of TMAs and had positive experiences with TMAs, in comparison to students with lower (medium low and very low) self-reported GPAs.
The results of the independent samples t-test analyses were as follows

**English as the Language of Instruction:** An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare students' perceptions of TMAs connected to English as the language of instruction. The test was significant: t(329) = 2.120, p=.035. When English was used as the language of instruction (M= 3.92, SD=.88), the average score was higher than when it was not used as the language of instruction (M=3.72, SD=.74). This indicates that for students who used English as the language of instruction, their perceptions regarding TMAs was higher and they felt more comfortable with the TMAs than students who did not use English as the language of instruction. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was quite wide, ranging from .01462 to .39137.

However, according to the independent-samples t-test analyses, there were no significant associations between students' perceptions of tutor marked assignments and current level of study (p= 0.546), nationality (p= 0.194), gender (p= 0.986) and type of high school (p= 0.244).

In summary, the analysis on students' perceptions of the statements related to TMAs was intended to ascertain whether students found the TMAs: accessible in terms of language and content and culturally relevant and applicable. Students’ self-reported GPAs and English as the language of high school instruction were significant influencers, but their perceptions were not significantly associated with their majors, current level of study, nationality, gender, or type of high school. This means that students with high (very high and medium high) self-reported GPAs had positive experiences with the TMAs in comparison to students with low (medium low and very low) GPAs. Furthermore, students who used English as the language of
instruction in their high schools felt more comfortable with TMAs than those who did not. The summary results are presented in the tables 9, 10 and 11 (Appendix B). P-values with asterisks indicate that the relationships between students' perceptions of tutor marked assignments and demographic status were statistically significant. Tables are presented in order from the most to least significant relationships to the extent this was possible.

**Students' Overall Perceptions Regarding the Exams and Other Evaluation Methods**

A frequency test was run to investigate whether students tended to agree or not on each of the four statements regarding their perceptions of exams. These statements are intended to ascertain whether students found the exams accessible and went beyond basic information in the textbooks; whether they preferred to have other type of exams; and if applicable, whether their perceptions were influenced by self-perceived academic performance (see Appendix A).

**Statement (1): Exams are based on the concepts in textbooks:** a high level of agreement was distributed between students who agreed (51.2%), and strongly agreed (30.7%), that exams are based on the concepts and theories presented in the textbooks. 13.6% of students' answers were neutral, and 3.9% and 0.6% students stated they disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively.

**Statement (2): Exam questions allow me to include critical analysis:** a high level of agreement was distributed between students who agreed (40.8%), and strongly agreed (16.5%), that exam questions allow them to include critical analysis (going beyond basic information in the textbooks). 27% of students' answers were neutral, and 12% and 3.6 % students responded: ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’, respectively.
Statement (3): I prefer to have non-marked small quizzes to aid my performance: 31.5% agreed, and 26.7% strongly agreed, to having non-marked small quizzes to aid in their academic performance. 25.5% of responses were neutral, 5.1% strongly disagreed, and 11.1% disagreed with this statement, meaning they did not prefer small-quizzes.

Statement (4): Exams aid my academic performance: 50.9% agreed that the exams and evaluation methods aid their self-perceived academic performance, in comparison to 18.4% who strongly agreed. Of the remaining respondents, 22.3% were neutral, 2.7% strongly disagreed, and 5.7% disagreed with this statement.

In summary, 332 students responded to statements 1 (exams are based on the concepts in textbooks) and 4 (exams aid my academic performance), and 333 students responded to statements 2 (exam questions allow me to include critical analysis) and 3 (I prefer to have non-marked small quizzes to aid my performance). Students tended to agree more than disagree on these four statements. The summary results are presented in table 12 (Appendix B).

Students’ perceptions of exams based on demographics

To investigate whether there was a relationship between students' perceptions about exams and their demographics, a Chi-square test of independence was performed.

Major: The major was only significantly associated with statement number 4. The Chi-square test of independence indicated a relationship between the major and student perceptions of statement 4 (exams aid my academic performance), $X^2(16, N = 330) = 27.869, p = .033$. Students from the economics major agreed less with this statement in comparison to all other majors.
**Self-reported GPA:** The Chi-square test of independence indicated a relationship between self-reported GPA and students' perceptions of statement 1 (exams are based on the concepts in textbooks), $X^2(12, N = 332) = 22.792, p = .030$. A relationship was also found between self-reported GPA and students' perceptions of statement 4 (exams aid my academic performance), $X^2(12, N = 332) = 28.619, p = .004$. Students with higher (very high and medium high) self-reported GPAs tended to agree more with the statement 1 and 4, and students with lower (medium low and very low) self-reported GPAs tended to disagree with these two statements.

**English as the language of instruction:** The Chi-square test of independence indicated a relationship between English as the language of instruction and students' perceptions of statement 1 (exams are based on the concepts in textbooks), statement 2 (exam questions allow me to include critical analysis), and statement 4 (exams aid my academic performance). The chi-square test of independence results were as follows: $X^2(4, N = 330) = 14.472, p = .006$, $X^2(4, N = 331) = 12.984, p = .011$, and $X^2(4, N = 330) = 33.962, p < .001$ respectively. This means that students who used English as the language of instruction in high school tended to agree more with the following statements than those who did not: exams are based on the concepts in textbooks, exam questions allow me to include critical analysis, and exams aid my academic performance.

According to the analyses, table 13 (Appendix B) shows that the level of study (3rd vs. 4th level students), gender (male vs. female), nationality (Kuwaitis vs. Non-Kuwaitis) and type of high school (public vs private), were not significantly related to the four statements of exams perception.

The analysis also demonstrated that there was no relationship between self-reported GPA and student perceptions on statements 2 (exam questions allow me to
include critical analysis) and 3 (I prefer to have non-marked small quizzes to aid my performance); the p-value was (p= 0.884 and 0.133), respectively. No relationship was found between majors and students' perceptions of statements 1 (exams are based on the concepts in textbooks), 2 (exam questions allow me to include critical analysis), and 3 (I prefer to have non-marked small quizzes to aid my performance); the p-value was (p= 0.166, 0.210, and 0.794), respectively. Finally, no relationship was found between English as the language of high school instruction and students' perceptions on statement 3 (I prefer to have non-marked small quizzes to aid my performance); the p-value was (p= 0.125).

In summary, the results of Chi-square tests of independence showed that the four statements related to exam perceptions were not significant with respect to the current level of study, gender, nationality, and the type of high school. Furthermore, there was no relationship between self-reported GPA and students' perceptions on statements 2 (exam questions allow me to include critical analysis) and 3 (I prefer to have non-marked small quizzes to aid my performance), and no relationship was found between the major and students' perceptions on statements 1 (exams are based on the concepts in textbooks), 2 (exam questions allow me to include critical analysis) and 3 (I prefer to have non-marked small quizzes to aid my performance). Finally, no relationship was found between English as the language of high school instruction and students' perceptions on statement 3 (I prefer to have non-marked small quizzes to aid my performance). However, major was only significantly associated with statement 4 (exams aid my academic performance). Self-reported GPA was only significantly associated with statement 1 (exams are based on the concepts in textbooks) and 4 (exams aid my academic performance). Also, English as the language of high school instruction was significantly associated with the following statements: exams are
based on the concepts in textbooks, exam questions allow me to include critical analysis, and exams aid my academic performance.

**Students' Overall Perceptions of the Business Program**

**Descriptive Statistics:** 333 students responded to the two statements regarding perceptions of the program overall. The minimum and maximum scores on that scale were 1 and 5 respectively. The average score of the students was 3.7943 with a SD of 0.81248. On average, students tended to agree with the statements related to the perceptions of the business program overall. These statements were intended to ascertain whether students view the business program as being of high quality and reflective of the current trends in business.

**Students' overall perceptions of the program based on demographics**

According to the independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVAs analyses, there were no statistically significant relationships between the perception of the program overall and student major (p= 0.684), year of study (p= 0.492), self-reported GPA (p= 0.198), nationality (p= 0.450), gender (p= 0.628), type of high school attended (p= 0.445) and whether English was used as the language of instruction or not in high school (p= 0.253). The summary results are presented in the tables 14, 15 and 16 (Appendix B).

**The Influence of the Imported Business Curriculum on Students' Perceptions about their Academic Performance**

The first part of the second research question (How might the imported business curriculum influence students' self-perceived academic performance?) that I
investigated was related to understanding how the imported business curriculum influenced students' self-perceived academic performance, and which factors impacted their self-perceived and self-reported performance. I divided this question into the following four sub-sections: 1) students' self-perceptions about the influence of the curriculum on their academic performance (to determine if students believed that each of the four factors of the curriculum: British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods used by tutors, TMAs, and exams aided their academic performance); 2) the relationship between students’ self-perceived and self-reported GPA; 3) the predicted impact of each of the four factors of the curriculum on students' self-perceived academic performance; and 4) the predicted impact of each of the four factors of the curriculum on students' self-reported GPA.

*Students’ Perspectives about the Influence of the Curriculum on their Academic Performance*

To determine the influence of each of the four factors of the curriculum—British textbooks, instructional learning, TMAs, and exams on students' self-perceived academic performance— I selected all the statements related to students' perceptions of their self-perceived academic performance from the questionnaire (see Appendix A) (British textbooks aided my academic performance, learning activities and instructional methods aided my academic performance, TMA aided my academic performance, and the exams and evaluation methods aided my academic performance). Subsequently, I ran frequency tables and one-sample t-test with 3 as a test value to evaluate if students tended to believe that the aforementioned curriculum factors supported their academic performance. The results are represented in the following sections.
students responded to the following statement: British textbooks and course materials aid my academic performance. The frequency results showed a high level of agreement among students who tended to believe that the British textbooks and course materials aided their self-perceived academic performance. 22% (73) strongly agreed, and 47.3% (157) agreed with this statement. In comparison, 23.8% (79) had neutral responses, 4.2% (14) disagreed and 2.7% (9) strongly disagreed.

A one-sample t-test with 3 as a test value was conducted on students' self-perceived academic performance to evaluate whether students tended to believe that British textbooks aided their self-perceived academic performance. With alpha set at .05, the one-sample t-test was significant, t(331)=16.235, p<.001, indicating that students tended to agree that British textbooks aided their self-perceived academic performance (M=3.82, SD= .92).

Learning Activities and Instructional Methods and Students' Self-Perceived Academic Performance: 333 students responded to the following statement: learning activities and instructional methods aided my academic performance. The frequency result showed high a level of agreement among students who tended to believe that tutors' learning activities and instructional methods aided their academic performance. 18.3% (61) strongly agreed, and 44.1% (147) agreed with this statement. 26.4% (88) had neutral responses, 8.4% (28) disagreed and 2.7% (9) strongly disagreed.

A one-sample t-test with 3 as a test value was conducted on students' self-perceived academic performance to evaluate whether students believed that learning activities and instructional methods aided their academic performance. With an alpha set at .05, the one-sample t-test was significant, t(332)=12.736, p<.001, indicating that
students tended to agree that learning activities and instructional methods aided their academic performance (M=3.67, SD=.96).

**Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) and Students' Self-Perceived Academic Performance:** 333 students responded to the following statement: TMA aided my academic performance. The frequency result showed a high level of agreement among students who believed that TMAs aided their academic performance. 24% (80) strongly agreed, and 40.8% (136) agreed that TMAs aided their self-perceived academic performance. 22.2% (74) had neutral responses, 9% (30) disagreed and 3.9% (13) strongly disagreed.

A one-sample t-test with 3 as a test value was conducted on students' self-perceived academic performance to evaluate whether students believed that TMAs aided their academic performance. With alpha set at .05, the one-sample t-test was significant, t(332)=12.543, p<.001, indicating that the students tended to agree that TMAs aided their academic performance (M=3.72, SD=1.05).

**Exams and Evaluation Methods and Students' Self-Perceived Academic Performance:** 332 students responded to the following statement: the exams and evaluation methods aided my academic performance. The frequency result showed a high level of agreement among students who believed that the exams and other evaluation methods aided their academic performance. 18.4% (61) strongly agreed, and 50.9% (169) agreed with this statement. 22.3% (74) had neutral responses, 5.7% (19) disagreed and 2.7% (9) strongly disagreed.

A one-sample t-test with 3 as a test value was conducted on students' self-perceived academic performance to evaluate whether students believed that the exams aided their academic performance. With alpha set at .05, the one-sample t-test was
significant, t(331) = 15.331, p<.001, indicating that students tended to agree that the exams aided their academic performance (M=3.77, SD=.91).

In summary, students were more likely to believe that the four factors of the imported business curriculum (British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods used by tutors, the TMAs, and the exams) aided their academic performance. Students' responses were almost the same among the four curriculum factors. Table 17 (Appendix B) presents the summary of the previous results.

The Relationship between whether Students believe the Curriculum Components aid their Academic Performance and their Actual Performance (self-reported GPAs)

A Kendall's tau-b correlation was run to determine the relationship between students’ self-reported GPAs and the level to which they perceived that 1) British textbooks, 2) learning activities and instructional methods, 3) TMAs, and 4) exams aided their academic performance. Kendall's Tau B correlation was used because it suits this type of ordinal analysis. The Kendall's tau-b correlations were as follows: (τb = .210, p = .001), (τb = .170, p = .001), and (τb = .196, p = .001) respectively. This indicates that Kendall's tau-b correlations were statistically significant, and that there were slight positive correlations between the perceived influence of British textbooks, TMAs, and exams and students' self-reported GPAs. However, there was a negligible positive correlation between the perceived influence of learning activities and instructional methods and students' self-reported GPA. Kendall's tau-b correlation was not statistically significant (τb = .035, p = .459).

In summary, there were very slight correlations between how students perceived the influence of each of the four curriculum factors on their academic
performance and their self-reported GPAs. However, it can be concluded that students tended to believe that: British textbooks (with an agreement of 69.3% of the students who strongly agreed and agreed), learning activities and instructional methods used by their tutors (with an agreement of 66.5% of the students who strongly agreed and agreed), TMAs (with an agreement of 64.8% of the students who strongly agreed and agreed) and exams (with an agreement of 69.3% of the students who strongly agreed and agreed) aided their academic performance in their business courses. Most of the responses were concentrated around the levels of strongly agree, agree, and neutral, with few students who tended to disagree or strongly disagree.

Students’ Perceptions about Curriculum Factors and Self-Perceived Academic Performance

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how perceptions about the curriculum factors: British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods used by tutors, the TMAs, and the exams predicted students' self-perceived academic performance. The predictors were the total score for each one of the following student perceptions: British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, TMAs, and the following statements related to exams: exams are based on the concepts and theories in the textbooks, exam questions allow me to include critical analysis, I prefer to have non-marked quizzes. The criterion variable was the total score of students' perceptions of the curriculum on their self-perceived academic performance represented by the following statements: (British textbooks aided my academic performance, learning activities and instructional methods aided my academic performance, TMA aided my academic performance, and the exams and evaluation methods aided my academic performance).
The results of the multiple regression indicated that 78% of the variance in the dependent variables was related to the set of predictors ($R^2=.78$). The British textbooks significantly predicted students' self-perceived academic performance ($\beta = .29$, $p<.01$), as did learning activities and instructional methods ($\beta = .34$, $p<.01$), and TMAs ($\beta = .41$, $p<.01$). The multiple regression results showed that among the 4 variables, students' perceptions of TMAs was the strongest predictor of the students' self-perceived academic performance.

**The Relationship between Students’ Perceptions about Curriculum Factors and Self-Reported GPA**

An ordinal regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how students’ perceptions about the curriculum factors: British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods used by tutors, the TMAs, and the exams predicted students' self-reported GPA. The predictors were the total score for each one of the following student perceptions: the British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, TMAs, and the following statements related to exams: exams are based on the concepts and theories in the textbooks, exam questions allow me to include critical analysis, I prefer to have non-marked quizzes. The criterion variable was the self-reported GPA (measured on a 4-point ordinal scale).

The results of the ordinal regression showed relatively small pseudo $R^2$ values (Nagelkerke = 15%), indicating that there was no strong relationship among the predictors and the outcome variable. The self-reported GPA was significantly predicted based on perceptions of British textbooks, exam statement 1 (exams are based on the concepts and theories in the textbooks), and exam statement 2 (exam questions allow me to include critical analysis) ($p<.001$, $p=.030$, and $p=.034$ respectively). The ordinal regression results showed a positive relationship between
British textbook perception (parameter estimate = .80), and the self-reported GPA. This indicates that the higher the student’s perception of the British textbook the better their self-reported GPA.

A positive relationship also exists between exam perception statement 1 (exams are based on the concepts and theories in the textbooks) (parameter estimate = .33), and students’ self-reported GPAs. This indicates that the more students agreed with this statement the better they performed academically. However, a negative relationship exists between exam perception statement 2 (exam questions allow me to include critical analysis) (parameter estimate = -.24), and students self-reported GPAs; the more students agreed with this statement the worse they believed they performed academically.

The Impact of the Imported Business Curriculum on Students' Self-Perceived Personal and Professional Growth

The second part of the second research question (How might the imported business contribute to their self-perceived personal and professional growth?) that I investigated was related to determining the contribution of the imported business curriculum on students' self-perceived personal and professional growth. I divided it into two parts: 1) the skills that students perceived themselves as gaining from the business program, and 2) the skills that students perceived themselves as gaining based on their demographics. Descriptive statistics were run for part (1), and independent samples t-tests for demographics with two categories; and one-way ANOVA for demographics with three and more categories were run for part (2).
Students' Perceptions about Skills gained from the Business Program

Descriptive Statistics: 332 students responded to the seven statements related to the skills that students perceived themselves as gaining from the business program. These statements were intended to ascertain whether students gained communication, intellectual and personal skills from the business program (see Appendix A). The scale ranged from very much, to quite a bit, somewhat, and very little. The minimum and maximum scores on that scale were 1 and 4 respectively. The average score of the students was 3.1766 with a SD of 0.59055. Students tended to respond, “quite a bit” across categories.

Students' perceptions about the gained skills based on demographics

To investigate whether there was a relationship between the skills that students perceived themselves as gaining from the business program and their demographic status, an independent samples t-tests was used for demographics with two categories (current level of study, nationality, gender, type of high school, and English as language of instruction), while one-way ANOVAs were performed for demographics with 3 or more categories (major and self-reported GPA).

The results of ANOVAs analyses were as follows:

According to the one-way ANOVAs analyses, there was no statistically significant relationship between the skills that students perceived themselves as gaining from the business program and the independent variables of student major and self-reported GPA. The results of the ANOVAs were (F(4.325) = 1.009, p=.403) for the major, and (F(3.328) = 2.504, p=.059) for the self-reported GPA. This indicates that the means across the population of students from different majors and self-reported GPA levels were the same regarding the perception of the skills that students
perceived themselves as gaining from the business program. The results are presented in the tables 18 and 19 (Appendix B).

**The results of independent samples t-tests analyses were as follows:**

According to the independent samples t-tests analyses, there was no statistically significant relationship between the skills that students perceived themselves as gaining from the business program, and current level of study \((p=0.233)\), nationality \((p=0.240)\), gender \((p=0.908)\), type of high school attended \((p=0.887)\), and whether English was the language of instruction in High School or not \((p=0.338)\). This indicates that the average perception of the skills that students perceived themselves as gaining from the business program was not related to students' demographic status. The results are presented in table 20 (Appendix B).

**Student's Overall Evaluation of the Business Program**

Students' overall evaluation of the program was divided into two statements. The first statement focused on students' evaluation of their educational experiences with the British courses as a whole. The second statement aimed to know whether, if students could start over again their studies, they would choose to go through the program again (see Appendix A). A frequency analysis and a Chi-square test of goodness of fit were run to investigate students' evaluation of these two statements; the results of the analyses were as follows:

**Students' Evaluation of the Entire Education Experience**

**Frequency analysis:** 332 students responded to the following statement: how would you evaluate your entire educational experience of the British courses related to your specialization? by indicating the degree of evaluation, ranging as follows: poor, fair, good, and excellent. 57.2% (190 students) of the respondents evaluated
their experience as "good"; 28.3% (94 students) stated that their entire educational experience of the British courses was “excellent”; 13.6% (45 students) had a “fair” experience and 0.9% (3 students) had a “poor” experience. The minimum and maximum scores on this item were 1 and 4 respectively. The average score was 3.13 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.663. Students tended to respond, "good" with respect to their entire educational experiences with the business program.

**Chi-square test of goodness of fit:** A one-sample chi-square test was conducted to evaluate students' entire educational experiences with the British courses. The result of the test was significant; $X^2 (3, N=332) = 233.904, p< .001$. More than expected, students were likely to evaluate their entire experience as “good” and “excellent”. The results are presented in table 21 (Appendix B).

**Would Students take the Program again if given the Choice?**

**Frequency analysis:** 332 students responded to the following statement: if you could start over again, would you choose to take the British courses designed by OU-UK and delivered at AOU? by indicating their choices, ranging as follows: “definitely no”; “probably no”; “probably yes”; “definitely yes”. 40.1% (133 students) stated that they would “definitely yes” take the British curriculum if given the choice again; 39.2% (130 students) stated that they would “probably” choose to do it again; 16.3% (54 students) would “probably not” choose to; and 4.5% (15 students) would “definitely not” choose to take it again. The minimum and maximum scores on this item were 1 and 4 respectively. The average score was 3.15, with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.851. Students tended respond, “definitely yes” if given the choice to take the program again.
Chi-square test of goodness of fit: A one-sample chi-square test was conducted to ascertain whether students would choose the retake the British curriculum if given the choice. The result of the test was significant; \( X^2 (3, N=332) = 122.578, p< .001. \) According to the test more than expected, students tended to favor retaking the designed British curriculum delivered at AOU if given the choice, according to the test. The result is presented in the table 22 (Appendix B).

In summary, according to the previous tests, students tended to evaluate their entire experience as good and excellent and tended to favor retaking the designed British curriculum delivered at AOU if given the choice more than predicted.

Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I presented the findings of the quantitative data analysis from student participants’ questionnaire responses. The chapter presented the preliminary and primary analyses of the data based on the research questions.

This chapter aimed to investigate students' perceptions of the imported curriculum, and the influence of the curriculum on their self-perceived academic performance and personal and professional growth, as they perceived it. This chapter highlighted students' perception of each component of the imported curriculum: British textbook, learning activities and instructional methods, TMA, and exams as related to students' demographics, to understand whether or how various demographic factors were correlated with their perceptions of the imported curriculum. Moreover, this chapter demonstrated the relationship between whether students believe the curriculum components aid their academic performance and their actual performance (self-reported GPAs). Furthermore, this chapter tested students’ perceptions about the
curriculum factors on students' self-perceived academic performance and self-reported GPAs.

The primary findings of the quantitative data, as related to students' perception of the imported curriculum, demonstrate that on average students tended to agree with the statements related to British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, TMAs, and the exams.

With respect to students' demographics, English as the language of instruction in high school was the mutual significant criterion that affected students' perceptions of the imported curriculum.

Further analysis showed that on average, students tended to believe that the business program developed their self-perceived personal and professional skills "quite a bit". However, there was no relationship between students' perceptions of the skills gained from the business program and their demographic status.

In terms of the influence of the imported curriculum on students' self-perceived academic performance, the results demonstrated that students tended to believe that all four components of the imported curriculum (British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, TMAs, and exams) had aided their academic performance. However, the results showed very slight correlations between the attributed value of the components on students' self-perceived academic performance and students’ self-reported GPAs.

Finally, *apropos* the students’ perceived value of the curriculum factors on their academic performance and self-reported GPA, the tests demonstrated that students attributed the most value to TMAs as having a positive influence on their academic performance, and the level of value attributed to the textbook was the strongest predictor of students' self-reported GPA.
Overall, students across all demographic attributes found the imported business curriculum useful. Moreover, students tended to evaluate their entire educational experience as “good” and “excellent”; they also tended to say that they would choose to retake the designed British curriculum delivered at AOU if they were given a choice.

Coupled with the findings from the quantitative analysis, the qualitative findings from students and faculty members will illuminate the data about students’ perceptions of the imported curriculum. As well, the juxtaposed qualitative and quantitative findings will demonstrate whether any recontextualization of the imported curriculum had taken place, either as designed or as implemented, in order to promote students’ academic experience of the imported curriculum. Next, I present the qualitative findings from student interviews.
Chapter 7: Student Interview Findings

This chapter examines findings from sixteen student interviews, documenting their experiences with the imported curriculum to answer the main research question: What are university faculty members’ and students’ experiences with the Western business curriculum at the Arab Open University (AOU) in Kuwait?

The chapter starts by introducing the profile of each student. This profile provides information related to students' nationalities, their major reasons for registering in the business program in particular and AOU in general, their overall experiences with the imported curriculum, perceptions about their Grade Point Average (GPA), and lastly, if they would reconsider AOU for their Bachelor studies.

Following the students' profiles, I present the findings on the student interview data. This part is subdivided into the following sections based on the students' responses to each of the following research questions:

1) How did students experience the imported curriculum and its four components (the materials, the activities and instructional methods, the TMAs and the exams)?
2) How did the imported business curriculum influence students’ self-perceived academic performance and contribute to their self-perceived personal and professional growth?

In each section, the themes and subthemes of the findings are listed, followed by an overview of students' responses. The chapter concludes with the proposed modifications and necessary changes to the program, as drawn from students' perspectives.
Profiles of Student Interview Participants

The table below provides an overview of students’ profiles, based on the following five characteristics: gender, nationality, major of specialization, the language of instruction, self-reported GPA, and age. A brief bio of each participant is also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Major of specialization</th>
<th>Type of School/Language of instruction</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<td>~23</td>
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<td>Syrian</td>
<td>Systems</td>
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<td>~30</td>
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<td>~23</td>
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<td>~20</td>
</tr>
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<td>Management</td>
<td>Private/Arabic</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>~20</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.04</td>
<td>~30</td>
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<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Private/Arabic</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>~20</td>
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Mona (~23 years old) is a Kuwaiti female student. She attended public school in Kuwait where Arabic was used as the language of instruction and English was taught as a second language. Mona is a third-year management specialty student. Her GPA is below (2). Mona chose the business program because she likes it and she is willing to work in that field. She chose AOU because it offers a dual degree and flexible schedule allowing for study and work. Mona said that she found some difficulties with the textbooks because the textbooks did not reflect and include examples from her local environment. Regardless of this difficulty, Mona had a good experience because she gained international knowledge from the textbooks. Mona
recommends AOU for prospective students, especially those who already are working and willing to continue their studies.

**Nada** (~30 years old) is a Syrian female student. She attended private school in Kuwait where Arabic was used as the language of instruction and English taught as a second language. Nada is a third-year system specialty student. Her GPA is low (2). Nada chose the business program because she developed this passion from her previous work as a secretary and wanted to work in the same field after graduation. She chose AOU for several reasons. It offers her an opportunity to pursue studies in an undergraduate program seven years after graduating from high school. AOU is the only university in Kuwait that accepts students regardless of their age and when they obtained their high school diploma. It offers a dual degree; according to Nada, this gives her more opportunities for employment. Her classmates from high school recommended AOU for her because, as they said, it is a good university due to its blended learning system. Nada is happy with being a university student. She feels engaged with the program, and has had a good educational experience, but she suggested some modifications regarding textbooks. Nada recommended AOU to her sister, and she will recommend AOU to prospective students, especially for those who had graduated from high school a long time ago, as it provides them a chance to achieve their academic dreams.

**Mazen** (~30 years old) is a Kuwaiti male student. He attended public school in Kuwait where Arabic was used as the language of instruction and English was taught as a second language. Mazen is a second year management specialty student. His GPA is low (2.1). Mazen chose the business program because business studies help him in his work. He chose AOU because the attendance policy fits with his work schedule (AOU offers tutorials during weekends). Mazen is not entirely satisfied with
his academic experience at AOU, as according to him, some modifications need to be made. In particular, he recommended modifications to textbooks, and training for tutors to prevent students from using private institutions to improve their GPAs.

Mazen recommends AOU to his friends because it is the only university suitable for working students and because it is a good university with a high academic standard.

**Mariam** (~23 years old) is a Lebanese female student. She was born and raised in Kuwait. She attended private school in Kuwait where Arabic was the language of instruction and English was taught as a second language. Mariam is a fourth year marketing specialty student. Her GPA is low (2.3). Mariam chose the business program and would like to work in the marketing and advertising field after graduation. She chose AOU for several reasons: 1) It was the only affordable option, as AOU tuition is lower than at other private universities; 2) she would rather not study in Lebanon due to the unstable political situation; and 3) the AOU course schedule is flexible, allowing her to work and study at the same time. Mariam felt disengaged and has had a bad academic experience with the imported curriculum. The disengagement and the bad educational experience negatively affected her academic performance. She attends a private institution to improve her GPA. Mariam would not choose to select AOU again if she had the option. She prefers to attend a traditional university that provides academic and practical experience. She does not recommend AOU to prospective students.

**Ali** (~20 years old) is a Lebanese male student. He attended private school in Kuwait where Arabic was the language of instruction and English was taught as a second language. Ali is a third-year management specialty student. His GPA is low (2.5). Ali chose the business program because he likes working in the business and management field. He feels it fits with his personality. He is a sociable person;
according to him, this type of personality is important for dealing in business. Ali chose AOU for several reasons: 1) Tuition fees are cheaper than those of other private universities; and 2) the schedule is flexible, allowing him to work and study at the same time. Ali is not used to the educational system at AOU where learning depends more on students' preparation than on tutors' explanation. This new educational system is a challenge for him because each week instructors explain new chapters; it is hard for him to absorb what has been taught in two hours. In general, Ali had a good experience with the imported curriculum to a certain extent, but he prefers to have some modifications to the curriculum to enhance his academic experience and performance. Ali stated that he would choose the AOU again due to the high academic standard of the business program, and the international knowledge it offers.

Afif (~20 years old) is a Palestinian male student. He attended a private school in Kuwait where Arabic was the language of instruction and English was taught as a second language. Afif is a third-year management specialty student. His GPA is considered low to medium (2.9). Afif chose the business program because he can apply this knowledge to, and have work opportunities within, any sector. He wanted to study law, but this specialization is only available for Kuwaiti students. Afif chose AOU because it accepts students from different nationalities and its tuition fees are lower than at other private universities in Kuwait. Afif is satisfied with the imported business curriculum at the design level, but does not feel he is gaining the required knowledge. He believes that students can develop their intellectual, personal and professional skills only when the tutors are well versed in the imported curriculum at the implementation level. Afif is looking for both quality educational and personal experiences. In Afif’s opinion, tutors should adopt new ways of teaching, such as interactive learning and student-centred approaches to help students not only
understand and engage with the materials, but also to gain the personal, intellectual
and professional skills needed in the workplace. If given the choice to attend AOU
again, he would only do so if major changes were made at the implementation level.

**Walid** (~30 years old) is a Kuwaiti male student. He attended a public school
in Kuwait where Arabic was the language of instruction and English was taught as a
second language. Walid is a third-year accounting specialty student. His GPA is good
(3.04). Walid chose AOU for two main reasons: 1) Tuition fees are cheaper than at
other private universities; and 2) the course schedule is flexible, allowing him to work
and study. He chose the business program because he had a diploma in accounting
and works in an accounting department. He wants to continue his education in this
field. Walid feels engaged with the imported business curriculum. He welcomes the
challenge of learning difficult subjects. However, Walid suggested that more activities
be added to the curriculum, and that tutors be provided with professional development
to learn how to run interactive tutorials to foster academic experience and
performance. Walid said that he would choose AOU again and he has recommended
AOU to his friends.

**Omar** (~30 years old) is a Bangladeshi male student. He was born and raised
in Bangladesh. He attended a public high school where the language of instruction
was Bengali and English was taught as a second language. Omar is in his final year in
the accounting specialty. His GPA is good (3.38). He chose the business program to
get promoted in his job, and to help him in the future when he has his own business.
He chose AOU because: 1) he can afford the tuition fees; 2) the course schedule is
flexible; and 3) getting two degrees will help him continue his study abroad. Omar
feels engaged with the imported business curriculum; as a Bangladeshi, he is more
familiar with international than local experiences. However, he is facing problems in
his current job due to some contradictions between course content and work contexts. Regarding curriculum adaptation, Omar feels that an adjustment should take place in the current curriculum. At the same time, he thinks adaptation at the planning level (course content) should be limited to preserve the value of the AOU degree. Omar would choose to study at AOU again and would recommend it to others, as the imported business curriculum is considered to be of a high standard in comparison to the curricula offered at other universities in Kuwait.

**Manal** (~20 years old) is a Syrian female student. She attended a British private school in Kuwait where English was the language of instruction. Even though Manal is in her second-year, she was able to get credit for previous English courses. Her GPA is good (3.42). Manal chose the business program because she likes this specialization. She chose AOU because: 1) she is familiar with the British system; 2) the attendance policy is flexible and gives her a chance to work part-time; and 3) getting a double degree gives her an advantage in finding a good job while continuing her studies in Britain. Manal feels a little disengaged with the imported business curriculum, especially the textbooks; she studies only to pass the exam as the imported curriculum does not reflect the local environment. Her familiarity with the British system and her language competence contribute to her academic success. To a certain extent, attending a British high school provided a firm transitional bridge for Manal to excel at the university level.

**Farida** (~25 years old) is a Pakistani female student. She attended a private international school in Kuwait where English was the language of instruction. Farida is a third-year accounting specialty student. Her GPA is good to high (3.6). She chose the business program because she likes to work in the business field. Farida chose AOU for the following reasons: 1) it was the only affordable option for her; 2) she can
get a dual degree from an accredited university which will help her to pursue a Master
degree abroad; and 3) AOU offers a flexible schedule allowing her to work and study.
Farida feels engaged with the imported business curriculum, and she has had a good
academic experience. However, she made some suggestions concerning
modifications, not only at the implementation level but also at the planning level. If
enacted, she feels students would engage with the imported curriculum more, and
their academic experience and performance would be enhanced. Farida recommended
AOU to friends, and she would choose AOU again.

**Wafaa** (~25 years old) is a Lebanese female student. She attended a private
school in Kuwait where Arabic was the language of instruction and English was
taught as a second language. Wafaa is a fourth-year management specialty student.
Her GPA is good to high (3.6). Wafaa chose the business program to get promoted at
her work. She chose AOU due to the flexible attendance policy. Wafaa feels engaged
with the imported business curriculum regardless of the lack of local representation
especially in textbooks; she welcomed this new global knowledge to widen her
business perspective. The curriculum and some tutors inspired Wafaa; she has the
passion and interest to continue her Master degree in business. To make the most of
the imported curriculum however, Wafaa suggested that some modifications must be
made at the design level as well as in the delivery process. While Wafaa did not like
AOU in the beginning of her studies, she is currently satisfied with the curriculum as
she considers it strong in comparison to those offered at other universities. She
recommended AOU to friends and would choose to attend AOU again.

**Azza** (~25 years old), is a female student from Sri Lanka. She was born and
raised in Kuwait. She attended a private international school in Kuwait where English
was the language of instruction. Azza is a third-year accounting specialty student.
GPA is considered good to high (3.64). After high school, she could not go back to her country to pursue her university studies. She chose AOU for several reasons: 1) it is less expensive than the other universities; 2) the dual degrees from AOU are accredited; and 3) her friend from high school recommended AOU. She chose the business program because she studied commerce and accounting in high school; she decided to do her bachelor degree in this discipline because she liked it. Azza was to some extent engaged and satisfied with the curriculum as she welcomed the international knowledge, but she is also looking for more local content to upgrade her knowledge. While the imported curriculum contributes positively to her academic success, it contributes less to her overall educational experience as it lacks practical aspects. At the planning level (textbooks), she likes to have some adaptation while preserving the same standard of the curriculum. She recommended AOU to one friend from her high school, and would definitely choose AOU again. She stated, "I think I will not find any other place in this country that gives me what I need more than this."

**Samer** (~20 years old) is an Indian male student. He attended a private Indian school in Kuwait where English was the language of instruction. A first-year management specialty student, he received credits for some courses due to his high school education. His GPA is considered good to high (3.67). Samer chose AOU for several reasons: 1) it is less expensive than other private universities; and 2) it offers dual degrees ("it is like studying and getting a degree from Britain without leaving the country; this is a good thing"). He chose the business program because his high school major was commerce and business. Samer felt to a certain extent engaged with the imported business curriculum, and he became more knowledgeable about international issues due to the knowledge provided in textbooks. He recommended
making some modifications to the current imported curriculum to represent local and global contexts to gain knowledge of both.

**Maya** (~20 years old) is an Egyptian female student. She attended a private school in Kuwait where Arabic was the language of instruction. Maya is a second year management specialty student. Her GPA is considered good (3.8). She chose AOU for several reasons: 1) it is less expensive than other universities; and 2) she will get double degrees. She chose the business because she likes this specialization. Maya felt satisfied and engaged with the imported business curriculum. She welcomes learning new knowledge from an international perspective. However, Maya suggested some modifications must be done to the curriculum to increase her engagement and to foster her academic experience and performance. Maya has had a good academic experience; she considers herself more educated in business now than before entering AOU. She would definitely choose AOU again, and would recommend it to other students.

**Dalal** (~40 years old) is a Lebanese female student. She attended a private school in Lebanon where French was the language of instruction. Dalal is a fourth-year management specialty student. Her GPA is considered very high (3.89). She chose AOU for two reasons: 1) the program is not expensive in comparison with other private universities; 2) the program schedule is flexible, especially for someone who works. She works in a private company as a commercial director. Her decision to continue her studies was based on personal challenge and professional development. As a team leader, she must have a university degree as the Kuwaiti market is becoming very competitive; employers prefer those having an academic degree regardless of years of working experiences. Dalal felt satisfied and engaged with the imported business curriculum, in particular with the courses that relate to her
professional experience; this engagement helped her in improving and developing behavioral and professional growth, as well widening her way of thinking. She suggested redesigning the imported curriculum and replacing some theoretical courses with practical ones. In general, Dalal has had a good academic experience at AOU, and her academic performance is high. She said that she would choose AOU again. She would make this choice not because she has had a good academic experience, but because it is the only option for her.

Asma (~20 years old) is a Lebanese female student. She attended a private school in Kuwait where Arabic was the language of instruction and English was taught as a second language. Asma is a third-year marketing student. Her GPA is considered very high (3.91). She received a government scholarship to study at AOU based on her high GPA at high school. She chose the business program as it was: 1) recommended to her by her sister who graduated from the business program as well; 2) she likes business; and 3) she wants to pursue a Master degree in business studies. The curriculum does not reflect her local environment, but she feels that she is engaged with the curriculum as she likes learning something different and new. Asma wants to study an international perspective, but also prefers to have some modification to the imported curriculum to reflect the local environment she lives and works. Asma is satisfied with the imported curriculum. She would choose AOU again and would recommend it to prospective students.

In summary, the interview sample contained 16 students with an average age of 25 years. These 16 students (seven female and six male) had diverse self-reported GPAs: four students (three females and one male) with very low self-reported GPA; two male students with medium-low self-reported GPAs; six students (four females and two males) with medium-high self-reported GPAs; and four students (three
females and one male) with very high self-reported GPAs. They are diverse in nationalities (three Kuwaitis and 13 expatriate students from different nationalities; eleven attended private schools in Kuwait and two attended schools in their country of origin—Bangladesh and Lebanon); and they were from diverse majors (nine management, two marketing, one systems, four accounting). This sample included students with and without working experience; and with different languages of instruction in high school: eleven students graduated from high school where Arabic was used as the language of instruction, four students graduated from high school where English was used as the language of instruction, and one student where French was used as the language of instruction.

In general, thirteen out of the sixteen interviewed students had to a certain extent good experience with the imported curriculum; twelve out of the sixteen interviewed students stated explicitly that they would choose again the Arab Open University. However, they offered suggestions for the design and implementation of the curriculum to improve their academic experiences and their GPAs.

The following section presents the findings on the questions regarding how students experienced the imported curriculum as designed and as implemented.

**Findings in Relation to the Research Questions**

*How did students experience the imported business curriculum?*

This question is divided into two sections. The first section deals with students' perceptions of the imported curriculum as designed to shed light on students' experience with the four facets of the curriculum; and the second section deals with students' perceptions of the imported curriculum as implemented, to highlight the role of the faculty members (tutors) in the implementation process.
Curriculum Experience as Designed

This section was divided into four sub-questions to cover students' perceptions of the following aspects of the imported curriculum: British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs), and exams.

Students' Perceptions of British Textbooks

Five themes emerged from perceptions of British textbooks: 1) course content and relevancy; 2) gaining new knowledge from textbooks; 3) students' representation in textbooks; 4) content difficulty; and 5) textbooks reflecting current trends.

Course Content and Relevancy

The student interviewees all commented on the weak connections between textbook content and local relevancy as some types of examples and case studies presented were unfamiliar to them, no local cases from the Arab world were included. Students were familiar with some of these international examples that were applicable to Kuwait, such as the examples about McDonalds. However, textbooks and other program materials did not include practical applications directly relevant to local companies.

Eight students, male and female from different specializations reported different GPAs explained that they welcomed learning and gaining new knowledge being exposed to business concepts and theories from an international perspective because it broadened their global vision and expertise. They found textbooks interesting and positively challenging. They believed that they prepare them for continuing their education abroad and working internationally. In Ali’s words (male Lebanese student; medium low reported GPA; from Arabic private school) mentioned that "I like learning about global examples to keep me updated with the international
market and to know how things are running internationally," Wafaa (female Lebanese student; medium high reported GPA; from Arabic private school), a typical voice whose comment was consistent with the other medium-high GPA students, said:

I think when the textbook presents international examples, we are not engaged, but it gives us broadened and widened examples than the GCC or the Middle East. Books broaden and expand our vision by providing these international examples. I prefer to talk and learn about Ford instead of talking about the agent here in Kuwait, and this is a good experience and knowledge for me.

Furthermore, Wafaa said, "business students have to be open-minded and to be aware and have the passion for learning new knowledge from a different perspective."

Farida (female Pakistani student; medium high reported GPA; from an English private school) welcomed this knowledge because she believed that, "local students have to be exposed internationally and that is what the current textbook/curriculum presents."

The eight other students believed that the disconnect between contexts presented challenges in applying the business concepts. In most cases, they had difficulties applying what they studied in their current jobs. While Ali said he values international curriculum content, "textbooks present Western ideas and concepts in marketing and management. Those concepts cannot be applied, or might be implemented differently, in Kuwait because our domestic environment is dissimilar to the ones [that] exist in the West." As well, Mariam (female Lebanese student; very low reported GPA; from an Arabic private school), declared that she felt that the curriculum and textbooks were irrelevant to her local environment and explained that not every success story in the West could be applied in her environment. She illuminated this point with the following example:

The book gives an example about a successful health care program [that] exits in Europe. The culture in Europe is different from our culture. Therefore, the textbooks have to present successful case studies from the Arab world that match with our environment and values. What is happening in Europe cannot happen here, not every success story in Europe means it will be a success story
also in the Middle East because we have a different culture. It is good to know what is happening outside our worlds but at the same time, we need something more relevant to our backgrounds and mentalities.

Manal (female Syrian student; medium high reported GPA; from an English private school), attributed the irrelevancy of the course content to her lack of motivation to learn beyond the minimum requirements:

Some concepts in Human Resource and management do not apply here. For example, the manager here in Kuwait is not a leader; the concept of leadership is missing here in Kuwait in some organization[s]. We study something different from what is happening in real life; therefore, I study only to pass the exam.

The absence of local examples, and the lack of a relationship between what the students study and their local environments, made understanding the materials difficult for some students, which in turn affected student engagement. Farida commented on this by saying,

It is hard to relate, understanding the concept is much easier when we can refer to some examples that we know. However, if we are not aware of those examples we cannot engage with the materials, so what the textbooks give us are international examples, they talk about global big major companies, but we do not know about them because we are here. So, it is hard to be engaged.

In summary, while the students showed somewhat mixed opinions regarding the relevancy and usefulness of the course content, it is clear that students who found irrelevancy of the materials, regardless of their reported GPAs and any other demographic characteristics, would benefit from better connections to their local environment in addition to international examples.

**Gaining New Knowledge**

Regardless their demographics status, all student interviewees, except for Mariam, said that the absence of local examples did not prevent them from gaining
new knowledge in the business domains, although it would help to include them. For instance, Maya (female management specialty student; very high reported GPA), whose views were reflective of other students who valued international content, said that in spite of the absence of local examples, the textbooks contributed positively to her academic experience and gave her a firm foundation of knowledge concerning concepts and theories in business. Furthermore, Nada said that the textbooks contained much useful information and knowledge. According to Maya and Nada, this served to help them in their personal and professional lives, such providing information on how to start a private business. Maya explained this by saying,

Textbooks give you an insight you feel like you are learning something about the real life. I will keep the textbooks; I might need to re-use them. Textbooks include useful information concerning how to start a new business, and how to conduct interviews; this will help me after graduation.

Mona, a female student, and Mazen, a male student (two Kuwaiti management specialty students; very low reported GPAs), both shared that they gained a lot of business knowledge through the program that has prepared them to start their own businesses.

In summary, the students, except for Mariam, regardless of their demographics status, felt that they gained useful knowledge in the business domains even if the textbooks did not contain local examples.

**Textbook Representation**

A common view amongst interviewees was that the textbooks they used in their business courses were written more for Western students than for those in the Middle East. The lack of local cultural and social representation made the students feel that they were marginalized and not represented in the textbooks. The students
stated that British textbooks are not designed for self-directed learning because it is hard for some of them to understand some of the trends and concepts that relate more to the international culture than the local one. Consequently, students such as Samer, Mazen and Dalal's were not engaged with the textbook. For instance, Samer (male Indian student; very high reported GPA; from an English private school), stated that, "[the textbooks] provide me with the theoretical knowledge, but I do not feel engaged with [them] because they do not present any connection with my local [Kuwaiti] environment." He added, OU textbooks represent only their surroundings, and [the textbooks] are made for their students to match their backgrounds. Obviously, it is their curriculum. However, if they could make efforts to give examples from our environment [it] will be better for us.

Mazen (male Kuwaiti student; very low reported GPA, attended public school), also reported not being engaged with the course material, and this had a negative impact on his learning. Rather than learning it, he resorted to memorization. He explained, I do not feel engaged with the textbooks, because the examples addressed are far from my environment. I have to memorize the material instead of understanding it…I depend on tutor explanation to understand the materials, I only feel engaged when teachers relate the concepts mentioned in textbooks to local examples, only then I get it.

Dalal (female Lebanese student; very high reported GPA; from French private school), affirmed this perspective saying, We [Arabs] are not included in the textbooks; instead we are excluded. However, our tutors include many examples from the Middle East and the local environment, but as a textbook no, it is more international…I feel engaged with some courses; especially the ones related to my work experience; this engagement helped me in improving and developing my behavioral and professional growth.
In summary, some of the students felt strongly about the insufficient local cultural and social representation in their textbooks, and this had negative effects on their school engagement.

**Content Difficulty**

Eight students reported that the content and language in course materials were not challenging for them. One of these students reported a medium low GPA, and had attended Arabic private school in Kuwait. The seven other students reported medium and high GPAs. Four of these seven students had studied in private high schools where the language of instruction was English. One of these four had attended British school and was familiar with the British system. Another of these four students had completed his high school in a public school in Bangladesh where Bengali was the language of instruction. Three students studied in private high school in Kuwait where the language of instruction was Arabic.

The other eight students reported that the content and language of the business course materials were difficult for them. Five of these students reported having very low and medium low GPAs, and three students reported having medium and very high GPAs. One of these eight students completed high school in a private school in Lebanon where the language of instruction was French. Two of these eight students attended public high schools, and five students studied in private high schools; the language of instruction was Arabic for these seven students. The complexity in content and difficulty in language were common challenges among the eight students, regardless of their GPA. However, the three students reporting medium and very high GPAs welcomed this complexity and high English language level.
By complexity in content, students meant that textbooks were full of information, concepts and theories; by language difficulty, students meant that they faced difficulty in understanding the written English, and experienced unfamiliarity with some technical wording. According to these students, the textbooks are not designed for self-directed learning. Consequently, they depended on tutors' explanations, which made the textbooks more accessible to them. Asma (female Lebanese student; very high reported GPA, from an Arabic private school), a typical voice of students who reported medium high and very high GPA who found the course content to be difficult, so she found it helpful to have the tutors explain the concepts well in class. In her words, "to read alone it is a little bit confusing because there is much information. However, when the tutor explains the lesson it becomes easy for me to understand it. Without teachers' explanation it is hard to prepare and study the materials by myself."

Mariam’s views were reflective of the other students who reported very low and medium GPAs. She felt that the advanced level of the course content was difficult to overcome. As she explained,

I feel that textbooks need someone with a high level of academic background to read and understand. The contents are not easy to be absorbed. The books contain a lot of information, and there is no clarity in presenting the information. Books are not adapted to the language skills of the students in Kuwait, for me, the content is too complex to comprehend it is beyond my capability.

On the other hand, the eight other students who did not have the same level of difficulty regarding the content or the English language said that they welcomed this advanced level of learning. They considered it as an opportunity to advance their English language, as well their knowledge. When asked about the content difficulty, Maya (female Egyptian student; very high reported GPA; from an Arabic private
school), whose views were representative of the other students who had high GPAs and similar school backgrounds, said, "content is not challenging, but too much to be covered in a particular time. Content level is appropriate for a university student. For me, technical and linguistic challenges are opportunities for me to learn and upgrade my knowledge."

Afif was the only student reporting a medium-low GPA who acknowledged that the level of difficulty in the textbook and course materials was high, but that it was still at a manageable level.

In summary, the interviewed students were evenly divided between two groups. The first group including eight students (seven reported having medium and high GPAs, and one student with medium low reported GPA) stated that content and language in the course materials were not challenging for them. The second group, also including eight students (five students reported having very low and medium-low GPAs, and three students reported having medium and very high GPAs) stated that the content and language of the business course materials were difficult for them and that textbooks are not designed for self-directed learning. However, three of these students (reporting medium and very high GPAs) welcomed this complexity and difficulty in language. Among these sixteen interviewed students, five with low and medium low GPAs attended Arabic schools had difficulties with the content and language. Of the students who reported medium-high and very high GPAs, regardless the type of school they attended and the language of instruction, they either did not find difficulty in the content or they welcomed this difficulty. Thus, the two main factors for students having difficulties with the content and language were: lower reported GPAs; and having Arabic as their language of instruction in high school.
To overcome content and language difficulties, some students used different strategies, such as depending on tutors' explanations, studying from the slides prepared by tutors instead of textbooks, and attending private institutions. These strategies will be discussed later in the chapter.

Textbooks Reflecting Current Trends

Students' opinions were divided between 1) those who felt that textbooks do not reflect the current trends; and 2) those who felt they do. In the first group, there were six students with mixed GPA levels (one reported very high GPA, three reported medium high GPAs, one reported medium low GPA, and one reported very low GPA) who were all currently working. Dalal and Wafa (two female management specialty students; very high reported GPA and medium high GPA), for instance, felt that some examples in textbooks needed to be updated to reflect the latest developments in technology. Likewise, Mariam (female marketing specialty student; very low reported GPA), said that the textbooks contained outdated information that does not reflect the recent business concept in marketing. As she explained,

The 4Ps that we study at AOU becomes an old version. I attended a lecture outside AOU, in a conference, and they mentioned that the 4Ps includes different Ps than the old one. It becomes 7Ps. We at AOU are still learning the old way of marketing that used in the 80s and 90s.

In the second group (students who felt that the textbooks do reflect the current trends), there were ten students with mixed self-reported GPA levels (three reported very high GPAs, two reported medium high GPAs, one reported medium low GPA, and three reported very low GPAs) and most were not working at the time. For instance, Maya (female management specialty student; very high reported GPA), a typical voice for non-working students, felt that the curriculum was up to date and
that textbooks reflected some new trends in business. She said, "it does reflect, for example now it is very popular the Instagram businesses and online businesses, and we did take topics about this in several classes." Asma was in agreement with this view, saying, "the curriculum is updated; they changed even several books from when I started till now."

Walid, and Mazen who work in the accounting and petroleum sectors respectively, felt that that in general, the curriculum and textbooks do reflect the current trends in business. However, Walid felt the accounting curriculum was an exception, as it does not reflect the accounting system in Kuwait.

In summary, the interviewed students were divided into two groups. The common element between the two groups seems to be whether or not the students were working. The students who were working at the time did not feel that the textbooks reflected the current trends in the business field. The other group of students was not currently working (other than two students) they felt that the textbooks did reflect the current trends.

Thus, the students' perceptions of textbooks confirmed that regardless of their self-reported GPAs and any other demographic characteristics, the students believed that they are not adequately represented in textbooks due to the lack of cultural and social connections and the lack of local examples from students' backgrounds. This made students feel disconnected to the textbooks’ contents. In spite of this disconnect, all students, except for one student, felt that they gained new knowledge in the business field, and some of those students welcomed learning the international business perspectives. With respect to the content and language difficulty, eleven students who overall had higher reported GPAs welcomed this difficulty regardless of
the type of school they attended and the language of instruction. Five students who reported lower GPAs and attended Arabic schools found it difficult to manage the content and language. Finally, regardless of the self-reported GPA levels and the areas of study, students who were working found textbooks do not reflect the current trends in the business field, while, students who currently do not work held the opposite view.

**Students' Perceptions of Learning Activities and Instructional Methods**

Five themes emerged from the interviews related to students' perception of learning activities and instructional methods: 1) lack of activities/practical aspects, 2) delivery methods used by tutors, 3) students' preferred learning styles, 4) students’ perceptions about tutors’ practical knowledge, and 5) challenges facing tutors in class.

**Lack of Activities/Practical Aspects**

The sixteen interviewed students stated that there were no additional activities, such as presentations, group activities, working on projects, or field trips, available in the business classes. However, at the general university level, sometimes workshops were organized with invited guest speakers from the field. Only two students shared that in some business courses, their tutors provided extra activities. The students attributed the lack of activity to the restrictions on class time imposed by the pre-established course calendar that faculty are required to follow. They felt that two hours per lecture session did not allow enough time for extra activities, given the amount of curriculum material they were expected to cover. As Dalal (female management specialty student; very high reported GPA), explained, "tutors stick to the course calendar (chapters and pages that have to be covered in the class), and they have to cover only these chapters. We do not do anything outside the textbooks
because there is not enough time." Maya (female management specialty student; very high reported GPA), summarized students' general understanding about learning activities, saying, "activities are missing from the curriculum, due to delivery process in a blended learning system, no activities other than participation and discussion."

Only two female students, Mona (female management specialty student; very low reported GPA), and Azza (female accounting student; medium high reported GPA), reported having some tutors that provide some activities to practice at home. In Mona’s words, "some tutors in some courses give us activities (small case study) to practice at home to make sure that we did understand what they have explained in class."

This absence of activities, in the students’ opinions, prevents them from gaining practical knowledge from the curriculum. With no exception, all students, with and without working experience, felt that the imported curriculum provides them with theoretical knowledge but lacks a practical component for developing their personal and professional skills. Mariam, Farida, Manal, Azza and Mona (other than the few examples of some tutors providing take-home activities) all felt that this missing practical aspect did not adequately prepare them for the job market in their fields of specialization. As Mariam explained,

The problem here [at AOU] is that I study concepts such as SWOT, marketing mix but I do not know how to apply them in the real world. So, when I graduate, how can I use these concepts at work? I am not sure...I consider my academic experience as bad experience; there is nothing motivates me to study and to improve my academic performance. One way to improve my experience and performance is to offer practical aspect and to have more interactive learning.

Similarly, Farida (female accounting specialty student; medium high reported GPA), who currently works as an assistant teacher, a typical voice for the five accounting specialty students, shared her experience as an accounting student:
All that I learned about auditing is in the books, and I have not done any professional auditing. Maybe the university can take us to auditing firms to know how things are done. In that way, we can learn. It is a sort of training session that they can give us; it will help us to be ready for a job after graduation.

Likewise, Omar (male student accounting specialty; from Bangladesh) a typical voice for a working student who is facing problems in his current job due to some contradictions between content and work contexts, mentioned that the business materials helped him gain the required knowledge but not the practical experience. He is missing the “know-how” approach that allows him to apply the learned theories into real life situations in the Kuwaiti market. In Omar’s words,

What we learned here is totally different in reality. So, when I go in reality I face so many complications and I don’t know how to deal with them, job is totally different. I don't know how to deal in real life; I think the activities will help me better to deal with these complications.

Omar’s views are representative of how the students generally felt about the absence of activities and the lack of practical aspects of the imported curriculum.

Regardless of students' demographic status, this missing practical component made students perceive themselves as not being ready enough for a job in their specialization field.

**Delivery Methods used by Tutors**

When students were asked to describe the instructional methods used by tutors, their answers ranged from lecture-based methods to discussion-based methods. Five of the sixteen students (mixed demographics and reported GPA levels) described their classes as lecture-based with little interaction between tutors and students and no adaptation to students' preferred learning styles. A typical voice of these students was Mazen (male Kuwaiti management specialty student; very low reported GPA), for
instance, stated that some tutors read aloud from the textbooks or the slides with a brief explanation of these materials, and they rarely encourage and motivate students to participate in class. Another voice for this group of students was Omar, who said, "some tutors only focus on what is coming in the exam which is not my concern, it could be for other students but not for me." Omar added, "in English subject makes some collaboration with the students, in another subject (business courses) the tutors just told us what we have to do in the exam, and they give us specific questions for revision."

In contrast, the eleven other students (mixed demographics and reported GPA levels) reported that their classes were a combination of lecture and discussion. Some of their tutors used a variety of learning styles, ensuring that students participated in the class and that they understood the materials. Afif (male management specialty student; medium low reported GPA), similarly to Omar, stated that some tutors focused on only what is coming in the exams in the tutorials. Afif believed that the choice to practice active learning pedagogies depended on the tutors’ age. He said,

We have young tutors, we have Kuwaiti tutors, we have non-Arab tutors, we have other non-Kuwaiti but Arab tutors. It always depends on the tutor. Always age is a factor: if they are old, they do not discuss the materials, and their mind is based on how they were taught when they were young.

Similarly, Asma (female Lebanese marketing student; very high reported GPA) reported that, "discussion and participation vary from one tutor to another and from one course to another (less room in math and accounting)." Asma elaborated on this:

Few tutors allow discussion, participation, and teamwork, and some of them give lecture only. While others follow the blended learning style, means that students have to depend on themselves and come prepared to the class, in this case, tutors only present the most important points without any in-depth explanation.
Mariam (female marketing specialty student; very low reported GPA), pointed out that whether discussions were facilitated in class did not only depend on the tutors or the course; and students also played a significant role in directing the tutorial towards a lecture or discussion. As she explained,

Some of the tutors use open discussion, but it also depends on the students. Some students do not prefer this type of discussion; they only want to have a lecture and to know what is included in the exam. Some tutors try to push students to participate in the class; they ask us to bring examples to engage us. However, if students are not interested tutors end up by giving a lecture.

Afif also noted that, "some tutors allow discussion, but it is not that deep, only a small trial of debate. The success of this discussion depends on students' participation and readiness to go into this kind of learning method." Wafaa (female management specialty student; medium high reported GPA), elaborated on students' participation in her class. She was impressed by her classmates, and she particularly valued those who work as assets to the class. She felt that they enriched the discussion by connecting the materials to what is happening in the market according to their work experience. She said,

Tutors run the class on discussion based more than lecturing. Yes, it is not a lecture, and yes students participate. The advantage that we have at AOU is that most of the students work, so they have practical experience and they share it with the ones who do not work.

Two students differed from their counterparts in their views on this topic. Afif and Walid, management and accounting specialty students, both reported medium high GPAs, stated that tutors need professional development to know how to turn a class from lecture-based to an active learning environment. They added that tutors have to change their way of thinking and students' way of thinking from the old teaching method used at school to an interactive method.
Interestingly, students said most of their tutors provided local examples from Kuwait or the Middle East that are similar to the ones mentioned in the textbooks when facilitating the courses. When these local examples are presented, students reported feeling connected to the curriculum and that it helped them to understand the materials. Manal (female Syrian management specialty student; medium high reported GPA), a typical voice of the students, said, "tutors provide us with some local examples, and we understand the information better, because the example is familiar to us so that we can relate between textbooks and our environment, and this helps us to express and engage with the topics." Azza (female accounting specialty student; from Sri Lanka; medium high reported GPA), further explained,

The examples in textbooks are not related to Kuwait they are more related to the country where the book is issued. However, I do not have any problem with this because even if the books do not have examples from our culture, the teachers fill this gap by referring to local examples, and this makes me feel more connected to the textbooks.

In summary, according to students, instructional methods used by their tutors varied from lecture-based to discussion-based depending on both the type of the course and tutors; however, two students mentioned that some tutors need professional development and training to help them use active pedagogies. The interviews were also similar in reporting that regardless of whether or not the class was lecture or discussion based, tutors provided examples from students' local environment when facilitating the courses.

**Students' Preferred Learning Styles**

The students varied in their preferred learning styles (lecture-based or discussion-based). Some were happy with the instructional methods used by their tutors, and some of them were not. On the one hand, the majority of the participants (13 students) preferred to have a combination tutorial based on both lecturing and in-
depth discussions amongst their classmates and their tutors. However, three students (Dalal, Mariam, and Mona) preferred lecture only, with little opportunity for participation at the end of the class. Each one of these three students justified why they preferred only lecturing. Dalal (female management specialty student; very high reported GPA), preferred lecturing; she said, "I prefer a lecture; I do not like discussion. I feel it is a waste of time for me. Because I want to have the cream, and the cream for me is to know the question and how to solve the exam." Likewise, Mariam (female marketing specialty student; very low reported GPA), said,

I prefer that tutor explains more in deep if he has time, while in the revision I prefer to give us the important points and questions that might come in the exams. I prefer the easiest and fastest way in getting the information, and I do not want to lose time from studying from books, I depend on tutors' explanation.

Mona (female management specialty student; very low reported GPA), also preferred lecturing over discussion, stating,

I prefer tutors to explain everything, from the beginning of the chapter till the end, I depend 100% on tutors' explanation to understand the materials...I also prefer to have discussion at the end of the class, because when students share their experience, I learn from them. When students explain things from their perspectives, we learn from them. Therefore, I like when we share our ideas in the class.

The remaining participants (13 students) who preferred the combination method, stated that they wished all tutors would use a variety of teaching styles, such as lecturing, open and deep discussion, and would invite student contributions in the class. Students preferred this kind of interactive learning because it allowed them to enrich their knowledge as well improve some of their skills such as the interpersonal ones. For instance, Omar, who experienced a lecture-based tutorial in his business courses, said, "I prefer discussion because it encourages me to participate and share my knowledge and experience with others." Likewise, Azza
and Samer, who experienced a lecture-based tutorial in most of their business courses, reported that they preferred their tutorials to be a mix of lecturing and discussion. Azza stated that,

Discuss examples in the class helps me to relate to the theory and the real world, this helps me to remember things in the exam…lecturing help me to understand only theories, but if there is little bit discussion of some real examples and others' work experience, it helps me to understand things better because it allows me to be exposed to different points of view.

Similarly, Samer said that,

Discussion helps me to understand things from different perspectives, when students share their opinions and experiences make understanding easier to me as well it corrects my misunderstanding for some things. Discussion helps me to prepare for the exam.

For Manal (female management specialty student; medium high reported GPA), who experienced a combination of lecturing and discussion, the interactive combination method not only helps with understanding the material, it also keeps her focused: "I prefer discussion because when you discuss you absorb the information and you will not forget it, but lecturing only I might lose my focus."

In summary, the majority of the interviewed students preferred the combination method because it helped them to understand the materials in a practical way, and it exposed them to different points of views. Only three female students preferred to depend only on tutor explanation and to have a lecture-based tutorial.

Students’ Perceptions about Tutors’ Practical Knowledge

Three female students (one reported very low GPA and two reported very high GPAs), explicitly stated that they believed some tutors were not qualified nor motivated in delivering the materials. They further felt that some of them lacked
practical knowledge, and created disconnects between the curriculum and what is happening in the real market. As Mariam explained,

Some tutors at AOU are far away from what goes on in the market, and they are only limited to their academic knowledge. For me, I need to know and understand what is happening in real life, in the market, what the people in the field say.

Asma’s views were in line with Mariam’s, as she said,

Some tutors are good but not all of them, some doctors here are not in the [business market] domain. Not all tutors are qualified and knowledgeable enough or have the practical experience to explain what is happening in the real business market. They only explain the theoretical part without any connection to the market because they lack this knowledge.

Two Kuwaiti students (one female and one male; very low reported GPAs; from Arabic public schools), mentioned that an additional problem was related to language barriers with some of their tutors. As Mona explained, "one of our tutors (from foreign nationality) we do not understand that much from his explanation. He talks fast, and his pronunciation is not clear, and I found difficulty in understanding the materials." Mazen also elaborated on this issue, saying,

I did not earn the required benefit from some courses due to tutors' explanation. Some of my tutors their English is hard to be understand, their pronunciation is not clear which makes confusion for me. For example, the word "downsizing" I heard it "insizing", therefore even when the tutor explains the concept, I did not understand it because I did not hear the word properly.

In summary, only three students mentioned the lack of practical knowledge and the linguistic issues were problems that prevented some tutors from delivering the materials at a high standard, negatively affecting some students in their learning.
Challenges Facing Tutors in Class

Three students from different majors (one reported medium low GPA, and two reported medium high and very high GPAs) observed some challenges that tutors faced while running a discussion-based tutorial. These three students reported that some of their classmates did not participate in the discussion, regardless of tutors’ efforts. They explained that the lack of participation was for several reasons, including: a) students are shy and are not used to speaking up and sharing their opinions/experiences in the class in front of other students; b) students do not like the discussion-style tutorials, so they decide not to participate, in order to reserve time for tutors’ explanation; c) some working students arrive exhausted to class, and lack the energy to share their experience with the class; d) lazy and careless students only attended the class for the purpose of attendance.

One of these students, Afif (male student; medium low reported GPA), explained, "open discussion ends up when students cannot participate because they have a problem with the language. Students pass the English courses, but they are not ready to a deep discussion; therefore discussion is useless when there is no participation."

In summary, three students observed one main challenge facing tutors in their attempts to conduct a discussion-based tutorial: unmotivated and unwilling students who do not participate in class discussions. When there are many of these students in a class, the tutorial inevitably becomes a lecture-based tutorial.

Overall, the students' perceptions of learning activities and instructional methods indicated that regardless students' characteristics and their self-reported GPAs, the absence of activities and the lack of practical aspect from the curriculum
prevented students from gaining the know-how concept that allows them to apply theories and concepts properly in their local environment. According to students, instructional methods used by their tutors varied from lecture-based to discussion-based depending on both the type of the course and tutors. The majority of the interviewed students preferred the combination method because it helps them to understand the materials in a practical way. Only three students mentioned that some tutors would benefit from professional development as they sometimes lack the practical knowledge and the capability to facilitate interactive classes. Finally, three students mentioned that unmotivated and unwilling students who do not participate in class discussions are a major challenge facing tutors in their attempts to conduct a discussion-based tutorial.

**Students’ Perceptions of Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)**

Two themes emerged from tutor marked assignments: 1) local examples versus international ones; and 2) usefulness of TMAs.

**Local Examples versus International Ones**

Students stated that case studies and examples presented in the tutor marked assignments (TMAs) were either local (related to the Middle Eastern countries and Kuwait) or international, depending on the course and on the GCC, who designed the TMA.

There was inconsistency among students in defining local and international companies. For instance, some students viewed international companies as existing only abroad, while other students considered companies such as Zara and McDonald's, with local franchises, as also international. According to these students,
a local company means a Kuwaiti company, or one belonging to other Middle Eastern countries such as Qatar Airways.

Two students said they preferred to have TMAs on international companies rather than local ones. Dalal (female Lebanese management specialty students; very high reported GPA), stated that sometimes she found difficulty in solving the assignment due to insufficient data, as they could not find all the required information on companies' websites. She elaborated,

I cannot use the website of Burqan company [a Kuwaiti company], for example, because it does not have all the information that I need. However, if I referred to international examples I can find more information that helps me to solve the assignment.

Omar (Bangladeshi accounting student; medium high reported GPA), also preferred international examples, but for different reasons: "[as a Bangladeshi student] I am more familiar with international organizations than the ones related to Kuwait."

The remaining 14 students preferred TMAs to local companies because they are familiar with them. For instance, Asma (female Lebanese marketing specialty student; very high reported GPA), a reflective voice, explained that, "TMAs are more international than local, but when we have local company it is easier for us to elaborate and explain the work of the company." Further to this point, Farida (Pakistani female accounting student; medium high reported GPA) said,

You can find people who give information related to the local company, or you can even visit the company and tell them that you are doing research, and they help you out.

Thus, using local organizations can benefit students in different ways – not only because they can better relate to the context, but also because they would have opportunities to develop their interpersonal skills through connecting with local professionals in their field.
Azza (female accounting specialty student; from Sri Lanka; medium high reported GPA), shared her experience by stating that the context is essential to successfully completing the TMA, referring to one of her TMAs that addressed the oil price in Kuwait. This made her feel engaged with the assignment. As she explained,

When we did the TMA concerning the oil reducing prices in Kuwait, it was easy for us to relate because we know what was going on. We live in this country; we even experienced this situation. Therefore it became easier for us to solve the TMA. However, if they asked us to write about the oil price decreasing in the United States it will not be the same; it will be more complicated; we need to search more to know what is going on their first.

In Ali’s opinion (male Lebanese management student; medium low reported GPA), completing TMAs with both local and international contexts have value. In his view, doing research on global and international companies also enriches his knowledge and provides personal and professional benefits. In his words,

When I have to refer to an international company to solve my TMA, this will lead me to do some research and independent study, and I think this is good because it develops my knowledge. I become more aware of how international companies run their business, and I might use this in my work.

In summary, two out of the sixteen participants preferred to have international examples and case studies in their tutor marked assignments because they are more familiar with the international than the local ones. Another reason is because it tends to be easier to find the needed information on websites for international companies. Which is not always the case for local companies’ websites. Thirteen students preferred TMAs on local companies because they are more familiar and it would provide them opportunities to apply theory to local contexts. Moreover, they would have the rare opportunity to personally connect with local professionals if they require more information about their companies. One student felt that both local and international companies would be valuable TMA material.
Usefulness of TMAs

Seven out of the sixteen participants found the TMA to be a helpful tool, two out of the sixteen found difficulties in solving the TMA, and another two out of the sixteen felt that TMAs could be helpful if students were equipped with the required skills that enable them to solve the TMA. Five out of the sixteen did not mention any usefulness for the TMA other than that it helped them to apply theories on local organizations (discussed in the previous paragraph).

Seven students with mixed demographic status explained how TMAs were useful for them in different ways. For instance, Asma (female marketing specialty student; very high reported GPA), and Samer (male management student; very high reported GPA), stated that TMAs helped them in preparing for the exam and to get good marks. Asma said, "TMAs are helpful because they cover part of our study of the Midterm and final exams, so when we go through these chapters to solve the TMA, it will be easy for me to write about it in the exam." Samer added that "the TMA system is very useful in helping students because it helps you get marks."

In contrast to Asma and Samer, Maya (female management specialty student; very high reported GPA; from an Arabic private school), said that TMAs did not prepare her for the exam, but did help her enrich her vocabulary. She said, "the assignments helped me to expand my vocabulary because I do a lot of research and reading to collect data to help me solve the TMA."

Four other students, Farida (female accounting specialty student; medium high reported GPA), Walid (male accounting student; medium high reported GPA), Ali (male management student; medium low reported GPA), and Nada (female systems specialty student; very low reported GPA) stated that doing research, whether on a local or international company, enriched their knowledge. TMAs made them work
harder and use different resources such as textbooks and websites, and helped them develop skills related to conducting research, such as using different resources and analyzing data. Walid explained, “TMA makes me do research, and go back to instructors, which is a good thing, this is so hard, and not all students are interested in doing the TMA, but actually, it develops some skills.”

Two interviewees, Mona (female management specialty student; very low reported GPA; from Arabic public school), and Manal (female management specialty student; medium high reported GPA; from English school), were two students who found it difficult to solve the TMA because they did not feel they were equipped with the required skills and knowledge. Mona shared,

I have difficulty to understand the question and how we have to answer it. Even if I solve the TMA, still I do it wrong. I do not know how to use the concepts and theories to answer TMA questions. Even with tutors' explanation still, I find difficulties in dealing with it.

When asked if she had difficulty with the TMA’s language, she replied,

No, not the language, but how I can apply the theories to solve the question. Tutor explains the TMA in general, but he does not explain how we can use the theory to answer the TMA's questions. Not all the students face the same difficulty same as I do.

Afif (male management specialty student; medium low reported GPA; from Arabic school), and Mariam (female marketing specialty student; very low reported GPA; from Arabic school), argued that TMAs could be helpful if students were equipped with the required skills to enable them to solve the TMA. They noted that when students are not equipped with the required skills to write and solve a TMA, and when they fail to have good marks, they tend to outsource their assignment to a third party, Mariam confessed to using this service during her studies. Afif did not agree that students benefit from a TMA; especially if they do not know how to complete it,
or if they are only concerned with getting good grades. In this case, it is all too easy for students to turn to another party. As he explained, "TMA is very affordable you can buy it from anywhere so why would students bother from solving such thing."

However, he said TMAs could be useful tools if they are used properly, if students are equipped to apply the concepts presented in textbooks. He stated, "TMA helps you to connect and use what you have studied in the program into real companies, but tutors have to prepare students first to know how to deal with the TMA."

In summary, beyond helping students understand the materials through applying the theories and concepts to local and or international companies, some students found TMAs to be useful for different reasons. For some, it helped them to prepare for the exam and get good grades, for others, it allowed them to enrich their knowledge and vocabulary while doing the TMA research. Other students found difficulties in solving their assignments because they believed that they were not equipped with the necessary skills that allow them to solve their assignments in a proper way and get good grades. Consequently, some students use a third party to solve their assignments.

Overall, the students' perceptions of tutor marked assignments indicated, regardless students self-reported GPAs and other demographic status, thirteen students tended to prefer local examples in their assignments rather than international ones because it helped them to interact with and understand the materials. One student felt that both local and international companies would be valuable TMA material. However, in one case, the student’s nationality played a role in the preference for international examples, as Omar, who was born and raised in Bangladesh, was unfamiliar with the Kuwaiti local market. While, Dalal preferred international
examples because it is easier to find the required information on websites for international companies.

**Students’ Perception of Exams**

Two themes that emerged from students’ perception of exams were 1) exams are textbook and memory based; and 2) exam content and time assigned

**Exams are Textbook and Memory Based**

Sixteen participants reported that most of the exams were based on textbooks and memory and not critical thinking. They observed that exams ask direct questions (such as asking students to describe, define, discuss, and explain) and rarely ask students to write their opinions or present their points of view. One of the reasons students believed there were insufficient opportunities to demonstrate critical thinking and analytical analysis in the exams is, as Mariam (female marketing specialty student; very high reported GPA), put it, “[the] program does not encourage this type of question[ing].”

Although the exams were textbook and memory based, students had to provide examples in the exams to draw connections between theories and real life situations.

Ten out of the sixteen participants, with mixed demographic status, stated that they preferred direct questions based on the textbooks and memorization. In their view, these kinds of questions permitted them to provide straightforward answers and thus guaranteed their grades. For these students, this method is easier than justification and critical analysis. For instance, as Asma (female marketing specialty student; very high reported GPA), a typical voice of students who reflected the preference of direct questions, explained,
I prefer exam to be from the book, and based on memorization, even though I took high marks in the justification, but still, I like it from the book. Because during the exam you are already stressed, and when the exam is just justification you become more stressed because answering this kind of questions required more time than the assigned one.

Mariam also explained why she preferred having exams from the book, stating,

There is not enough time to expand your answers; tutors might get lost from the answer if I go outside the book, and to have a good grade I have to stick to the book. So I get the safe side, I do not go outside the book.

However, two participants out of these ten students, Mazen, reported a very low GPA, and Ali, reported a medium low GPA, both of them management specialty students and both of them attended Arabic school, preferred to write the exams to demonstrate their understating rather than purely memorization.

Four accounting specialty students and two management specialty students who took accounting courses felt that the accounting exam was slightly different from the other business exams. The accounting exam was more about calculations and problem-solving. For instance, Azza, representing the views of the accounting majors, said, "in the accounting exams we have about 10% to 20% of theories, and the remaining is sums, balance sheet and stuff like that, and in the business exam asks to include examples to justify our answers."

Farida, a female accounting specialty student, on the other hand, prefers analytical questions because they make her think critically and apply her learning. She acknowledged, however, that this might not be the case of other students who lack the knowledge or fluency in English.

In summary, students reported that the exams are mainly textbooks and memory based. Ten out the sixteen participants, regardless their demographic status, preferred this kind of exams as they considered it more conducive to getting high
grades. Only two students reported that they preferred to write the exams to demonstrate their understating rather than purely memorization. The four accounting students clarified that their exams were not only based on memory and theories; they also included calculations and sums.

**Exam Content and Time Assigned**

All the participants reported that their tutors prepared them for the exams by reviewing the course content at the end of semester. Two out of the sixteen participants, Asma and Dalal, claimed that too much content is covered in the exams, as the time assigned to the exam is insufficient. As Asma (female marketing specialty student; very high reported GPA), explained,

> Exams, in general, are hard not because the questions are hard but because they cover many chapters. They give us essay, discuss and explain questions, and the answers should include an introduction, body, and a conclusion for each question. Moreover, you have to provide examples to support your answers, so this takes time in writing. I feel 2 hours for the Midterm are not enough.

Thus, beyond content, from some of the students’ perspectives, time allotment is an additional consideration for issues around exams.

In this section, I presented students’ perceptions of and experiences with the four facets of the imported curriculum as designed, namely the British textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, TMAs, and exams. The main findings were as follows:

Notwithstanding their self-reported GPAs or demographic characteristics, students felt that textbooks did not reflect or include examples related to their environment. For the most part, they felt they could understand and engage better
with the materials that included local context connections along with Western content. However, other students felt satisfied with the internationally-based curriculum, particularly if they found the content to be relevant to their jobs and/or interests.

With respect to the content and language difficulty in textbooks, students who reported higher GPAs tended to welcome the challenge, regardless of whether or not their prior schooling was in Arabic or English. The opposite was true for students who reported lower GPAs, as these students tended to feel more negatively about the level of content difficulty in general and were less engaged.

In general, students felt that regardless of reported GPAs and demographic characteristics, the absence of activities and the lack of practical aspects in the curriculum prevented them from gaining applicable skills. The majority of the interviewed students preferred the ‘combination’ method of instruction because it helped them to understand the materials in a practical way especially; when tutors used local examples. As well, thirteen students tended to prefer local examples in their assignments rather than international ones. For one student, his nationality played a role in his preference for international examples than the local ones, because he was unfamiliar with the Kuwaiti local market. Several students, who reported having very low and medium high GPAs, also felt they needed to be better equipped with the necessary skills to solve their assignments properly. Finally, the students' perceptions of the exams indicated that exams were mainly textbooks and memory based, and the majority of the participants preferred this style of testing in order as they viewed it as more conducive to achieving high grades.

There was more similarity than dissimilarity between participants across reported GPAs, especially in relation to learning activities, instructional methods, and exams. The notable dissimilarities were around perceptions of British textbooks, as
participants with lower reported GPAs and Arabic as the language of instruction in their high schools found textbooks more challenging to work with than participants who reported having higher GPAs from English language high schools.

To summarize students' self-perceived academic experiences, those who reported positive overall experiences with the imported curriculum tended to value the international content; they appreciated the new knowledge provided through textbooks, the usefulness of the TMA s, and the exams in memory-based format. Some students who did not value the international contended tended to feel more negatively about their overall experience.

Thirteen students (two reported very low GPAs, two reported medium low GPAs, five reported medium high GPAs, and four reported very high GPAs) ranked their experiences with the imported curriculum from a good to very good, while three students (two reported very low and one reported medium high) had a moderate to negative experience. Generally, students’ rating of their experiences is most strongly related to how they perceived the design of the imported curriculum’s components (textbooks, TMA s, and the exams). Interestingly, students’ perceived academic experience is not directly related to their self-reported GPA levels or demographics characteristics.

The following section deals with students' perceptions of the implementation of the imported curriculum.

**Curriculum Implementation Experience**

In this section, four themes emerged regarding students' experiences of curriculum implementation: 1) tutors' explanations; 2) active learning/lack of active learning; 3) tutor - student relationships; 4) AOU - student relations.
Tutors' Explanations

Students felt that tutors played a crucial role in their academic experience. For them, tutors were the channel connecting students with the imported curriculum via their explanations and usage of examples from students' backgrounds and environment. At the implementation level, some tutors helped their students interact with textbooks and understand the materials by answering questions, discussing examples, and letting their students think and react with the materials instead of depending on memorization alone. For Dalal (female management specialty student; very high reported GPA; from a French school), the tutor was the bridge between her and the textbooks; as she put it, "the knowledge already exists in the book, the tutor helps me to understand the experience, and he makes the book more animated. Tutor makes it more understandable; he was the bridge between me and the book." All the other students stated that they depended on tutors' explanations to facilitate their understanding of the materials, especially when tutors correlate concepts to student experiences and backgrounds. In Wafaa’s words (female management specialty student; medium high reported GPA; from an Arabic school), a typical voice of the medium high and very high self-reported GPA,

In the discussion/explanation the tutor uses synonyms for the wording, to make it easier for the students who have difficulty in English. The tutor summarizes the most important points that the students have to concentrate, and he provides us by relevant examples from the local market, Middle Eastern market and the Arabian market.

Affirming this view, Azza (female accounting specialty student; medium high reported GPA; from an English school), commented on one accounting tutor as an example. She stated that this tutor, "addresses properly the topics in the classroom, explains and makes sure that everyone understands, and at the end of the class the
tutor gives homework to practice the new accounting concepts that the tutor explained."

Beyond class instruction, Samer and Farida (management and accounting specialty students, very high and medium high reported GPAs respectively), felt that additional explanations tutors provide during office hours is very helpful for the learning process. Farida elaborated by saying,

I always go to them in their office hours and they explain me things hundreds of times, they are ready to explain to me whenever I want to, that is the best that they can give me. It is not all the tutors do this; it is only some of them, a very few of them.

Nada, who has a lower GPA, also felt the importance of individual feedback. She shared that tutors always encourage her to participate in the class and they give her advice and constructive feedback on how she can improve her TMA by showing her the weak points and how they can be enhanced.

However, only Mona and Mazen, who both had low reported GPAs and Arabic as the language of instruction in their high schools, mentioned that they experienced difficulties with tutors when they could not understand their pronunciation and their way of speaking English.

In summary, regardless students self-reported GPAs, the language of instruction at school and their specialization, students found the tutors’ explanation of the materials to be integral to their learning. This was particularly the case with the textbooks. When tutors explain and simplify the materials through using simple English in their explanation and provide relevant local examples, participants feel more connected to the imported curriculum. This connection facilitated their understanding and had a direct impact on their academic experience.
Active Learning / Lack of Active Learning

Eleven students stated that some of their tutors used discussion in the tutorials while delivering and explaining the materials. This method enriched their academic experience with the imported curriculum, and made the curriculum more connected to real life, allowing them to gain some skills such as personal and intellectual skills.

As Farida (female accounting specialty student; medium high reported GPA; attended English school), a reflective voice of the students who had active learning in their classes, explained, "our classrooms are not lecture based only, they are discussion based also, every girl gets a chance to contribute to the topic, to say something she knows. Moreover, you end up knowing everything because everybody participated."

According to Farida, practicing discussion in the tutorials enriched her knowledge and her academic experience. It taught her to look at things differently using different lenses based on the contributions of students. Furthermore, the discussion allowed her to accept and respect others' points of view and opinions.

Nada (female systems specialty student; very low reported GPA), shared that some of her tutors used a new learning style in delivering the materials: brainstorming. She found this approach to be effective and even used it in other courses and in her personal life.

In contrast, five students (reported very low and medium high GPAs, management and accounting specialty), mentioned that in most of the classes that they attended, tutors did not include any active learning in their tutorials, did not encourage them to participate in the class. They attributed both to lack of motivation and qualifications amongst some tutors. This negatively affected their academic experience.
In summary, students overall feel more connected to the imported curriculum when active learning is taking place in classrooms. One of the active learning aspects that had a positive impact on their academic experience was the use of discussion in the classrooms by tutors. It helped students connect theories and the market, which made their understanding of the materials easier and enriched their knowledge. Besides this, discussion helped students gain personal skills such as communication skills and respecting others’ opinions. However, when tutors did not encourage active learning, there was less class participation and this contributed to an undesirable academic experience for some students.

**Tutor-Student Relationships**

This theme emerged in seven of the interviews. Mariam (female marketing specialty student; very low reported GPA) had attended a private institution that teaches the AOU business curriculum to students who want to improve their GPAs. Mariam attributed her low GPA to the challenges she faced with both the curriculum and her tutors. In her interview, Mariam compared the relationship between students and tutors at AOU, and students and tutors at the private institution. She said,

> At the private institution, the atmosphere is more friendly and dynamic. There is no big difference in age between the teacher and the students, so when we deal with the teacher; we feel that we are dealing with a friend.

Mariam implied that the rigid nature of the imported curriculum hinders the tutor-student relationship. As she explained,

> The tutors here [at AOU] are tied to a course syllabus, and they have to follow this outline, so they cannot use their summary or their way of teaching. Second, AOU prevents tutors to give their summaries; the slides for some courses are prepared by the general course chair. All these slides are standardized for all the branches. Some tutors also do not make these slides available on the LMS. When we ask the tutors to give us the slides they said all is written in the book, you have to look. Ok, but we need to get the
information easily; we don't have time to find it in the book. I need to understand, study, apply and that is it.

In contrast, Asma, Farida, Azza, Maya, and Wafaa, five female students with medium high and very high reported GPAs, reported having a positive relationship with some of the tutors (especially those who "cared" about the students' performance). In their view, having good relationships with these tutors positively affected their academic experience. As Maya described it,

I have some excellent tutors, and I am still in touch with them. I ask them about other courses and other subjects, and there are some tutors whom I avoid completely because seriously they do not care. In general, some of my tutors did an excellent job and affected my academic experience in a right way.

Afif (male management specialty student; medium low reported GPA) was the only participant who mentioned tutors' age as an important factor in tutor-student relationships. He said that young tutors tended to respond in a timely matter to students' emails, and encouraged them in the classroom and during office hours. These actions, in turn, built good relationships between tutors and their students. From his perspective, older tutors did not develop these kinds of relationship with their students nor take the time to respond to emails.

In summary, the five students who declared having good relationships with their tutors said it was an asset in their experience with the imported curriculum; while for the only student that had a negative relationship with some of her tutors believed it negatively impacted her performance, exacerbating the challenges of the curriculum.

**AOU– Student Relations**

Thirteen students stated that the lack of academic activities did not contribute positively to their academic experience. For instance, as Mariam explained,
Some AOU’s students are fed up with the university. They do not have the feeling that they are university students, and I am one of them. The university campus is dead; there are no interactions among students. Students only come to attend the class, and some of them only come to class to submit their assignments and write the exams.

Mariam shared that although AOU tried to encourage its students to create clubs, unfortunately, this process failed because students were not ready or prepared for extra-curricular activities. Mariam elaborated on this by saying,

AOU tried two years ago to motivate students to participate in academic and students’ activities, but students were not ready to take part in this or to develop clubs. Some students developed some social and academic clubs, and they tried to apply what they studied into these clubs, but it did not work well.

Mariam indicated that the lack of soft and other intellectual skills (such as teamwork, leadership, time management, crises management) was a barrier, resulting in the failure of these clubs. In her words, "because students do not have soft skills, they still use high school mentality. They did not know that these clubs require teamwork, leadership, time management, crises management. Students do not have these skills."

Mariam’s comments point to the interrelated nature of the various components of students’ experience at AOU. In her anecdote, for instance, she highlights how the imported curriculum’s shortcomings in developing soft skills have also negatively impacted other areas, such as campus life.

In line with Mariam’s views, Samer said that the lack of campus life at AOU does not help students develop any interpersonal skills and the flexibility in attendance is not conducive to students connecting and communicating with each other. He explained this by saying,

In high school, you meet many people, but in university, you just come to attend your class and then you leave. It is not like that you stay in the university from morning till the evening. I just finish my class in 2 hours, and then I leave, so I do not stay in the university. So there is no chance to upgrade, to integrate with others, and to practice these skills.
Thus, the lack of academic activities at the university, campus life, social interactions on campus, and student activities are some issues affecting some students' academic experience and their relationship with AOU.

In summary, some of the tutors had a crucial role in making students' experience a positive one, especially those tutors who took the time to explain and make the imported curriculum relevant to students’ backgrounds, and those who used a combined, discussion-lecture based tutorial. Having a good relationship between students and tutors was an asset in students' experience with the imported curriculum. In contrast, when tutors were perceived to be unqualified and did not address student concerns surrounding passing exams, knowledge acquisition, and the development of intellectual, personal, and professional skills, it had a negative effect on students' experience. Thus, some students had not gained the required knowledge due to delivery issues at the implementation level, concerns that they believed related to unqualified and demotivated tutors. Finally, the lack of extracurricular opportunities available on campus affected some students' academic experience and their relationship with AOU.

To conclude, this section highlighted students' self-perceived academic experience with the imported curriculum at the design as well as the implemented level. All students believed that the imported curriculum at the design level was high standard. However, the content and language difficulty remain the main issues for students who attended Arabic schools and lower reported GPAs. At the implementation level, students found the tutors’ explanation of the materials to be integral to their learning.
While the level of satisfaction with the imported curriculum varied among the students in different areas, all sixteen students suggested some modifications at the design and implementation levels to foster a more positive academic experience.

Students’ Perspectives on the Imported Curriculum

The following section of the findings deals with the research question regarding participants’ perspectives on how the imported business curriculum influenced their academic performance and contributed to their personal and professional growth.

*How did the imported business curriculum influence students’ self-perceived academic performance and contribute to their self-perceived personal and professional growth?*

The first section starts by reporting the findings of the influence of the imported curriculum on students’ self-perceived academic performance. The second section reports on the findings related to the curriculum’ contribution on students’ self-perceived personal and professional growth.

Curriculum - Students' Self-Perceived Academic Performance

Students provided different opinions regarding the influence of the imported curriculum on their academic performance. Students' opinions were classified in three groups as follows:

The first group included five students (three females and two males; management, systems, and marketing specialty; from Arabic schools; four of them very low reported GPAs, and one medium low reported GPA), who believed that the content and language difficulty of the imported curriculum as well the lack of the needed skills to solve properly their tutor marked assignments (TMAs) negatively
influenced their academic performance which was reflected in their very low GPAs. Only Afif, a male management specialty student with a lower reported GPA did not attribute his low performance to the content or the TMAs. He commented by saying, "I do not care about my low GPA, I am more concerned about the knowledge that I got from the books and how I can apply to real life."

Mariam and Mona were two typical voices of the students in the first group. For instance, in addition to the content difficulty and her dissatisfaction with the imported curriculum, Mariam (female marketing specialty; very low reported GPA) attributed the lack of practical applications, unqualified tutors, and her demotivation to study as contributing to her low academic performance. Mariam is one of many students at AOU who is seeking support from outside the university (e.g., attending private institutions) to improve her GPA. Mariam stated, "my grades are neither high nor low, as I said I do not have any energy or mood to study." She added

The content is difficult; as well it is not relevant. Me personally I am tired of studying something I do not need it. I feel that I am using my capability in studying something not necessary. I am doing efforts to improve my GPA, but even if I have the same GPA I have no problem with this, but I do not want it to get lower. I just want to graduate, and that is it.

As illustrated by Mariam, beyond the curriculum itself, student motivation has an important influence on how they perceive their academic performance in relation to the program.

The second group included six students (four female and two male, three accounting and three management specialty students, three attended English schools, two attended Arabic school, and one attended Bengali school; four reported medium high GPAs and two reported very high GPAs) who welcomed this challenge of the curriculum. These students felt that their good academic performance was due to their
integration with the imported curriculum, and their openness to new knowledge from an international perspective. Samer, represented the views of the students in this second group, who found the imported curriculum, specifically, the TMA, positively influenced their academic performance and GPA, saying,

    TMAs help you get up your grade because it is not at all a test, it is an assignment that you have to do from your understanding, and you are grading on the base of that. So I think it helps you to raise your academic performance as well experience.

    The third group included three female students (two management and one marketing specialty students; one attended from an Arabic school, one from an English school and one from a French school; one reported medium high GPA and reported two very high GPAs) who did not feel that their satisfaction with the imported curriculum contributed to their academic performance. Instead, they attributed their good performance to personal efforts and hard work in overcoming the challenges of the imported curriculum.

    Walid (male accounting student; medium low reported GPA), was the only student who did not comment how the imported curriculum influenced his academic performance. Instead, he stated in general that if the accounting curriculum was offered in both Arabic and English, it would not only aid students in understanding the materials in their mother tongue, but would also have a positive impact on their academic performance.

    In summary, students provided different opinions regarding the influence of the imported curriculum on their self-perceived academic performance and how it reflected on their self-reported academic performance. Lower reported GPAs and Arabic as the language of high school instruction believed that the content and
language difficulty negatively influenced their academic performance. Students with higher reported GPAs and for the most part attended English schools, said that their integration with the imported curriculum and their openness to new knowledge from an international perspective positively influenced their academic performance. Finally, the last group of students attributed their good performance to personal efforts in overcoming the challenges of the imported curriculum. However, all students felt that some modifications (in different degrees and areas) were needed at the design level to improve their academic experience.

The Role of Tutors and Students’ Self-Perceived Academic Performance

Three female students (one reported medium high GPA and two very high reported GPAs) felt that tutors had a minimal role in their high academic performance, attributing this more to their individual efforts. Dalal said

Yes, the tutor helped me to engage with the book, but not to have a high GPA. GPA is something personal, I worked hard to prove that I am capable to be a university student, and this was a challenge for me, so I worked hard from the first semester to get a high GPA.

Asma concurred, saying,

Actually my high GPA is a more personal effort. Tutors help, but you have to do your job, such as summaries, to read to elaborate to give examples…some tutors you feel that when they are marking, they do not give you your right. It is from my own experience, many times, you feel that your papers are marked unfairly.

In contrast, four students reported medium high GPAs and two students reported very high GPAs, and one student reported a very low GPA, from different specialties stated that tutors' encouragement, explanation, and support helped them to improve their self-perceived academic performance and this was reflected in their
self-reported academic performance. Maya, whose views were representative of students who appreciated their tutors' support in achieving good standing, said,

Their encouragement obviously helps your academic performance. Sometimes you say I will not do it; this is hard, they told you no you can do it, and you can get an A, so they do help you mentally. They challenged me to get the A, and I got it.

Samer said that explanations provided by his tutors helped him improve his GPA. He felt tutor-facilitated discussions were also helpful to his academic performance. He said, "discussion will help you improve your GPA because when you have discussion and debate in your class, you will remember things that it can assist you in the exams."

Nada was the only student with a very low GPA who said the tutors' roles positively influenced her academic experience and improved her grades. She shared that tutors helped her revise and improve her TMA, which directly impacted her grade and improved her performance.

In summary, while three students did not attribute their high academic performance to the role of tutors, more of the students stated that the tutors' encouragement, explanation, and support helped them to improve their academic performance. Six students of the sample (three reported very low GPAs, two reported medium low GPAs and one reported medium high GPA) did not mention how their tutors affected their self-reported academic performance.

The following section introduces the findings related to the ways student interviewees perceived the influence of the imported business curriculum on their personal and professional growth. Findings are presented according to the six themes that emerged from the interview data: 1) personal and professional development; 2)
developing purpose; 3) intellectual competence; 4) interpersonal competence; 5) readiness for the job; and 6) self-confidence. These themes are discussed below.

**Personal and Professional Development**

This theme is divided into the following two sub-themes: 1) the role of the curriculum, and 2) the role of tutors.

**The Role of the Curriculum**

In their opinions, the imported curriculum provided the interviewed students with the required knowledge needed for personal and professional development in the business field. Fifteen of the participants, except for Mariam (female marketing specialty student; very low reported GPA), believed that they gained a new vision, perspective, and way of thinking in business. These participants further said that the imported curriculum provided them with the required theoretical knowledge to succeed in their jobs; however, they added if this theoretical aspect was accompanied with the practical one it could more beneficial for them at their jobs. For instance, Dalal (female Lebanese management specialty student; very high reported GPA), a typical voice of working students who attributed the curriculum's role to learning a new perspective that she used in her job, saying that the business program helped her better understand the people she works with and helped her develop professionally. She elaborated on this by saying

> I learned new things from some courses in management. Some of this course helped me to accept my team and to improve its effectiveness. Before that, I was doing everything by myself. However, now I started to do training for my staff and trying to improve their weakness.

Wafaa (female Lebanese management specialty student; medium high reported GPA), another working student’ voice who gave credit to the curriculum, felt that the curriculum allowed her to gain new perspectives and skills in business. She was able to apply to a certain extent what she had learned in her job and felt there is
alignment between her interests as a student and as an employee, and what the curriculum offered. As Maya (female Egyptian management student; very high reported GPA), a reflective voice of non-working students, articulated it, "the curriculum gives you a huge insight into what is happening in the business field. So, if you want to graduate and want to start your business, you basically have everything you need."

Mazen, Mona, Ali, Nada, and Samer (very low, medium low and very high reported GPAs), only Mazen and Ali currently work, attributed the curriculum’s role in their personal and professional development differently from the other students. They felt that they became more knowledgeable in business studies and could discuss and relate business concepts and trends to the current market outside the university. They were able to also analyze news articles related to the business field, linking what they studied with their daily lives. For instance, Nada (female systems specialty student; very low reported GPA), said, "I can give my husband advice if he faced any problem in his job, I am grateful because I have the academic background to support my discussion and points of view." Mona (female management specialty student; very low reported GPA), another typical voice of student who uses the curriculum knowledge in her daily life, saying, "Curriculum provided me with business knowledge that allows me to analyze to a certain limit what is happening in the business market, for example, I can relate to a real advertisement and the theory behind it."

Walid (male Kuwaiti accounting specialty student; medium high reported GPA), had a different perspective when approaching his personal development. He considered his studies in a blended system an opportunity to help him upgrade his
technological skills and drive him to becoming a better self-learner, open to asking friends for clarifications. He explained this by saying,

Here at AOU, the class is once a week for the major courses, so we have to study by ourselves, so it is a new skill, we have to ask our friend, it is also a new skill, we have to search on YouTube and websites, so it is a new skill. So, it is good; now I am having a new experience and getting new skills.

Mariam (female Lebanese marketing specialty student; very low reported GPA), was the only participant who felt her work experience contributed more to her personal and professional development than the imported curriculum. According to her, the curriculum does not match her interests.

The Role of Tutors

Only five students (one reported very high GPA, two reported medium high GPAs, one reported medium low GPA, and one reported very low GPA), from different specialties acknowledged the role of their tutors in developing their personal and professional growth and the other eleven students did not address tutors’ role in their personal and professional development.

Ali (male management specialty; a medium low reported GPA), Mona and Dalal (two female management specialty students; very low and very high reported GPAs respectively) felt that some of their tutors helped them to develop in their way of thinking. Mona explained,

During the class, the tutor has no problem to express our own opinions even if ours do not match with his. Alternatively, if you said something wrong, he gives us a chance to correct the answers, as well he allows us to think more. I believe he developed my way of thinking.

Furthermore, Farida (female accounting specialty student; medium high reported GPA) said that her tutors helped her develop her academic vision on a
personal level. When her tutors talked about future qualifications, such as a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) certificate, she understood the contribution of her studies towards earning the certificate. Tutors further encouraged and motivated her to earn a professional certificate besides her degree to get a better job and to develop her competencies. Wafaa (female management specialty student; medium high reported GPA) affirmed Farida's opinion:

> Some tutors here are role models, they are a treasure for the university, and I feel sorry if they left the university. These tutors give you the feeling that they understand what they are doing, they know the materials very well, they are well educated, and they are a role model. These kinds of tutors changed my way of thinking, the way of giving an answer, not to give a shallow answer, but instead, I have to get into details to convince a person.

Students generally felt that the imported curriculum had important contributions to students' personal and professional development, especially those who felt engaged with the imported curriculum. Only five students acknowledged the role of their tutors in developing their personal and professional growth.

**Developing Purpose**

Thirteen out of sixteen students felt that the imported curriculum and the business program helped them develop their purpose after graduation. Although one student developed her vocational purpose, she did not attribute it to the curriculum and two of the working students did not develop any noteworthy purposes. Most of the students planned to continue their studies, earn Masters degrees in business (MBA) from abroad, work in academia or have their own business. Other students developed their vocational visions through completing the AOU program and wanted to work directly after graduation.
The eight participants (male and female students reported medium high and very high GPA) who hoped to pursue their MBA said the curriculum helped drive this passion and interest. In Wafaa’s words (female management specialty student; medium high reported GPA),

I am looking to have my master degree from abroad, to have and gain a wider vision in business. I have now the passion for knowing more. Moreover, I think that after one course that I had taken in the bachelor, I feel that I am ready to have my master.

Some of the students also acknowledged the role of their tutors. Maya (female management specialty student; very high reported GPA) said that some tutors gave her insight to pursue her studies.

For six participants (male and female students who reported very low, medium low and medium high GPAs), the curriculum helped them to develop their future career. For instance, Mazen (Kuwait male management student; very low reported GPA), and Afif (Palestinian male management student; medium high reported GPA), acknowledged that the real examples provided by their tutors and some business courses gave them the idea to start a new business. Nada (Syrian female management student; very high reported GPA), said that she would like to become a consultant and that she was inspired by one of her business courses because of the way the tutor explained the materials. Likewise, Farida (Pakistani female accounting student; medium high reported GPA), said that one of her tutors influenced her through providing examples of big companies in the tutorial. The examples resonated with her so much, it became her passion to work in one of the companies after graduation.

Mona (Kuwaiti female management student; very low reported GPA) also acknowledged the role of her classmates in contributing to her professional development and aspirations to work in banking. She said that the interaction with the
tutor and her peers who work in the banking system influenced her through sharing their work experiences, providing real examples from the banking sector.

Walid (Kuwaiti accounting student; medium high reported GPA) aspired to pursue postgraduate studies and he hoped to become an instructor at the university. He said that some of his courses helped him gain some interpersonal skills that also allowed him to realize his vocational interests. Mariam (female marketing student; very low GPA), who hopes to work in a job related to social media advertising, was the only student who did not attribute her vocational purpose to the program. As she explained,

The program even did not provide me with the base and the theories, because it is easy to go online and get all the information that I need concerning the marketing, I can see it and read it online, and that is it. The program did not give me or provide me anything new.

Overall, the acquired knowledge from the imported curriculum and tutors’ explanations inspired thirteen participants to develop their purposes, either in academia or employment.

**Intellectual Competence**

Almost all (15) of the interviewed students, except for Mariam, said they gained knowledge and new perspectives from the imported curriculum. They felt it helped them develop their intellectual skills, theoretical knowledge, and professional attitude. As such, the imported curriculum provided them with the essential knowledge needed for the job market. As Dalal explained,

Curriculum helped me to change my behavior. I understand more stuff related to the business, where is the problem in work, I learned that there is innovation, technology. Before we depended only on resources, now we depend more on capable human beings. There is no value for the
business without having capable and competent employees. I learned all this from the business program.

Mazen also acknowledged the role of his tutor in his learning journey, adding that not only did the imported curriculum develop his intellectual competence; one of his tutors also played a crucial role in this aspect. The tutor’s explanations and classroom discussions allowed Mazen to have an in-depth understanding of some business topics.

Furthermore, Nada, Afif, Wafaa, and Maya reported different GPAs, stated that some business courses and tutors' explanation shifted their ways of thinking. By thinking outside the box, new ways of thinking such as critical thinking, system thinking, and problem-solving developed to a certain limit their intellectual knowledge in business. As Wafaa (medium high reported GPA), said, "I used critical thinking in some TMAs, and this helped me to look at things from different perspectives, to think in multi-way and find multi-solutions." While Farida agreed with these views, she repeatedly pointed out that "there is always room for improvement" in the imported business courses.

Asma (very high reported GPA), also felt that the imported curriculum helps to develop students intellectually, but needs some improvements. Specifically, in the area of critical thinking:

I think the books are enough, and the things that we studied in the management track are helpful. However, the practical part and the critical thinking, need to be developed more, we need to think outside the box. We need to be more prepare for the market.

The business department indirectly provided Asma with an opportunity to develop her critical thinking skills, selecting her as one of four high-performance students in the department to participate in a competition between universities in
Kuwait, organized by local business companies. This opportunity allowed Asma to gain some of the practical aspects that are missing in the curriculum.

Mariam and Omar affirmed the insufficient opportunities to develop critical thinking and analytical skills. To them, this kind of skillset was not encouraged in the program, especially in exam preparation nor practiced in the tutorials.

In summary, most of the participants, except for Mariam, reported that the imported curriculum helped them take the first step in the process of developing intellectual competence. However, three students reported that there was no room to develop critical thinking skills.

**Interpersonal Competence**

The combination of discussion and lecture tutorials used by some tutors helped some of the students develop new learning styles and acquire interpersonal competence, while the lecture-based approach used by other tutors did not. All students aimed to gain personal and professional development from their courses. They generally preferred the tutors’ use of mixed approaches based on lecturing and discussions as well as tutors who encouraged them to learn and develop new learning styles that they could use in other courses or their jobs. Students said that when discussion was used in the classroom, it allowed them to gain some required skills needed in the workplace; for example, this style allowed them to be more open to hear and acknowledge others opinions’ and to respect different points of view. As Maya (female management student; very high reported GPA; from an Arabic school), explained it,

> Discussion allows me to listen, and respect others' opinion even if I do not agree with what is being said; it allows me to be open to different perspectives and become interested to know more about a particular topic, or at least to have some insight about it.
In this context, Mona (female management student; very low reported GPA; from an Arabic school), said that participating in discussions changed her from a passive to an active student: "Instead of being just a recipient who receives the information, I learned how to participate, to make comments even if I said something wrong, I can learn from what I said." She commented that when she participated, she learned how to represent her ideas and justify them, and how to be open to any critics. Thus, Mona’s tutors helped her develop new learning styles. Farida (female accounting student; medium high reported GPA; from an English school), was in agreement, saying that discussions helped her practice communication skills, and study groups have helped her learn how to work with others.

Reflecting the experiences of those who did not participate in classroom discussions, Mazen (male management student; very low reported GPA; from an Arabic school), said, "I do not know how to deal in teamwork because we do not practice this in the class, I cannot say that I gained any interpersonal skills." Mona as well expanded on this by giving an example of how one of her tutors asked the class to develop teamwork skills, but her classmates did not have the skills and the commitment to work as a group. She explained,

We did some group work, but I did not like it because it happens that some students do not arrive on time, some students depend on other students, so I did not like this kind of activity. I prefer to work independently.

Mariam (female marketing student; very low reported GPA), and Omar (male accounting student; medium high reported GPA), did not feel that the teaching methods used by their tutors allowed them to develop their interpersonal skills nor gain new ways of learning. Mariam said that she had a lack of interpersonal skills and that the university does not help her gain those critical skills to be ready for the job
market. Omar stated that tutors did not have any significant role in developing students' interpersonal skills or new learning styles. He also said that discussions do help him in developing some of these skills, but the tutors' main teaching method was based on explanation and not participation. Mariam wondered, "If I have a different perspective or opinion than my friend or colleague, or if I am facing a crisis with a customer, how can I deal with these things if I am not prepared at the university?" She added that a lack of interpersonal skills was considered as a barrier preventing some students from participating in or creating extra curricula activities at the university level.

To conclude, tutors who used active learning methods such as discussion and participation allowed their students opportunities to acquire and develop some interpersonal skills, which influenced students' perceived competence. While, for students who experienced lecture-based classroom have reported that this method did not allow them to develop their interpersonal skills.

**Students’ Perceived Readiness for a Job**

In the same way, students admitted that the imported curriculum provided them with the theoretical knowledge and academic diploma needed for the job market but not with the necessary practical knowledge. Those who were currently not working, such as Nada, felt that they were not being prepared for the job market and that their chances of getting an employment were lower in comparison with students who graduated from traditional universities. Asma said, "Curriculum helps, but some aspects are missing such as the practice."

The lack of practical components, and the disconnect between the imported curriculum and local environment, was seen as preventing non-working students from being ready for the job market. Mariam reiterated that AOU only provided academic
knowledge without offering any practical experience or developing soft skills, while students in other universities gained these skills because of the opportunities to gain practical experiences in the real market. She elaborated on this by saying,

AOU students, in general, do not have the skills needed by the employers. Students do not have problem-solving, critical thinking, crises management, communication, leadership, teamwork. The knowledge that they have is not supported by the required experience that the market needs. I know how to do a marketing mix, but I do not know how to apply it in the Kuwaiti market for a restaurant. Without having these soft skills and the practical aspect, our chances for employment are too low.

Thus, lack of interpersonal skills, such as the ability to do teamwork and communication skills, made some students feel that they were not ready for entering the job market. Omar, a working student, said that tutors only focused on textbooks and covering exam material. He felt that there was no place for discussion in the classroom and consequently, he did not develop the essential skills needed for the job market.

Asma, a non-working student, pointed out that students felt that they were not ready for jobs; not only because they are not offered practical instruction or lack in some skills, but also because they were not educated enough in knowing the kinds of jobs available in the Kuwaiti market. Asma suggested that AOU connect their students directly with business companies that exist in Kuwait, or indirectly through recruitment agencies.

However, lack of efforts to prepare students for the job market was not necessarily true across the program. For instance, Maya pointed out that some tutors provided their students with some tips for a successful job interview.
In short, while the students felt that they were equipped with academic knowledge they did not feel that the curriculum provided them with the practical skillsets necessary for the job market.

**Self-Confidence**

The fifteen students, except for Mariam, declared that they were confident in themselves as business students due to attaining the knowledge (from an international perspective) from the imported curriculum. Ali (male management student; medium low reported GPA; from an Arabic school), said that he was confident in academic discussions related to the business field due to the knowledge he acquired in the business courses. Maya and Wafaa (two female management students; very high and medium high reported GPAs respectively; from an Arabic school), said that classroom discussions and participation helped them to be confident and speak up. Maya said,

> Discussion and participation helped a little bit in being confident in speaking up because many students are afraid to speak up and afraid to make mistakes. However, when we get used to it, like now I am too confident that sometimes I do make mistakes, but I do not care, it is better than staying silent, so it helped with confidence.

Wafaa said that the acquired knowledge from the program, and participation in a group project in one of her courses, made her feel more confident. This practice helped her learn how to deal with people, how to interact with them, and how to respect others' opinions. She explained by saying,

> First year of study, in some materials we were working as group, participating 2 or 3 students in one TMA, I found that when you have teamwork in the TMA it helped more than if only one student is working on the TMA. This practice at the university helped me in my job, I joined a teamwork at the job, I was not afraid, because I know how to deal with people, and how to interact with them.
However, as previously discussed, this self-confidence decreases when it comes to the gained skills and the practical aspects.

Another area influencing students' self-confidence is their language skills. For example, Ali said that he could now discuss topics related to business, but not in English. He had the required knowledge, but not the language, and this affected his confidence.

While the imported curriculum helped the majority of the students, except for Mariam, gain confidence in theoretical knowledge, they lacked self-confidence about application in the working world. While students reported a few modest efforts in the department, they were not enough to make students feel confident in the job market.

To conclude, this section introduced the findings related to the contribution of the imported business curriculum on students' self-perceived personal and professional growth. The curriculum contributions were: 1) personal and professional development; 2) developing purpose; 3) intellectual competence; 4) interpersonal competence; 5) readiness for the job; and 6) self-confidence. These were examples of how the imported curriculum contributed to students' self-perceived personal and professional growth in different ways. Regardless of the students' self-reported GPAs, and any other demographics status, most of them said that the acquired knowledge from the imported curriculum and tutors' roles both contributed to their self-perceived personal and professional development, and that it helped them to set their goals for the near future. The absence of practical application, and the slight attempts adopted by some tutors to enhance students' interpersonal competence made some of the students (the non-working students) believe that they were not ready for the job market yet, nor were they able to compete with graduates of traditional universities.
This in turn, had a negative effect on non-working students’ self-confidence about their potential in the job market.

In the next section I present students’ suggestions for curriculum modifications to improve and enrich their academic experiences with the imported curriculum.

**What might Students like to change to the Imported Curriculum?**

In this section, I present the findings from one of the interview questions: what might you like to change or add to the program? This question aims to understand, from students’ perspectives, how the current imported curriculum can be modified to improve their experiences in the program.

Overall, the students would like to see the curriculum include local examples to reflect their social, cultural and economics background, to help them feel engaged with the curriculum—especially the textbooks. Two students—Dalal and Omar, felt that the curriculum should remain focused on international perspectives, as they felt this would keep the content at a higher standard.

Students believed the changes that they proposed would allow them to enrich their academic experienced with the imported curriculum as well develop some of their interpersonal and intellectual skills. Following is a general overview of the students’ suggestions:

*The British textbooks:* Overall, students suggested adding local examples to the international ones in textbooks to reflect their environment. Students who preferred to keep the same level of content and language wanted to keep the value of their university degree.

*Learning activities and instructional methods:* students recommended including discussions in their tutorials to allow them to gain the required knowledge
from different perspectives; share with others their experiences; understand the materials; develop and improve personal and intellectual skills; and draw connections between theories and the market.

*Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs):* students felt that changing the format to a group project based assignment requiring fieldwork would allow them to develop their personal and professional skills.

Finally, *the exams:* Most of the students preferred more non-marked participation and non-marked quizzes to add the practical aspect to the evaluation methods; this could be achieved by including and presenting graduate projects to address the gaps in the existing imported curriculum.

Next is a brief section on students' recommended changes at the institutional level to build positive relations between the Arab Open University (AOU) and its students.

**Modifications at the University/Campus Level**

**AOU - Student Relations**

The students highlighted the importance of developing positive relations between the university and the students to support them in their academic journeys. Students would like to have activities at the university and department level such as workshops, seminars, field trips, guest speakers, and internship training programs. According to students, these types of activities contribute to improving their academic experience and builds supportive relationships. Beyond these activities, one student would also like the university to facilitate job fairs and on-campus extra-curricular activities to foster student connections.
Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I presented the profiles of each of the sixteen interviewed students and subsequently presented and discussed findings from student interviews, based on the research questions.

The first part of the results relates to understanding how students experienced the imported curriculum and its four components: the textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, TMAs, and exams.

The results have shown that regardless of their self-reported GPAs and any demographic characteristics, the students did not feel represented in textbooks due to the lack of cultural and social representation and lack of local examples. In spite of this disconnect, however, the students generally, except for Mariam, felt that they gained important new knowledge in the business field, and the majority of students reported different GPAs welcomed learning the international business perspective. While, other students believed that the irrelevance between contexts and the imported curriculum made understanding the materials difficult for them. However, most of the students declared that they gained new knowledge in the business field. Regarding content and language difficulty, students were divided into two groups. One group of students, reported high GPAs, the content and language were not challenging for them. While, the other group of students, reported low GPAs and attended Arabic high schools, the content and language were challenging for them. However, the majority of the students regardless their reported GPAs preferred minor changes in the textbooks, such as adding local examples to the international ones in the interest of retaining the high standards of the curriculum as they viewed it.

All of the students expressed appreciation for tutor explanations of the materials, particularly when they incorporated examples relevant to their
environments. Students overall, except for one, believed that they acquired important theoretical business knowledge; however, all the students felt that the imported curriculum neglects the practical aspect. To address this, students recommended the incorporation of activities into the existing curriculum, including the addition of discussion in their tutorials.

Concerning the TMA component, some students found the assignments useful because doing research on local or international companies enriches their knowledge and some of their skills. Other students declared that they did not have the necessary skills (such as the writing and researching) to be ready for this kind of assignment. However, the majority of the students preferred to revise the existing TMA to make it a practical assignment, as it would allow them to develop their personal and professional skills.

Finally, the majority of the students preferred the current style of exams, which is based on memorization of textbook theory. Many of the students' recommended including non-marked participation and non-marked quizzes in order to support exam preparation.

Overall, students believed that the imported curriculum at the design level was of a high standard. Thirteen students felt that their academic experience was moderate to good, and twelve out of the sixteen interviewees stated explicitly that they would choose to enroll in the Arab Open University again if given the opportunity. Only three students (two reported very low GPAs and one reported very high GPA) said they were not satisfied with the imported curriculum and felt it contributed negatively to their academic experiences.

Notably, students' self-reported GPA was connected to their experience with textbooks. Students’ answers tended to be similar to others within their own low or
high self-reported GPA group concerning textbooks, and dissimilar between the
groups. However, for the rest of the findings, students’ answers were not affected by
their self-reported GPAs. Instead, overall they expressed similar experiences with the
curriculum, and had similar recommendations for modifications at the intended and
enacted levels.

The changes primarily focused on addressing the lack of local examples in
textbooks and the lack of a practical aspect of the imported curriculum.

Students provided different opinions regarding the influence of the imported
curriculum on their academic performance. Students with lower reported GPAs and
weaker English skills felt that the content and language of the textbooks had a
negative influence on their academic performance, while students with higher
reported GPAs felt that their engagement with the imported curriculum positively
influenced their academic performance. Three students responded differently,
attributing their good performance to personal efforts in overcoming the challenges of
the imported curriculum.

Reflecting on students’ perspectives on the imported curriculum, it is
important to acknowledge the difference between what has been borrowed and how it
aligns (or does not align) with students in the hosting country. Students at AOU, even
the ones who were satisfied from the imported curriculum, recommended some
changes to be made to the imported curriculum as designed and as implemented. They
believed that these changes better would reflect their interests and consequently
enrich their academic experience with the imported curriculum as students and as
citizens.

Understanding the potential disconnects between the curriculum as designed
and the curriculum as students experience it will make the borrowed curriculum more
efficient and useful for the adopting country. This recognition supports to a certain extent the systems theory viewpoint that "borrowing is not copying," and that all educational transfers and policy borrowing involve recontextualization and indigenization in their new context.

The British imported business curriculum’s goals, objectives, textbooks, and assessments do not appear to take into account the cultural context of the country where the curriculum is intended to be delivered, although some individual tutors were able to bridge the textbook content and students’ contexts through the use of local examples.

The next chapter presents the summary of the quantitative and qualitative essential findings and sheds light on the commonalities as well as divergence points that emerged from the data, and the discussion of the main findings based on the conceptual framework and literature review.
Chapter 8: Comparisons of the main findings and discussion based on the conceptual framework and literature review

This study investigates higher education faculty members and students’ experiences of internationalization at the Arab Open University-Kuwait branch. It examines students' experiences of the imported curriculum through exploring how this imported curriculum contributed to their academic experience, and the impacts of this imported curriculum on their self-perceived academic performance and its contribution to their self-perceived personal and professional growth. This data integration illuminates the issues and importance of recontextualizing imported curriculum in alignment with students' needs/interests and local requirements, in this case, taking into consideration the idiosyncrasies of the Kuwaiti as well as the Middle Eastern environment.

In this chapter, I present a comparison of the key quantitative and qualitative findings, followed by a summary of the conceptual framework. I then discuss the major findings, addressing each of the research questions, in relation to the conceptual framework and the literature review. I start the chapter by addressing the research questions and end it with a summary drawing all the points together.

Research questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

The main question: How is the Western business curriculum experienced by university faculty members and students at the Arab Open University in Kuwait?

The sub-questions:

1) How did faculty members implement the imported business curriculum?
2) How did students experience the imported business curriculum? (through: textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, assignments and exams)

3) How did the imported business curriculum influence students' self-perceived academic performance and contribute to their self-perceived personal and professional growth.

Comparison of the Main Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

In this section, I compare and contrast the themes that emerged from students' and faculty members' interviews. This is done to identify the key points that both students and faculty members agreed or disagreed with in relation to the research questions. I referred to and compared the themes with the quantitative results when it was applicable.

First research sub-question: How did faculty members implement the imported business curriculum?

Second research sub-question: How did students experience the imported business curriculum? (through: textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, assignments, and exams).

These two questions dealt with students’ and faculty members' perceptions of the textbooks, learning activities and instructional methods, tutor-marked assignments, and exams. This section presents the findings in relation to the curriculum as designed and as implemented. I merged the two questions together because the findings were complementary.

The summary of students and faculty members' findings in relation to each curriculum factor as designed are as follows:

British Textbooks Perception

The relationship between topics and students' backgrounds, and content difficulty, were two common themes that emerged from the findings. While, gaining
new knowledge from textbooks, textbook representation, and textbooks reflecting current trends were themes that emerged explicitly from student interviews.

The Relationship between Topics and Students' Backgrounds

The interviewed students and faculty members said that the British textbooks did not include examples from students' cultural and social backgrounds, and some of the concepts presented in the textbooks cannot apply in the Kuwaiti market. Students said that most of the examples were international and no local cases from the Arab world were included. However, students were familiar with some of these examples, for instance, international chains like McDonald's that have locations in Kuwait.

Faculty members as well as students acknowledged the absence of local examples, and had similar perspectives that this gap, if not filled by faculty members bringing in local examples, resulted in students facing some difficulties in understanding and engaging with the materials. The quantitative results generally supported the qualitative findings: the frequency of the statement, "the textbooks reflect my cultural and social background" showed that the majority (65.7%) of students' responses ranged between strongly disagree, disagree and neutral, while only 33.9% agreed with this statement. The group of students agreeing with this statement might have considered the examples of the franchise companies that exist in Kuwait as examples from their own context. However, the interviewed students felt that examples reflecting their background were in reference to Kuwaiti or Middle Eastern owned and operated examples.
Content Difficulty

Some students and faculty members said that British textbooks are not designed for self-directed learning due to the advanced level of textbooks in content and language. Among students who found the textbooks’ content and language levels to be difficult, the two common factors were lower reported GPAs and Arabic as the language of instruction in the students’ high schools. Students, who reported higher GPAs, regardless the type of school they had previously attended and the language of instruction, either did not find difficulty in the content or they welcomed this difficulty. The quantitative results support the qualitative findings; the frequency of the statements, "the English used in course materials is easily understood" showed that 31.5% of students' responses ranged between disagreed and neutral, while 68.1% agreed with the statement. The majority of the students who agreed with this statement reported higher GPAs, and their language of instruction at high school was either Arabic or English. As well, the frequency of the statements "textbook content is easily understood for independent learning with little need for tutors' explanation" showed that 42.9% of students' responses ranged between disagree and neutral, while 56.7% agreed with this statement.

Gaining New Knowledge from Textbooks, Textbook representation, and Textbooks Reflecting Current Trends

All students, regardless their demographic attributes, felt that they gained new knowledge in the business domains even if the textbooks did not contain local examples. As well, students felt that they were not represented in textbooks due to the lack of local cultural and social representation. Students who currently work felt that
textbooks did not reflect the current trends in the business field, while the non-working students held the opposite view.

Perceptions of Learning Activities and Instructional Methods

Lack of learning/practical activities; the delivery methods used by tutors; and the challenges tutors face in the class were three common themes that emerged from both student and faculty member findings. While, students' preferred learning styles, and some tutors’ lack of practical knowledge only emerged from students' interviews.

Lack of Learning/Practical Activities

Students and faculty members stated that there were no extra learning activities provided in their classes due to the limited time assigned per lecture (in relation to the quantity of content to be covered); and most of the imported curriculum courses lacked the practical aspects. The exclusion of learning activities from the course calendar, as well the lack of practicality, to a certain extent prevented students from gaining the practical knowledge from the curriculum, to know how theories and concepts can be applied properly in their local environment. The quantitative results did not support the qualitative findings; interestingly, the frequency of the statements, "the tutors offered additional activities other than coursework" showed that 59.7% of students' responses ranged between disagree and neutral, while 40.2% agreed with this statement. The 40.2% of students who agreed that tutors offered additional activities might have been referring to particular course tutors rather than in general. According to Mona and Azza, some business course tutors provided extra activities to work on at home. The analysis did not take into consideration the proportions of
students who have taken particular courses, so an unbalanced distribution could have affected the results in this case.

**Delivery Methods Used by Tutors, and Challenges Tutors Face in Class**

Students said that some faculty members used a variety of teaching styles to encourage students to participate in the class; this was affirmed by faculty members. The quantitative results supported the qualitative findings; the frequency of the statement, "tutors use various pedagogical styles" showed that 23.1% of students' responses were ranged between disagreed and neutral, while 76.8% agreed with this statement.

However, as faculty members and students emphasized, students with work experience and those who were proficient in English participated more in the class discussions than their counterparts. The quantitative results supported this fact; the results showed that when English was previously used as the language of instruction (M=3.97, SD=.66), the average score was higher than when it was not (M=3.80, SD=.66). This means that students who used English as the language of instruction at their high school felt more comfortable with the learning activities and instructional methods used by their tutors than those who did not use English in their high school.

**Students' Preferred Learning Styles**

Whether students experienced a lecture-based or a combination of lecturing and discussion, the majority of the interviewed students preferred the combination method because it helped them to understand the materials in a practical way, and through discussions, exposed them to different points of view. The quantitative results supported this fact; the frequency of the following statements: "I prefer a tutors' role
to facilitate my understanding (e.g. through discussion) more than just to lecture", and "tutors encourage me to share my own views/experiences related to the topics in class" showed that 84.9% and 72% of students' responses agreed with these statements respectively.

**Perceptions of Tutors’ (lack of) Practical Knowledge**

Only three students felt that the lack of practical knowledge and the linguistic issues were problems that prevent some tutors from delivering the materials at a high standard.

**Perceptions of Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)**

Local examples/applications versus international ones and usefulness of TMAs were common themes that emerged from student and faculty member findings.

**Local Examples/Applications versus International Ones**

Students stated that case studies and examples presented in the TMA were either local or international depending on the course. Two of the interviewed faculty members were GCCs who acknowledged that they designed the TMA to be relevant to students' environment and help students to understand the materials through relating the theories to local applications in the Middle East. The quantitative results supported the qualitative findings; the frequency of the statement, "in my TMA, I was able to refer to non-British local, and international examples" showed that 22.2% of students' responses ranged between disagreed and neutral, while 77.4% agreed with this statement.
Usefulness of TMAs

Four out of six faculty members and the majority of students said that TMAs allowed students to use the theoretical information that they learned and apply it to real organizations and thus develop their intellectual skills. However, two out of six faculty members found that the current design of the TMA was not helping students to develop their practical skills and two students stated that they did not feel well equipped to solve their assignments as well. The quantitative results supported the qualitative findings; the frequency of the following statements: "the assignments allow me to connect ideas and concepts that I have learned from my business courses with my prior experiences and knowledge", and "the assignments reflect the business concepts, principles, and theories presented in the textbooks" showed that 60.9% and 61.8% of students' responses agreed with these statements respectively.

Perceptions of Exams

A common theme that emerged from student and faculty member findings was the comment that exams are based on textbook and memory. The exam content and time assigned only emerged from students' interviews.

Exams are Textbook and Memory Based

Students and faculty members said that exams were drawn from textbooks and that the majority of the exam questions were based on memorization, rarely including critical questions. Students preferred the current format of the exam. However five faculty interviewees had a different view, as they felt that exams should contain some critical and indirect questions for more meaningful evaluation. The quantitative results demonstrated that the majority of students (81.9%) agreed that exams were
based on concepts and theories presented in the textbooks. This result aligned with student and faculty member interview findings. However, 57.3% of students, regardless of their GPA, agreed that exam questions allowed them to include critical analysis. This result contradicted with the interview findings. This discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative results might be due to students misunderstanding the critical analysis concept on the questionnaire. (The students might have considered ‘critical analysis’ to include the use of real examples to support exam answers).

Regardless of their GPA, 58.2% of students agreed on the importance of non-marked quizzes to improve their academic performance. This result aligned with the student and faculty interview findings, as non-marked quizzes were generally viewed as effective exam preparation. Five interviewed students preferred having non-marked quizzes, while the rest did not prefer having non-marked quizzes and this represented by the 40% of students who did not agree on the importance of non-marked quizzes. Only two out of sixteen students found that exams covered too many questions relative to the assigned time for exam completion.

**Program Quality**

All students as well as faculty members agreed that the imported curriculum in the business program was of a high standard and contained an advanced level of information and knowledge. The quantitative results were generally in line with students' and faculty members' perspectives; students tended more towards agreeing (67%) than disagreeing that the overall quality of the academic business program is high.
In summary, the quantitative and qualitative findings showed that at the design level: students' exposure to the international aspects of the imported curriculum, the new knowledge that it is provided through textbooks, the usefulness of the TMAs, and the exams as memory-based contributed positively to students' academic experience to a certain degree. While, the lack of local examples from textbooks and the lack of the practical aspects and activities had a negative contribution to students' academic experience; however faculty members help to address some of these weaknesses through their explanations, including and referring to local examples. Students as well as faculty members believed that the imported curriculum is of a high standard.

The second section of students' and faculty members' perceptions reports on the findings related to the curriculum experience as implemented; the themes that emerged are as follows: tutors' explanations and active learning/lack of active learning; and AOU - student relations were common themes emerging from student and faculty member interview data. ‘Tutor - student relationships’ emerged only from students' interviews and ‘providing supplementary materials’ only emerged from faculty members' interviews.

**Tutors' Explanations**

Students considered the tutors to be the bridge connecting the imported curriculum to students. According to the students, tutors facilitated learning the materials and concepts presented in textbooks and made it relevant to students' backgrounds through using local examples to connect between theory and practice. Similarly, faculty members stated that they moved from local to global and vice versa to show their students how things are connected and interrelated. The quantitative
results supported this fact; the frequency of the statement, "tutors help me to link theory and practice by presenting real cases of business operations" showed that 73.5% of students agreed with this statement.

**Active Learning Pedagogies**

Students as well as faculty members said that when active learning activities, such as discussions, were used in class, this helped to connect the curriculum to real life, enrich students' knowledge, and allow them to gain some interpersonal and intellectual skills. The quantitative results supported this fact; the frequency of the statement, "tutors use various pedagogical styles (e.g. lectures, case studies, discussions, demonstrations)" showed that 76.8% of students' responses agreed with this statement, while 23.1% of students' responses were ranged between disagree and neutral.

**Lack of Active Learning Pedagogies**

When active pedagogical teaching approach was not implemented, students felt it had a negative impact on their academic experience. Five interviewed students reported that for most of the classes they attended, tutors did not include any active learning in their tutorials, aligned with the 23.1% of students' who disagreed with the statement "tutors use various pedagogical styles". However, all the interviewed faculty members asserted that they offered active learning in their classes, but that this active learning turned into one-way delivery when the majority of the students preferred not to participate in class discussions.
AOU – Student Relations

Students as well as faculty members affirmed that the lack of social and academic activities on campus affected students' academic experience and students' relationships with AOU.

Tutor– Student Relationships

Five students said that they had a good relationship with some of their tutors, and that this good relationship affected their academic experience positively. One student felt that a bad relationship with one tutor had a negative impact on her academic experience. This theme was embedded in the section related to faculty members' role in students' personal and professional growth.

Supplementary Materials

Two out of the six faculty members developed their own supplementary materials to support their students in understanding the materials presented in the British textbooks and make it more relevant and accessible for them.

In summary, the quantitative and the qualitative findings at the implementation level showed that students valued their tutors’ role in explaining and facilitating the materials, especially the tutors who used active learning settings to help students make connections between the materials and the local market through sharing and discussing students’ perspectives.

Third research sub- question:

How did the imported business curriculum influence students' self-perceived academic performance and contribute to their self-perceived personal and professional growth?
Students' Self-Perceived Academic Performance

Curriculum as designed

Five students felt that their low academic performance was due to the content and language difficulty of the imported curriculum. Students who reported higher GPAs felt that their integration with the imported curriculum positively influenced their academic performance. These findings supported the quantitative results regarding students' perspectives of the influence of the imported curriculum on their academic performance. Results showed that students tended to believe that the four factors of the imported business curriculum (British textbooks and course materials, tutors' learning activities and instructional methods, the TMAs, and the exams) had aided their academic performance. Moreover, the multiple regression results showed that the perception of the TMAs was the strongest predictor of students' self-perceived academic performance. As well, the ordinal regression analysis results showed that students' perception of textbooks was the strongest predictor of students' actual academic performance. Students who felt that the content and language of the textbooks was difficult tended to have lower GPAs.

Tutors' Role – Academic Performance

While three students with high GPAs attributed their high performance to their personal efforts rather than tutors' influence, the other students with higher reported GPAs credited tutors with helping them in their academic achievements. Faculty members did not provide any direct information on their role in students' academic performance.
**Students’ Self-Perceived Personal and Professional Growth**

Personal and professional development, intellectual competence, interpersonal competence, and readiness for the job were common themes that emerged from student and faculty interview findings of how the imported curriculum contributed to students' self-perceived personal and professional growth. Developing purpose and self-confidence were two themes emerged from students' interviews.

**Personal and Professional Development**

Students and faculty members felt that the imported curriculum played a major role in providing students with the required knowledge to be involved in the world of business. The quantitative findings were in agreement with the quantitative results; 80% of students responded that the imported curriculum contributed "quite a bit" to "very much" to knowledge about real problems and issues in the business field.

**Intellectual Competence**

Students who experienced discussion-based tutorials felt that the business program and the instructional methods helped them to improve their way of thinking. Faculty interviewees shared the same viewpoint about the benefits of discussion-based tutorials for student learning. Some students said that certain business courses and tutors' explanations shifted their way of thinking; this was described as a shift from thinking within the box to thinking outside the box. This way of thinking enhanced their skills in critical thinking, system thinking, and problem-solving. This finding was in agreement with the quantitative results that showed that 84% of students responded that the imported curriculum contributed "quite a bit" to "very much" to developing their skills in the area of thinking critically and analytically.
Interpersonal Skills

Students and faculty members said that discussion allowed students to gain the interpersonal skills needed in the workplace. However, students said that they would like to have more discussion in the class as because there is not currently enough time allotted for discussions. This finding was not in agreement with the quantitative results that showed 83% of students responded that the imported curriculum contributed "quite a bit" to "very much" in developing their skills in the area of speaking up clearly and effectively, and 73% of students responded that the imported curriculum contributed "quite a bit" to "very much" in developing their skills in the area of working efficiently with others. The quantitative results might reflect the cumulative interpersonal skills gained from the whole courses taken by students, while the qualitative results might represent the interpersonal skills gained only at the time where the interviews conducted.

Readiness for the Job

All students and faculty members said that the curriculum provided students with theoretical knowledge but it lacked a practical component. The lack of practical aspects within the imported curriculum prohibited students from gaining the "know-how" and the skills needed to be ready for the job market. The non-working students believed that they were not ready for the job due to the lack of the practical aspect and they did not feel confident in their interpersonal skills. The interview findings somewhat reflected the quantitative results but not entirely. The survey results showed that 68.1% of students responded that the imported curriculum contributed "quite a bit" to "very much" in obtaining a job or work related to students' knowledge and skills. The qualitative findings indicated that the imported curriculum provided
students with the theoretical knowledge, so the 68.1% of students who felt the curriculum contributed to obtaining a job might have been referring to the knowledge aspect rather than practical skills development.

**Developing Purpose**

Students felt that the acquired knowledge from the imported curriculum and tutors’ explanations inspired them to develop their academic and employment goals.

**Self-Confidence**

The students felt that the lack of practical application opportunities offered by the imported curriculum did not develop the needed skills for competence in the job market.

*The main research question: How is the Western business curriculum experienced by university faculty members and students at the Arab Open University in Kuwait?*

Twelve interviewed students declared that they would choose to go through the program again, if given the choice, and thirteen out of sixteen students said they had good/satisfactory experiences with the imported curriculum. This finding was significant in the quantitative results: 40.1% stated that they would "definitely yes" take the British curriculum if given a choice, 39% stated that they "probably yes". 16.2% and 4.5% stated that they "probably no" and "definitely no" respectively would take the British curriculum if given a choice. The student interviewees also generally felt that their experience with the imported curriculum was good, and they would recommend AOU to their family members and friends. This finding was significant in the quantitative results; 28.3% stated that their entire educational experience of the
British courses was excellent and 57.2% had a good experience. However, students and faculty members suggested some modifications at the design and implementation levels, as they believed these modifications would enrich students’ academic experience. Students as well faculty members recommended adding locally relevant cases and examples to the materials, practical skills development through reformatting assignments, changing the current grading and evaluation methods, and adding new courses that would support students in their academic and professional journeys. When an ordinal analysis was conducted on the survey data, it indicated a positive relationship between textbook perception and self-reported academic performance, indicating that revising textbooks to include local examples might improve students’ academic performance.

In summary, regardless of students’ self-reported GPAs, the changes that students suggested focused on making improvements to the four facets of the imported curriculum: the British textbooks, learning activities, tutor marked assignments and exams. Faculty members’ views were in line with students’ suggestions, which is evident by the ways in which they have implemented some of these suggested changes (for example, supporting students using local examples to draw connections with theory, and providing supplementary materials to facilitate students’ learning).

Discussion of the Main Findings based on the Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

In brief, my study is guided by the Steiner-Khamsi policy borrowing analytical framework, which is based on systems theory. Steiner-Khamsi’s framework seeks to understand why educational transfer has occurred in the first place (externalization), how it is locally adapted and modified (recontextualization), and what impact the
educational transfer has on existing policy (internalization). Focusing on the recontextualization processes, I sought to learn whether, and if so how, any local modifications were taking place in the imported curriculum, from students' and faculty members' perspectives, and how the imported curriculum can be localized to fit students' social, cultural, and economic environments to enrich students' self-perceived academic experience.

Some findings from this study were consistent with the theories presented in the literature review, while other findings challenged them. In general however, most of the findings supported the recontextualization concept presented in the conceptual framework that advised adjusting the imported curriculum to fit its new context. According to the qualitative findings, the imported curriculum as designed, especially the textbooks, was based on the providers' context rather than the local one. Therefore, students and faculty members indicated the need to recontextualize the imported curriculum to fit with the local students, while keeping the international perspective, in order to create integration between the global and local.

The following discussions were derived from this study’s findings and presented according to the study's research questions.

**First research sub-question discussion: How did faculty members implement the imported business curriculum?**

All faculty members affirmed that they use and deliver the same materials from the Open University-United Kingdom. This reflects Dunn and Wallace’s (2006) view that regardless of the nature of the relationship between faculty at the host country and the home institution, faculty at the host country should use and deliver the same materials and contents that reflect the same academic standards as in the home country.
Strategies to address the perceived weaknesses and disconnects in the imported curriculum included: incorporating local examples, providing supplementary materials, and modifying the criteria and format of assignments and exams.

The faculty interviewees' experiences reflect Hughes' (2011) observation that faculty members might face some challenges while delivering the home institution's curriculum if this curriculum does not align with and reflect the needs of the local students and their surrounding local environment.

Faculty members also felt that a jointly designed curriculum between AOU faculty members and OU-UK would make a huge difference in students' academic experience and performance. This aligns with Hughes’ suggestion that home institutions take faculty experiences into consideration when designing the imported curriculum and make adjustments relevant to the host country’s context. For instance, some of these suggested changes include, "different prioritization of student needs, and differences in teaching and assessment methods" (Hughes, 2011, p.23).

Second research sub-question discussion: How did students experience the imported curriculum and its four components (the materials, the activities and instructional methods, the TMAs and the exams)?

All participants (students and faculty members) agreed that the imported curriculum as designed is of a sufficiently high standard, and that it covers all the fundamental concepts and theories in business. From the participants' perspectives, however, the imported curriculum does not consider the local environment.

Nevertheless, half (eight) of the interviewed students said that while they preferred to have local examples in textbooks, it did not affect their learning either way. Instead, they welcomed being exposed to an international perspective. They felt
that they benefited from the business program because the international examples helped to broaden their business perspectives and consequently readied them to continue their studies abroad. This group of students believed that it is beneficial for local students to be exposed to international practices and concepts rather than being restricted to only learning about the local environment. This perception aligns with Velayo’s (2012) position concerning the goal behind an internationalized curriculum. Velayo (2012) stated that an internationalized curriculum should "transforms students' national perspectives into a broader and more informed view of the world in which students understand and appreciate the interdependence among nations and among world cultures" (p.4).

This group of students also viewed the complexity of course content and the language difficulty as a learning opportunity. They believed that being AOU students was an opportunity for them to learn, upgrade their knowledge, and differentiate themselves from other universities’ graduate students. This finding supports one of the main goals of the imported curriculum, which is to offer students a unique experience by exposing them to new forms of learning and knowledge (Kuh et al., 2005; Strange, 2003). It similarly reflects the benefits of internationalization highlighted in Mazon’s' study (2009), which include, "offering opportunities for students to develop cross-cultural skills (Kitsantas, 2004; Scott, 1993), and improving students' foreign language ability (Brecht et al., 1995; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004)" (p.3).

This group of students also believed that the process of gaining knowledge from the curriculum was part of a lifelong journey of learning and development, rather than simply studying to pass the exam. This perspective was in line with two of the main rationales for internationalization at the national and institutional levels; namely, nation/capacity building and student development (Knight, 2004), and also
aligned with AOU’s mission and vision. According to Knight (2004), nation-building occurs when well-educated and knowledgeable students are capable of producing new knowledge and making significant differences in their country. Those educated and knowledgeable students are the vital productive resources for a country’s development. The rationale for nation-building at the national level goes hand in hand with the rationale for students' development at the institutional level. Students' development involves an upgrading of their understandings and skills to become life-long learners through the institutions, enabling students to contribute to the social and economic development and productivity of their country, community and workplace.

The other group of eight interviewed students felt that regardless of whether or not they were familiar with the examples presented in textbooks, the absence of local examples makes them feel disengaged with the contents. Consequently, students as well as faculty members admitted that students might be ready to work internationally but not locally as they are not able to apply theory to local practice. This finding supports Altbach’s (2004) and Cichocki’s (2005) concerns about the threat to local cultures and indigenous traditions by Western transnational education providers. It also emphasizes Altbach's idea as highlighted by Walsh (2011), who stated that, "there is often little effort to adapt foreign provider programs to the language, needs, or traditions of the receiving country" (p.40).

The absence of local examples in textbooks contradicts the social and cultural rationales for internationalization. Representing and reflecting the society in textbooks is not only limited to permitting students' engagement with, and understanding the curriculum, but it also goes beyond that. It helps students to be involved in developing their society. Working towards human development and capacity building is
considered to be one of the motivations for internationalization at national and institutional levels.

One of the aims of internationalizing nation's educational system is to build intercultural and mutual understanding among countries, and to recognize the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity in a nation's education system (de Wit, 2002; Knight, 1997). However, according to this group of students and faculty members, the imported curriculum fails in this area, as the content only focuses on Western culture and language. In turn, this leads to its inability in creating any mutual academic understanding among different countries.

One of the faculty members highlighted this in his interview, commenting that students' identities get lost between Western normalization and local particularity when the curriculum does not reflect the local environment. This is because what they study does not reflect the idiosyncrasies of the Kuwaiti public sector and the local environment. As a consequence, the programs will produce unqualified, incapable students and citizens who cannot lift-up and develop their economic and social sectors.

**Third research sub-question discussion:** How did the imported business curriculum influence students' self-perceived academic performance and contribute to their self-perceived personal and professional growth?

The absence of local examples and the lack of practical aspects negatively affect some students' self-perceived academic experiences and their readiness for the job market. Students reported facing problems in their real life jobs due to contradictions between concepts presented in textbooks and their workplace realities.
They attributed this to the curriculum only exposing them to examples outside of their own context that deal with issues and realities different from their own.

AOU business students had a similar experience to the students in Hoare's study (2011), who felt that the Western curriculum they studied did not apply to their work environments. Students' views about their negative academic experiences affirms Milszewska & Sztendur's (2012) findings, which indicate that curriculum irrelevance is a serious issue in cross-border education when it does not consider the local context. This is also consistent with Dunn & Wallace (2006) and Smith (2010) who suggest that Western providers should adapt the curriculum to the local environment of the host institutions, and not doing so could negatively affect curriculum delivery and student outcomes. The strong influence of content on students’ learning experience aligns with the survey data, showing that students view textbooks as having the strongest influence on their academic performance.

Interviewed students with higher reported GPAs attributed their academic achievements to competence in English and participation in class discussions, factors that are cited in the literature as among the key factors for students’ positive achievement (Harb & El Shaarawi, 2006). The interview data showed that students attributed these two factors to keeping them engaged in the program and driving them to pursue further studies.

According to Tinto (1975), students with positive academic experience and performance have a good integration with the academic system as measured by grade performance and intellectual development. Students with good academic experience and high standing achievement contradicts Donn and Manthri (2013) position on the imported curriculum, suggesting that imported curriculum might teach local students about international concepts but might not contribute to their success.
The absence of local examples at the design level had been overcome, to some extent, at the implementation level. The students were in agreement that in classrooms, faculty members provided students with local examples to explain how business concepts could be applied in Kuwait. This recontextualization at the implementation level supports the theorists who have stated that national differences affect the type of delivery used to implement global policies and curricula into local systems (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Ball, 1998). According to these theorists, homogeneity and similarity exist at the planned level of the imported curriculum, while at the implemented level diversity exists. This diversity emerges through the interaction between the teacher and students; what happens in one context is different than what happens in another context (Anderson-Levitt, 2008).

The tutors’ role in recontextualization helped students to connect between the local and global, be engaged with and understand the contents easily, gain the required benefits from the imported curriculum, and enhance students' academic experience in general. This process of recontextualization made by tutor to the materials of the imported curriculum is in accord with Dewey (1938) and Dressel's (1968) position indicating that any changes made by educators in the objective conditions such as books, materials, and instructional methods might have some effects on student experience and lead to changes in the curriculum experience among students. When these objective conditions are well selected and planned, students will learn what is supposed to be learnt (Dewey, 1938; Dressel 1968). This, in turn, leads to improvements in students' academic experience and they will gain not only the acquired knowledge, but also the skills from the hidden curriculum.

All participants agreed that tutors were the bridge between students and the imported curriculum. This bridge aims to make connections between textbooks and
students' real life experiences to enhance students' self-perceived academic experience which in turn impacts their self-perceived academic performance and their self-reported GPAs. This finding is in accordance with studies indicating that the teacher has a major role in the academic achievements of the student. Positive associations have been found between the teacher’s role and students' academic achievements (e.g., Daniyal, Nawaz, Aleem, & Hassan, 2011; Musttqa & Khan, 2012).

Moreover, students' findings emphasized that knowledgeable tutors who encourage students to think critically play a vital role in their academic and personal experience. This finding seems to be consistent with Tam, Heng, and Jiang’s (2009) study, which found that undergraduate students in China prefer faculty members who are "knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction, making connections to student learning beyond textbooks and examinations, and employing more student centered-teaching approaches to engage and inspire students" (p. 147).

The first part of the findings of this third research sub-question addressed students' academic experience and self-perceived performance with the imported curriculum. These findings help fill the gap in the literature, as little research focuses on students' experience with cross-border education in Kuwait, and students' voices regarding imported curriculum are rarely heard (Chapman & Pyvis, 2005; Cuthbert, Smith, & Boey, 2008).

The second part of the findings of the third research-sub questions examines the contribution of the imported curriculum to students' self-perceived personal and professional growth.

Almost all students agreed that they gained from the imported curriculum a new vision and perspective, and a new way of thinking in business, and it helped them to set their goals in the future. The imported curriculum helped some students in
developing their competence and setting their professional and personal purpose. This finding aligns with Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of student development which states that curriculum is one of the environmental influences that affects the identity and personal growth of the student through offering diverse perspectives.

While some students felt that they gained the academic knowledge, they did not feel they were prepared for the job because they did not acquire the necessary skills from the program. The absence of local examples and the lack of practical aspects negatively affect some students' self-perceived academic experiences and their readiness for the job market. Thus, the imported curriculum might prepare local students for international concepts but not for local jobs; this supports the claim raised by Donn and Manthri (2013) that imported curricula/programs may be of the highest quality in the home countries but do not necessarily travel well or serve the interests of higher education students in the host countries.

The lack of a practical aspect and learning activities prevented some students from developing their personal and professional growth. Students expressed that this contradicts the AOU's mission as well as the academic, social and institutional rationales for internationalization, which are considered to be: personal growth and students' development (Qiang, 2003; Knight, 1997, 2004).

According to Anderson-Levitt (2008), although the same policies and curricula are imported into the local context, this similarity disappears to some extent when the borrowed curriculum is implemented in local classrooms. This diversity emerges through the interactions between the teacher and students, and "as decided by teachers and students in specific contexts since what actually happens in classrooms varies widely around the world" (Anderson-Levitt, 2008, p.363). The imported curriculum as implemented at AOU differed from one faculty member to another.
Some faculty members adopted a combination of discussion and tutorial lecturing in an active learning setting to develop students' intellectual and critical thinking and interpersonal competence. This was done to make them ready for the job with the concern that otherwise they cannot compete with graduates from traditional universities. The position of those tutors (faculty members) aligns with Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) theory of student development which stated that teaching is one of the critical influences that affect the identity and personal growth of the student, primarily when teachers use active learning to help students develop better interpersonal relationships and positive intercultural identities.

Few students mentioned that some of their faculty members based their classes on lecturing only and were not aware of using active learning and respect students’ learning differences. Therefore, their position contradicts Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory because these faculty members appeared unaware that such teaching strategies as active learning affect cognitive students' development in the form of active thinking and integration of ideas. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993) active learning supports student learning to develop better interpersonal relationships and positive intercultural identities. As well, their approach disregards Kolb's (1981) theory, which states that students adapt and prefer different learning styles that help them in absorbing knowledge better, and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) advice that educators should be aware of the different needs of their students and adjust their instructional methods to address these differences. Barmeyer (2004) also includes the consideration of culture: "for optimal learning process, instructors need to understand their students' learning styles and their culture" (p.579).
In summary, all participants emphasized that to enhance students' academic experience of the imported curriculum and to improve their academic performance, some modifications should be made to the imported curriculum as designed and implemented. The curriculum modifications suggested by the participants focus on modifying the content in a balanced way that is relevant to students' backgrounds, through adding practical activities, using an interactive learning approach, re-formatting assignments and the criteria, including critical analysis requirements in evaluations, and adding new courses that match with student and market needs.

From participants' perspectives, these modifications to the imported curriculum as designed and implemented are required to build a bridge between students and the imported curriculum. This bridge will help students improve their academic experience as well their academic performance. For example, the desire to have local examples and practical activities incorporated into the curriculum agrees with the views of Chickering and Reisser (1993), who suggested that curriculum content be made more relevant to students' backgrounds and prior experiences, and activities be provided to help them integrate diverse perspectives. They felt that these approaches would help students develop their identity and enhance their personal growth.

According to Dressel (1968), when materials, instructional methods, assignments, activities, and evaluation methods are well selected and planned, students will learn what is anticipated. Therefore, perhaps implementing the modifications suggested by participants would help students learn and benefit from what is anticipated from the imported curriculum. Furthermore, the participants' responses agree with Dewey’s (1938/63) theory that when educators change objective
conditions such as books, the materials, and the total situation in which a student is engaged, it will affect students' academic experience.

Students requested slight modifications to the imported curriculum in order to preserve the quality and value of their foreign university degree, and gain both international and local business perspectives. The views of the AOU students align with the views of the students in Willis' (2004) study, who preferred minor adaptations to teaching styles and course content that would allow them to gain the foreign university experience integrated with the local one.

Students' and faculty members' views on modification are in line with a prominent theme in the higher education internationalization literature: imported curriculum should not only be globalized but also localized. According to these scholars, Western providers do not have to use the same curriculum of their home institution; instead, they should adapt to local environments by taking the social, economic, and political factors of the receiving country into consideration (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Edwards, 2003; Smith, 2010).

The students’ and faculty’s views on modifications also align with the systems theory presented in the conceptual framework, asserting that borrowing should not be copying; and that working towards successful educational transfer and policy borrowing should always involve recontextualization and indigenization within their new context.

If implemented, however, these modifications would challenge the United Kingdom’s educational code which does not recommend adjusting the curriculum to the cultural norms of the receiving countries for the sake of maintaining quality (Smith, 2010). The UK Quality Assurance Agency’s Code of Practice highlights that any movement away from UK standards, "could be deleterious to the partnership,
institutional reputations and student learning” (Smith, 2010, p. 802). Therefore, in order to make changes, AOU and OU-UK would have to agree on a joint re-design of the curriculum that would preserve the international standard and at the same time include local perspectives.

**Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I presented a comparison of the significant quantitative and qualitative findings, and I discussed the findings based on the conceptual framework and the literature review.

The section that compares the main quantitative and qualitative findings, as well as the discussion section based on the conceptual framework and the literature review, indicated that students and faculty members participating in this study demonstrated in varying ways the need to recontextualize and modify the imported curriculum in order to be relevant to students' contexts. Instead of assuming that the imported curriculum be implemented as-is to the new context, participants stated and indicated the opposite. The discussion section pointed out that the provider did not consider the borrower's local context nor make the necessary changes to the imported curriculum to make it relevant to the borrower's backgrounds. However, students and tutors (faculty members) believed that the imported curriculum is of a high standard, and that the majority of the students welcomed the challenges in the content as well welcomed to be exposed to international perspectives as it widen their knowledge.

The modifications suggested by students and faculty members, in relation to the main research question, are evidence that borrowing policy should not be a "copying process"; recontextualization should to be done to the imported curriculum, as designed as well as implemented, in order to enhance students' academic
experience and academic performance, and to have a successful implementation of the borrowed ideas and practices.
Chapter 9: Overview & Recommendations

In this final chapter, I present a restatement of the research background and its purpose and significance. Next, is an overview of the previous chapters and, finally, I discuss recommendations and suggest future research possibilities.

Restatement of the Research Background and Purpose

In addition to the traditional educational systems, new providers, new delivery methods, and new types of programs emerged in most countries due to internationalization. Importing curriculum is considered a cross-border initiative for internationalization and it is a common feature in most countries. Although students who study this curriculum in their home country and faculty members who deliver this curriculum are those most affected by it, little is known about their experiences and perspectives regarding the imported curriculum (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Green, 2005).

My study has two major objectives: 1) to understand how an imported curriculum is adapted in its new context, from the perspectives of faculty members and students; and 2) to fill part of the gap in the literature on the internationalization of higher education by focusing on faculty members and student experiences with imported curriculum as designed versus as adapted specifically in Kuwait.

Significance of the Research

This study contributes to understanding how students and faculty members experience and interact with the imported curriculum. This study offered a meaningful opportunity for AOU-Kuwait students and faculty members to be heard and share their experiences regarding transnational education; this contributes to filling the
existing gap in the literature on students' reflections on the imported curriculum, especially in the Middle East and in Kuwait, supported by insights from faculty members.

This study also provided insights into the changes/modifications as suggested by students and faculty members that they recommended to be instituted at the institutional and departmental level at AOU. Suggestions for specific and practical adjustments for recontextualization were identified at the design and implemented level. The main recommendation from faculty members was for modifications to the curriculum to be jointly designed by the business department at AOU headquarters, in collaboration with OU-UK, to ensure international standards are maintained, while incorporating local accreditation requirements, local students' backgrounds and interests, and the local market's characteristics.

This study suggested that OU-UK design a potential business curriculum that takes into consideration the context (issues, needs, contributions and examples) of the hosting countries. Based on the perspectives of those directly affected, it is clear that the imported curriculum should not be a "copy-paste" process. Instead, it should be recontextualized when needed, to fit with students' environmental backgrounds, interests, and needs, in order to achieve the national and institutional objectives behind the internationalization concepts.

**Overview of chapters 1-8**

The first two chapters of this thesis articulated the need for research that delves into faculty members' and students' experiences of internationalization and to hear their voices concerning an imported curriculum. Chapter One presented the role of internationalization in higher education in the Arab region. I also discussed the
motivations that prompted me to conduct this study, and presented the main research questions.

Chapter Two reviewed the relevant literature that has informed this study, highlighting that borrowed curriculum should be modified and recontextualized to fit with students' backgrounds, interests, and needs.

In Chapter Three, I laid out the conceptual framework for this study, based on Steiner-Khamsi’s framework of policy borrowing and the systems theory for understanding the externalization, recontextualization, and internalization processes of international borrowing policy. Elements from Steiner-Khamsi’s framework were used to understand, from faculty members' and students' perspectives, how the imported curriculum was recontextualized at the implementation as well as whether and how modifications should be made.

Chapter Four presented the contexts of Kuwait and the Arab Open University and outlined the mixed method design that I used to conduct my research. I discussed the research sample, and the data collection and analysis for the interviews as well as the questionnaire.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven presented the analyses of this study's results. Chapter Five discussed findings from faculty members' interviews. This chapter aimed to add insight into faculty members' perceptions and their experiences with the four factors of the imported business curriculum. As well, it shed light on faculty members' role in students' academic experience and personal and professional growth. To determine whether faculty members adjusted the imported curriculum to align with students' needs, this chapter identified differences between the curriculum as designed and implemented. The chapter concluded by highlighting the recommendation from faculty members that OU-UK and AOU work together to
update the current curriculum to create a Middle Eastern/Western version based on the Kuwaiti and Arab market demands.

Chapter Six presented the quantitative analysis and outlined the primary findings of students' perceptions as related to the imported curriculum. The results demonstrated that, regardless of most of the demographic characteristics, students tended to find the imported business curriculum to be useful and of a high standard. Moreover, students tended to evaluate their entire educational experience as good and excellent; they also tended to say they would choose to re-enroll in the program if they were given a choice.

Chapter Seven dealt with the qualitative results of students' interviews. This chapter aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences with the imported curriculum. The qualitative results have shown that while the imported curriculum is of a high standard, students generally did not find it relevant as it did not reflect their environment. Students suggested some changes to be made to the imported curriculum to respond to their educational needs.

Chapter Eight presented the summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings, answering the research questions and discussing the findings under the conceptual framework umbrella that emphasized modifying the imported curriculum. The chapter demonstrated that when appropriate modifications take place, students benefit from the intended imported curriculum.

In this chapter, chapter Nine, the concluding chapter, I restate the research statement and offering some recommendations for practice and future research possibilities, concluding the chapter by presenting my final thoughts regarding this study.
Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice were derived from the findings of this study. These practices are arranged according to the research questions.

First Research Sub-Question Recommendation

Faculty members are the transmitters for students' voices. They are aware of know students’ needs and are therefore the best people to consult with in redesigning the imported curriculum.

Second Research Sub-Question Recommendation

Recontextualize the imported curriculum. Redesigning the imported curriculum according to students and faculty members’ suggestions will provide students with equal opportunities in the learning process while accessing the same quality of education as their Western counterparts. To enhance students' academic experience of the imported curriculum, changes should be made to the objective conditions mentioned by Dewey (1938/63), including: books, materials, and learning facilities.

According to Dewey, educators have the most direct control over these conditions, and any changes made by the educators in the objective conditions will have the possibility to lead to changes in the school and curriculum experience among students. Therefore, it is important for faculty members as well the business deanship to build a close relationship with their students to better understand and identify the best conditions that fit with students' needs and requirements.
Third Sub-Research Question Recommendation

Students' self-perceived academic performance: Students with lower reported GPAs felt that their low performance was due to the content and language difficulty. These students felt it would help to have supplementary materials written in simple English to help them understand the content and overcome the language difficulty.

Students' self-perceived personal and professional growth: Students expressed the need for a bridge between textbooks and real business examples from their environment to learn how they can appropriately transfer international knowledge and benefit from this knowledge in their jobs (transferable knowledge). Specifically, they recommended the addition of practical components to the imported curriculum, including field trips, inviting professional speakers from diverse industrial domains to AOU's campus, and reformatting the TMA to include the option of working with local organizations.

The goal of the imported curriculum is to not only to give students a certificate of completion, but to also permit them to start or continue a lifelong journey of learning (capacity building). This aspect is mentioned in AOU's vision and mission, but in the reality is different. Efforts need to be made by AOU and faculty members to help students change their mentalities and lift them up from passive to active students, leading them to be active citizens in their society.

To this end, modifications should not be limited to the imported curriculum and classrooms setting, but should also provide professional development to the faculty members. Professional training helps faculty members implement the imported curriculum better and ensure the quality of education at the implementation level. This aligns with Dunn and Wallace (2006) who refer to a number of studies (e.g., Dixon and Scott, 2003; Sheehy, 2004) that have shown the need for
"professional development of local academic staff who teach in their home countries for partner organizations in Australian degree programs" (p.361) to support and equip them with the necessary skills to deliver the imported curriculum effectively.

This study has suggested that a holistic approach should be taken into consideration before and during the curriculum import. The educational process is not only about dealing with students' minds through developing their intellectual competences; it goes further than that. According to the holistic approach, education should also touch students' hearts. Students have to feel engaged with the curriculum to delve into it and gain not only the knowledge (minds), but also develop the interpersonal competencies and skills that stay with them (hearts). Empowered by the knowledge and skills, students become active participants not only in the classroom setting but also in society.

**Main Question Recommendation**

If educational policy borrowing does not reflect the local environment, students will not be provided with the quality of education that will help them make real and vital changes in their social and economic sectors, and in their personal and professional lives.

Thus, local and international accreditation authorities should require borrowers to provide a designed curriculum that fits with the local social needs, supporting regional and individual development and providing students with equal opportunities for learning.

Some personal efforts were made by the faculty members of the business department to recontextualize the imported curriculum by referring to local examples in classes and presenting local case studies in the assignments, and when possible,
faculty members designed supplementary materials to facilitate students understanding and engagement with the materials. From students' and faculty members' perspectives, however, these efforts were insufficient. Faculty members recommended that, instead of a top-down approach for importing and implementing the imported curriculum, OU-UK and AOU should consider revising the imported curriculum and jointly design a new curriculum to accommodate students' needs. Moreover, all faculty members should have professional training and development to understand how to effectively deliver and implement the curriculum.

Changing and modifying the imported curriculum is not an easy process, and it should take place through the combined efforts of the local and international stakeholders involved in the educational and the transplanting process.

**Research Limitations**

There were several limitations in this study. First, this study was conducted only at AOU- Kuwait; the other seven branches of AOU in various Arab countries are not included in this study. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized. Second, this study was conducted in the first two weeks in the month of May. Since students to prepare for the final exams in this month, it limited the number of students who participated in the survey. Therefore, the interviewed students are not representative of the survey group. Third because the interviewed faculty members were all full-time male-faculty members, female and part-time faculty members’ perspectives were missing.
Future Research

Future research could be done at all AOU’s branches existing in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Kuwait. Including these branches would reach more participants from different contexts; this would provide in turn additional insights reflecting these different perspectives. Studying different contexts could confirm or challenge some of the findings; for instance, understanding whether some of the issues were unique to Kuwait students and faculty perspectives, or whether these are common issues experienced in different contexts. If the findings are found to be consistent across contexts, this could provide incentive to OU-UK to adjust the curricula according to the recommendations from the branches.

Future studies could also be done in Kuwait to compare the traditional universities affiliated with foreign providers, with AOU’s blended learning system. Future studies should take into consideration that demographic composition of AOU students is different from that of student bodies at traditional universities, especially with respect to age. AOU is open to all students regardless of their age while traditional universities in Kuwait limit admission to new high school graduates. Student age might be a crucial factor that differentiates their experience with the imported curriculum not only within AOU, but also between AOU in general and traditional universities.

Future research could also be done to compare students' experiences of the imported OU-UK curriculum within different cultural contexts. I would like to examine whether the imported OU-UK curriculum has been recontextualized in those host countries or whether it has been implemented as-is. It would be useful to find out whether the OU-UK has designed special curriculum that is relevant to the local context of other host countries. It would be informative to conduct a larger-scale,
comparative study of the imported OU-UK curriculum in different countries, to have a broader view of the relationships between OU-UK and its partnership universities. Such a study would examine the different reasons and ways in which countries externalize and recontextualize the borrowed policies, and their effects on students’ academic experience with internationalization.

**Final Thoughts**

This study is one of the few studies that considers the impact of the imported curriculum on local faculty members' and students' academic experience in Kuwait specifically and in higher education in general.

This study has shown that recontextualization should be inherent in the transplanting process and should be incorporated into the design and implementation of imported curriculum. In order to achieve this for imported business curriculum at AOU-Kuwait, it is important for AOU and OU-UK to play an active, collaborative role in the recontextualization process.

Faculty members’ insistence on the importance of jointly designing a new curriculum that is more relevant to their students and the market falsifies the idea that describes policy borrowers as passive receivers. Instead, some of AOU's faculty members made efforts to recontextualize the imported curriculum on their own; and expressed their desire to see the current shortcomings addressed. Faculty members as well students did not accept the imported curriculum as-is. They felt strongly about having a hybrid curriculum that includes international perspective with local practices by taking the context of the students into consideration. Students and faculty members' positions align with Anderson-Levitt (2008) and Steiner-Khamsi (2003), who state that policy borrowers create combined policy to fit their environments.
According to the Steiner-Khamsi’ conceptual framework which is based on systems theory, it is important not to impose the borrowed policy as-is into the national context, or ignore the contextual differences between the lender and the receiver.

This mixed methods study achieved its purpose of presenting faculty members and students' experience of the imported curriculum; both suggested recontextualizing the imported curriculum to have better results in students' academic experience, performance, and personal and professional growth. Their perspectives affirm the conceptual framework adopted in this study and the central idea that recontextualization should take place in the imported curriculum in order for a successful and promising transplant.

Therefore, it would be most effective if all parties involved in the educational process could work together and combine their efforts to create a win-win solution, offering quality education to the local students, and not just a certification of accomplishment. The quality of education impacts the students throughout their lives; it translates into personal development and social changes, and these are the main reasons internationalization should take place in the higher education system. When students are empowered by the intended knowledge and skills from the imported curriculum and use them in their lives, they become active citizens in their society. Only then can it be said that the imported curriculum achieved another success story in its new context, rather than in the context of the provider.

As a final word, students are significant stakeholders in the AOU educational process and their voices should be heard by the business program deanship. This can be done through building communication channel between the triad of AOU headquarters and faculty members, students in the Kuwait campus, and OU-UK representatives. A bridge should be built among these parties to make effective
changes in the educational process. For a win-win situation for all the concerned parties, each party should take a step toward the other party to meet in the middle of this bridge at the institutional as well the national level. Implementing the aforementioned recommendations will likely improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the post-secondary business students in Kuwait.
References


Aoki, T.(2012). Teaching as In-dwelling between two curriculum worlds. In S.E.
Gibson (Ed.), *Canadian curriculum studies: trends, issues, and influences* (pp. 38-44). Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press.

AOU. Arab Open University website https://www.arabou.edu.kw/


Knight, J. (1997). Internationalization of higher education: A conceptual framework. In J. Knight & H. deWit (Eds.), *Internationalization of higher education in Asia Pacific countries* (pp. 5-19). Amsterdam: European Association for International Education.


Appendix A: Students’ Questionnaire
Higher Education Students’ Experiences of Internationalization in Kuwait: The Case of The Arab Open University

Dear Students,

This information is being collected as a part of a research study. Your participation in this study will provide my research with valuable information to understand how the business imported curriculum from the Open University-UK influence and contribute to your academic experience and performance.

Your participation in this survey is totally voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you choose to participate or not, this will have no effect on your marks or any other factors of academic progress. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you have the right to withdraw at any time with no any consequences. At no time will value judgments or evaluations be placed on your responses. The survey is anonymous and all answers will be kept confidential. All data is stored in a protected password. Filling this online survey will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes in length.

Consent: Please select your choice.

If you decide to participate, please check the Yes box below to indicate that:

1- You have read the above information
2- You voluntary agree to participate

If you do not want to participate in this survey, please check the No box.

Amal Berrwin
PhD. Candidate in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development. Comparative, International, and Development Education Collaborative Program, and Educational Policy Program
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto
Student Survey Items

I. Demographic Information

1- What major/track are you enrolled in? 

Accounting□ Economics□ Management□ Marketing□ Systems□

2- What is your current year of study? 

3rd year□ 4th year□

3- How many core business courses are you currently enrolled in? -------

4- What is your GPA for the British courses? (OU GPA)

From 3.67 to 4.00□
From 3.00 to 3.66□
From 2.33 to 2.99□
From 2.00 to 2.32□

5- What is your GPA in general (AOU GPA)?

From 3.67 to 4.00□
From 3.00 to 3.66□
From 2.33 to 2.99□
From 2.00 to 2.32□

6- Are you a Kuwaiti or non-Kuwaiti student?

Kuwaiti□ Non-Kuwaiti□

7- Gender: Female□ Male□

8- What kind of high school did you graduate from?

Public□ Private□

9- Was English the language of instruction in your high school?

Yes□ No□
II- Perception/Experience
The next questions are related to your perception and experience regarding the core business courses that you took in the previous semester, or you are still taking in this current semester. Please answer all the questions.

مجموعة الأسئلة التالية تتعلق بخبرتك في المواد الأساسية لبرنامج إدارة الأعمال التي أكملتها في الفصول الدراسية السابقة أو التي مازلت مسجل بها في الفصل الدراسي الحالي.

- Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement on the following statements related to your business curriculum factors, using a 5 point-Likert scale

  Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Neutral (N); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

حدد مستوى موافقتك أو عدم موافقتك على مجموعة البيانات التالية التي تتعلق بعناصر منهج برنامج إدارة الأعمال فقط، وذلك باستخدام مقياس ليكرت. أرجو الإجابة على جميع الأسئلة، اختار إحدى المقاييس التالية:

أوافق بشدة (SA)، أوافق (A)، لا أعرض ولا أوافق (N)، أعارض (D)، أعارض بشدة (SD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British textbooks (include other course materials if applicable)</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
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<td>10- The English used in course materials (textbooks) is easily understood</td>
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<td>اللغة الإنجليزية المستخدمة في الكتب ال البريطانية سهلة الفهم</td>
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<td>11- The textbooks reflect my cultural and social background</td>
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<td>الكتب البريطانية تعكس ثقافتي وبيئتي الإجتماعية</td>
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<td>12- Textbook content is easily understood for independent learning with little need for tutors' explanation</td>
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<td>يسهل علىٍ فهم محتوى الكتب الدراسية بمفردٍ مع شرح بسيط من قبل الأستاذ</td>
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<td>13- The textbook helps me to apply course content to real situations</td>
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<td>الكتب الدراسية تساعدي على تطبيق محتوى المواد الدراسية على حالات واقعية في عالم الأعمال</td>
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<tr>
<td>14- British textbooks and course materials aid my academic performance</td>
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<td>الكتب البريطانية والمواد الدراسية المعتمدة في المناهج الدراسية تساعد أداءي الأكاديمي</td>
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</table>

15- Please add any other comments regarding British textbooks and how they aid your academic performance (in Arabic or English):

يرجى إضافة أي تعليقات أخرى فيما يتعلق بالكتب البريطانية وكيفية مساعدتها في تأثيرها على أدائك الأكاديمي

______________________________
______________________________
Learning Activities and Instructional Methods Used by your Tutors
الأنشطة التعليمية وطرق التدريس المستخدمة من قبل الأستاذ

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<tr>
<td>16-</td>
<td>Tutors facilitate students’ learning process and development learning skill</td>
<td>يسهل الأستاذ العملية التعليمية للطلبة ويساعدهم على تنمية مهاراتهم التعليمية</td>
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<td>17-</td>
<td>Tutors use various pedagogical styles (e.g. lectures, case studies, discussions, demonstrations)</td>
<td>يستخدم الأستاذ عدة أساليب وطرق تعليمية (على سبيل المثال: محاضرات، حالات عملية، مناقشات، عرض بيانات)</td>
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<td>18-</td>
<td>I prefer a tutors' role to facilitate my understanding (e.g. through discussion) more than just to lecture</td>
<td>أفضل أن يسهم الأستاذ فهم المواد الدراسية من خلال المناقشات أكثر من إعتماده فقط على إلقاء المحاضرات</td>
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<td>19-</td>
<td>Tutors encourage me to share my own views/experiences related to the topics in class</td>
<td>يشجعني الأستاذ على مشاركة ومناقشة وجهة نظري وخبرتي بالموضوعات التي تناقش بالصف</td>
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<td>20-</td>
<td>Tutors help me to link theory and practice by presenting real cases of business operation</td>
<td>يساعدني الأستاذ على الربط بين النظرية والتطبيق العملي وذلك من خلال تداوله لحالات حقيقية في عالم إدارة الأعمال</td>
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<td>21-</td>
<td>In one or more classes, the tutors offered additional activities other than coursework. Extra readings, working on projects, presentations, field trips to factories and organizations</td>
<td>بعض الأستاذة يقومون باستخدام أنشطة تعليمية أخرى للطلاب بالإضافة إلى ما هو معتمد في المنهاج الدراسي، مثلما تحفز الطلاب على قراءة مقالات إضافية، عمل أبحاث ومشاريع، القيام بزيارات ميدانية لمصانع وشركات أعمال</td>
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<td>22-</td>
<td>My Tutors’ learning activities and instructional methods aid my academic performance</td>
<td>الأنشطة التعليمية وطرق التدريس المستخدمة من قبل الأستاذ تساعد أدائي الأكاديمي</td>
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23- Please add any other comments regarding the learning activities and instructional methods used (or not used) by your tutors and how they aid your academic performance (in Arabic or English):
يرجى إضافة أية تعليقات أخرى فيما يتعلق بالأنشطة التعليمية وطرق التدريس المستخدمة من قبل الأستاذ
Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)

|   | Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) |
|---|---------------------------------
| 24- | Writing assignments in English aid my academic performance |
| 25- | The assignments allow me to connect ideas and concepts that I have learned from my business courses with my prior experiences and knowledge |
| 26- | The assignments reflect the business concepts, principles, and theories presented in the textbooks |
| 27- | In my TMAs, I was able to refer to (non-British) local and international examples |
| 28- | In addition to the TMAs, I had other types of assignments (e.g. writing reports, presentation, reflection papers) |
| 29- | The TMAs aid my academic performance |
| 30- | Please add any other comments regarding the TMAs and how they aid your academic performance (in Arabic or English): |

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<th>TMAs الواجبات الدراسية</th>
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<tr>
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<td>SA</td>
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<td>24-</td>
<td>Writing assignments in English aid my academic performance</td>
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<td>25-</td>
<td>The assignments allow me to connect ideas and concepts that I have learned from my business courses with my prior experiences and knowledge</td>
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<td>26-</td>
<td>The assignments reflect the business concepts, principles, and theories presented in the textbooks</td>
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<td>27-</td>
<td>In my TMAs, I was able to refer to (non-British) local and international examples</td>
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<td>28-</td>
<td>In addition to the TMAs, I had other types of assignments (e.g. writing reports, presentation, reflection papers)</td>
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<td>29-</td>
<td>The TMAs aid my academic performance</td>
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<td>30-</td>
<td>Please add any other comments regarding the TMAs and how they aid your academic performance (in Arabic or English):</td>
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Other Evaluation Methods (exams)  

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<tr>
<td>31- Exams are based on the concepts and theories in the textbooks</td>
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<td>الامتحانات مبنية على المفاهيم والنظريات الموجودة في الكتب الدراسية</td>
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<td>32- Exam questions allow me to include critical analysis (going beyond basic information in the textbooks)</td>
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<td>أسئلة الامتحانات تسمح لي باستخدام التحليل النقدي، أي تجاوز المعلومات الأساسية الموجودة في الكتب</td>
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<td>33 - I prefer to have non-marked small quizzes during the course to aid my academic performance</td>
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<td>أفضل المسابقات والاختبارات الصغيرة (دون درجات) خلال الفصل الدراسي لمساعدة أدائي الأكاديمي</td>
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<td>34- The exams and evaluation methods aid my academic performance</td>
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<td>الامتحانات وطرق التقييم المعتمدة في المنهج الدراسي تساعد أدائي الأكاديمي</td>
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35- Please add any other comments regarding exams or evaluation methods and how they might aid your academic performance (in Arabic or English):  
يرجى إضافة أي تعليقات أخرى فيما يتعلق بطرق التقييم وكيفية مساعدتها وتأثيرها على أدائك الأكاديمي

The Program/Track  

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<tr>
<td>36- My academic program connects with recent developments in the field</td>
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<td>برنامجي الأكاديمي يعكس آخر التطورات في مجال الأعمال</td>
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<tr>
<td>37- Overall the quality of the academic program is high</td>
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<tr>
<td>جودة برنامجي الأكاديمي عالية</td>
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38- Please add any other comments regarding your Program/Track (in Arabic or English)  
يرجى إضافة أي تعليقات أخرى فيما يتعلق ببرنامجك الأكاديمي

III- How much has your program/track of study contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? Please answer all the questions.
إلى أي مدى ساهم برنامجك الأكاديمي في تعزيز وتنمية معرفتك، مهاراتك، وتطورك الشخصي في المجالات التالية؟ أرجو الإجابة على جميع الأسئلة (very little (قليل جداً), (somewhat (قليلًا), (quite a bit (كثيرًا), (very much (كثيراً))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very little</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39-Writing clearly and effectively</td>
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<tr>
<td>الكتابة بشكل واضح وفعال</td>
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<td>40-Speaking up clearly and effectively</td>
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<td>التحدث بشكل واضح وفعال</td>
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<td>41-Thinking critically and analytically</td>
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<tr>
<td>التفكير بشكل نقدي وتحليلي (نقد بناء)</td>
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<td>42-Obtaining a job or work related to your knowledge and skills</td>
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<td>الحصول على وظيفة تتعلق بمعرفتي ومهاراتي العلمية</td>
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<td>43-Working effectively with others (team work)</td>
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<td>العمل بشكل فعال مع الآخرين (العمل الجماعي)</td>
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<td>44-Being involved in real business world problems and issues</td>
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<td>الاهتمام والمشاركة فيما يخص الأمور المتعلقة في عالم إدارة الأعمال</td>
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<td>45-Being an informed and active citizen/student</td>
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<td>أن أكون مواطن/طالب مطلع وفعال في المجتمع</td>
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46- How would you evaluate your entire educational experience of the British courses (Open University courses) related to your specialization?

كيف تقيم تجربتك التعليمية فيما يتعلق بالمواد البريطانية الخاصة بتخصصك الأكاديمي؟

Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor ☐

ممتازة جيدة مقبولة ضعيفة

47- And why?

ولماذا؟

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

48- If you could start over again, would you choose to take the British courses designed by the Open University and delivered at Arab Open University?

إذا كنت تبدأ من جديد، هل تختار أن تتعلم المواد البريطانية الذي قدمت من قبل افتونيا ووزعتها من قبل جامعة أوبن العربية؟
Definitely YES ☐ Probably NO ☐

Probably YES ☐ Definitely NO ☐

And why? ____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

I appreciate your participation in this survey. Thank You

أشكر مشاركتك في هذا البحث الاستقصائي

Following this survey there will be an interview opportunity for students who would like to volunteer to be interviewed. It will involve a few deep questions regarding their experiences of their business courses. If you choose to participate or not, this will have no effect on your marks or any other factors of academic progress. Participant’s names in the interview will be changed in my dissertation.

يعقب هذا البحث الاستقصائي فرصة للمشاركة في مقابلة شخصية للطلاب الذين يبدون رغبة اختيارية للمشاركة. سوف يتم طرح عدد من الأسئلة التي تتعلق بخبرة الطالب في مواد إدارة الأعمال. لن يترتب أي تأثير على درجاتك أو على أي عناصر أخرى تتعلق بعاداتك الأكاديمية سواء أقررت المشاركة من عدمه في هذه المقابلة. سيتم استخدام أسماء مستعارة للطلاب المشاركين في المقابلة.

If you would like to be one of those participants, please contact me to arrange for a face-to-face interview at the following address:

أرادت المشاركة، أرجو أن تتصل بي لترتيب موعد للمقابلة الشخصية (المقابلة ستكون فقط بين الطالب والباحثة)

Would you like to participate in this interview? Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, please contact me and provide me with the following information:

إذا كنت ترغب بالمشاركة، يرجى الإتصال بي عبر بريدتي الإلكتروني أو الهاتف ونوردي بالمعلومات التالية:

1- Your major track

2- Your current year of study

3- Your GPA for the British courses

4- Your Nationality

6- Your Gender

7- The type of high school that you graduated from: Public or Private

I appreciate your cooperation in this interview

أقدر تعاونكم في هذه المقابلة
Appendix B: Quantitative Results

Table 3: Summary of ANOVAs regarding students' perception of British textbooks and self-reported GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From 2.00 to 2.32</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.1250</td>
<td>.58722</td>
<td>13.702</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 2.33 to 2.99</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>3.4324</td>
<td>.76621</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 3.00 to 3.66</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3.7172</td>
<td>.66370</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 3.67 to 4.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.8920</td>
<td>.56019</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Summary of ANOVAs regarding students' perception of British textbooks and Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.4655</td>
<td>.71558</td>
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<td>.030*</td>
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<td>Economics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.8211</td>
<td>.68279</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.7382</td>
<td>.58131</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.6308</td>
<td>.87724</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Summary of independent t-tests regarding students' perception of British textbook and their demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as the language of instruction</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.8277</td>
<td>.68870</td>
<td>4.073</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English language of instruction</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>3.4787</td>
<td>.70215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>3.4548</td>
<td>.75205</td>
<td>-2.490</td>
<td>.013*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3.6539</td>
<td>.67721</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd level</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>3.6170</td>
<td>.68325</td>
<td>1.787</td>
<td>.075</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th level</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3.4631</td>
<td>.78732</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.4671</td>
<td>.74336</td>
<td>-1.857</td>
<td>.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Kuwaiti</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>3.6228</td>
<td>.69201</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>3.6241</td>
<td>.70438</td>
<td>1.532</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.4943</td>
<td>.72684</td>
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</table>

Table 6: Summary of ANOVAs regarding students' perception of learning activities and instructional methods and self-reported GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From 2.00 to 2.32</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.6845</td>
<td>.72738</td>
<td>2.357</td>
<td>.072</td>
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<tr>
<td>From 2.33 to 2.99</td>
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<td>.66037</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 3.00 to 3.66</td>
<td>131</td>
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<td>.67376</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>From 3.67 to 4.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.9314</td>
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</table>
Table 7: Summary of ANOVAs regarding students' perception of learning activities and instructional methods and Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.8029</td>
<td>.66814</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.7444</td>
<td>.74472</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.9211</td>
<td>.67022</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.8382</td>
<td>.74748</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
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<td>3.8507</td>
<td>.59468</td>
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</table>

Table 8: Summary of independent t-tests regarding students' perception of learning activities and instructional methods and their demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd level</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>3.8965</td>
<td>.65102</td>
<td>2.109</td>
<td>.036*</td>
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<td>4th level</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3.7287</td>
<td>.68527</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as the language of instruction</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.9689</td>
<td>.66226</td>
<td>2.027</td>
<td>.044*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English language of instruction</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>3.8046</td>
<td>.66021</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.8991</td>
<td>.70125</td>
<td>.911</td>
<td>.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Kuwaiti</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>3.8274</td>
<td>.64831</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>3.8429</td>
<td>.65258</td>
<td>-.305</td>
<td>.760</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.8666</td>
<td>.65310</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.8649</td>
<td>.70249</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3.8427</td>
<td>.64000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Table 9: Summary of ANOVAs regarding students' perception of TMAs and GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA Range</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From 2.00 to 2.32</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.5265</td>
<td>.75135</td>
<td>5.894</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 2.33 to 2.99</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>3.6284</td>
<td>.87662</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 3.00 to 3.66</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3.8501</td>
<td>.75816</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 3.67 to 4.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.0787</td>
<td>.49293</td>
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</table>

Table 10: Summary of ANOVAs regarding students' perception of TMAs and Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.7650</td>
<td>.88269</td>
<td>.423</td>
<td>.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.7632</td>
<td>.77443</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.8443</td>
<td>.65282</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.8085</td>
<td>.86753</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.6938</td>
<td>.80623</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Table 11: Summary of independent t-tests regarding students' perception of TMAs and their demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as the language of instruction</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.9185</td>
<td>.87549</td>
<td>2.120</td>
<td>.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English language of instruction</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>3.7155</td>
<td>.74091</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.6797</td>
<td>.87831</td>
<td>-1.304</td>
<td>.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Kuwaiti</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>3.8086</td>
<td>.73708</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>3.7026</td>
<td>.90480</td>
<td>-1.169</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>205</td>
<td>3.8128</td>
<td>.70066</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3.7805</td>
<td>.75726</td>
<td>.605</td>
<td>.546</td>
</tr>
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<td>99</td>
<td>3.7232</td>
<td>.85229</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>3.7736</td>
<td>.76888</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.7752</td>
<td>.79117</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Table 12: Summary of the frequency results related to students' perception on exams

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: P-values for the exams' statements and students' demographics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Type of High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td>0.559</td>
<td>0.857</td>
<td>0.660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>0.252</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.779</td>
<td>0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>0.792</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>0.484</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>0.544</td>
<td>0.057</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Summary of ANOVAs regarding students' perception of program overall and Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td>.684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15: Summary of ANOVAs regarding students' perception of program overall and self-reported GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.00 to 2.32</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>1.565</td>
<td>.198</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.33 to 2.99</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00 to 3.66</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.67 to 4.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Summary of independent t-tests regarding students' perception of program overall and their demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd level</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>.492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th level</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td>.450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Kuwaiti</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>-.486</td>
<td>.628</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>3.8413</td>
<td>.82620</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td>.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3.7707</td>
<td>.80660</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as the language of instruction</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.8913</td>
<td>.96027</td>
<td>1.282</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English language of instruction</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>3.7636</td>
<td>.74725</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: Summary of the frequency and t-test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British textbooks and course materials aid my academic performance</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning activities and instructional methods aided my academic performance</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMA aided my academic performance</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The exams and evaluation</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
methods aided my academic performance

Table 18: Summary of ANOVAs regarding the gained skills and Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.0956</td>
<td>.62156</td>
<td>1.009</td>
<td>.403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.1767</td>
<td>.49964</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.2737</td>
<td>.54105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.1722</td>
<td>.72339</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3.1954</td>
<td>.54916</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Summary of ANOVAs regarding the gained skills and self-reported GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA Range</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From 2.00 to 2.32</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.0785</td>
<td>.50219</td>
<td>2.504</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 2.33 to 2.99</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>3.0809</td>
<td>.62252</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 3.00 to 3.66</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3.2520</td>
<td>.60156</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 3.67 to 4.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.2700</td>
<td>.52969</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: Summary of independent t-tests regarding the gained skills and students' demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd level</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>3.1990</td>
<td>.58846</td>
<td>1.194</td>
<td>.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th level</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3.1139</td>
<td>.60167</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3.2355</td>
<td>.54874</td>
<td>1.176</td>
<td>.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Kuwaiti</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>3.1531</td>
<td>.60899</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>3.1828</td>
<td>.59353</td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.1909</td>
<td>.57909</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>3.1862</td>
<td>.60593</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3.1767</td>
<td>.58151</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as lang.</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.2296</td>
<td>.60913</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td>.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as not a</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.58299</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 21: Evaluation of the entire experience of the British courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observed N</th>
<th>Expected N</th>
<th>Residual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>-80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>-38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>107.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 22: Students' choice to take the OU designed courses and delivered at AOU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observed N</th>
<th>Expected N</th>
<th>Residual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>-68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably No</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>-29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably Yes</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely Yes</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Students' Interview Protocol

1- About yourself:
- What program/track are you enrolled in?
- What is your current year of study?
- How many core business courses are you currently enrolled in?
- What is your GPA in the British courses? And in general?
- Where are you from (country)?
- Where did you graduate from high school?
- Was English the language of instruction in your high school?
- What are your main reasons for enrolling in this business program?

2- Curriculum experience:
2.1 - Does the course (program) address topics related to your cultural and social background (prompt: textbooks, activities, assignments, exams)? If yes/no, how do you feel studying such topics in class?

2.2- Are there any topics or courses you would like to see added to your curriculum? Why? (Prompt: local and international case studies and example)

2.3- In general, do you find the content of the course easy or difficult? If difficult, what supports might help you?

2.4- To what extent does the curriculum reflect current trends in the field? (prompt: where do you expect to work), What suggestion for improvement?

2.5- How did these courses contribute to your academic experience and performance? (Prompt: textbooks, activities, assignments, exams)

2.6- What role did the tutors play in your curriculum experience and academic performance?

3- Personal and professional growth:
3.1- What do you want to do once you graduate? How has this business program is helping you (or not) to achieve this?

3.2- Do you think that the program helped you to develop critical thinking and analytical approaches related to the business field? (Prompt: instructional methods and your preferred way of learning)

3.3- Do you believe that you have learned in this program the knowledge and skills necessary for job requirements? Why? Why not?

4- What might you like to change or add to the program? (prompt: adaptation, or not, to the local context and to what degree?)

5- Do you have any further comments about your program?
Appendix D: Faculty Members' Interview Protocol

1) What is your job title/position title?

2) For how long have you been in this position?

3) Years of teaching experience at AOU and/or other universities?

4) What types of international experiences/international education do you have?

5) What are the courses that you teach?

6) Tell me a bit about your most recent education (e.g. degree, specialization) and professional background?

7) Your nationality

The questions below will serve as a guide.

1- Choose one course and describe me the following:

- content of the course (brief description of the course outlines),
- content of the textbooks,
- content of the assignments,
- content of the exams

2- While you were implementing this course did you make any changes from the official material you received? Why, or why not?

3- A) What curriculum challenges, if any, have you faced in relation to your students' backgrounds and interests? In relation to the Kuwait context?
   B) Have these considerations caused you to adjust your course (e.g. teaching, assignments, or evaluation) in any way? Why?

4- Please tell me a little more about what are the ways in which you think you contribute to (the role you play in) your students' a) academic performance and b) personal and professional growth?

5- Do you think that your students perceive themselves to be adequately prepared to meet job requirements? How so?

6- Do you have any additional comments that will help me to understand your (and students') experience with the British curriculum?
Appendix E: Student's Interview Consent Form

Higher Education Students' Experiences of Internationalization in Kuwait:

The case of Arab Open University

My name is Amal Berrwin, I am a Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

During this interview, you will be asked to answer some questions related to your academic experience of the business curriculum. This interview is designed to be approximately an hour in length. I will tape record all the interviews and then transcribe them. You have the right to read the transcriptions. Please, if there are any questions you feel you cannot answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering it, feel free to indicate this and I will move on to the next question. Participation in this research is voluntary, so you may withdraw at any time. Your participation will have no effect on your marks or any other factors of academic progress. At no time will value judgments or evaluations be placed on your responses. Your name will not be used in any written report, all your responses and your names will be kept confidential.

The participant

I, ________________________________, agree to voluntarily participate in this study and be interviewed by Mrs. Berrwin. I understand that the data gathered in this study are confidential and anonymous. I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time I wish without having any consequences.

-------------------------------  --------------------------
Date                       Participant's signature

-------------------------------  --------------------------
Date                       Interviewer's signature
Appendix F: Faculty Members' Consent Interview Form

Higher Education Students' Experiences of Internationalization in Kuwait:
The case of Arab Open University

My name is Amal Berrwin, I am a Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

During this interview, you will be asked to answer some questions related to your teaching experience of the business curriculum. This interview is designed to be approximately an hour in length. I will tape record all the interviews and then transcribe them. You have the right to read the transcriptions. Please, if there are any questions you feel you cannot answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering it, feel free to indicate this and I will move on to the next question. Participation in this research is voluntary, so you may withdraw at any time. Your name will not be used in any written report and will remain confidential.

The participant
I, _________________________________, agree to voluntarily participate in this study and be interviewed by Mrs. Berrwin. I understand that the data gathered in this study are confidential and anonymous. I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time I wish without having any consequences.

---------------------------  ---------------------------
Date  Participant's signature

---------------------------  ---------------------------
Date  Interviewer's signature