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The American University in Cairo

Graduate School of Education

The Impact of the Western Liberal Arts Education in the MENA Region: A Case Study

A Thesis Submitted to the International and Comparative Education Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Educational Leadership

By Heba Mansour

Under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Skaggs

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Abstract

This study focuses on the development of the millennial generation within the liberal arts education setting. It has been demonstrated that the values of different generations periodically change. It is the university's duty to articulate the distinctive sociological, ideological, and psychological variations of each generation in order to provide the most viable educational system. Follow-up researches in different educational systems should be conducted regularly in order to incorporate new data from the rapidly changing millennial generation. This particular research focuses on understanding student development models that adequately demonstrate the effectiveness of a liberal arts education within the MENA region. The emphasis of this paper is on Arab students within transnational settings, focusing on the American University in Cairo and the American University of Kuwait.

Keywords: Arab, millennial, learning outcome, liberal arts education, transnational

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AUC has taught us to become educators and leaders of this world. It has created individuals who will teach the upcoming generation. I hope all the educators look forward in changing this.

Chapter 1

Introduction

To have an effective educational system, institutions should meet the needs of the community and the current generation. The university structure should be adjusted and developed according to the rapidly changing needs of prospective students, but this is often neglected in Liberal arts universities in transnational settings (Lowery, 2016). Hence, the student is obliged to accommodate to the pre-structured educational settings. Globalization is the catalyst that altered the way in which higher educational institutions develop in order to satisfy new generational needs (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013). Globalization has intensely impacted the millennial generation; it started in the early 1980's and continues until the present era. This generation is heavily influenced by the diverse hyperactive digital culture, which causes them to stray away from their cultural roots (Park, 2013, p.118).

This study provides a better understanding of the effectiveness of the Western liberal arts model of higher education within transnational university settings. It primarily focuses on examining the pedagogies of student learning outcomes, and comparing the learning experience of undergraduate junior and senior students from the American University in Cairo (AUC) and the American University of Kuwait (AUK).

Statement of the Problem

Liberal arts education aids in developing the identity of the student through critical thinking in comparison to the different culture and backgrounds of the millennial generation (Roche, 2012). The effects of liberal arts education in a transnational setting—AUC and AUK—was studied in order to comprehend the way in which upper-class students obtain the greatest benefit of a liberal arts education in the MENA region. This study will thus allow for a better understanding of the current liberal arts educational institution present in AUC and AUK in order to provide the best educational atmosphere for this generation. Consequently, we will be able to alter and create a better educational format that will benefit the upper-class students in their daily lives through what they learn at the university. This does not necessitate that it is only limited to the material covered inside classrooms. The liberal arts

education also emphasizes learning through extra-curricular activities, as students are known to learn from their peers as they learn from their professors.

Purpose of the Study

This research is designed to understand the concept of liberal arts education taken from a Western perspective and tailored to MENA educational institutions. The purpose of this study is to aid in developing a better understanding of the liberal arts educational system by integrating the cultural aspects and beliefs of the MENA area. In order to clearly illustrate the integration and bridging of gaps between American ideology and Arab student identity, it behooves researchers to study both AUC and AUK. Both universities are international educational institutions in national contexts. They follow international systems; have local and international students, as well as faculty. As mentioned above, students learn from their peers as well as their professors. Being in such a diverse environment allows each student to acquire knowledge in various ways. The main concern of the present research is to examine the effects of studying in a western liberal arts educational system on the daily lives of upper classmen; one wonders, is it beneficial or not. Besides this, further investigation attempts to reach a consensus on how students interpret the liberal arts education system itself.

Chapter 2

During the examination of two American institutions in the Middle East that follow the liberal arts education, while also focusing on the pedagogical student learning outcomes for upper-class students, various themes emerged. These themes highlight a better understanding towards the adaptation of liberal arts model of higher education within the transnational university settings.

Literature Review

Firstly, the history of liberal arts alongside the approach articulated through the liberal arts educational model will be stated while focusing on the millennials generation and the emerging of the liberal arts educational system and its impact on the millennials generation. Subsequently, there will be a discussion of the Arab youth in the region as a whole. This will demonstrate the effect of the liberal arts education on developing the character of this generation. Additionally, a more in-depth study will be conducted on two different institutions in the Arab region adopting a transnational educational system through the liberal arts education. Thereafter, an analysis will be provided of the process of policy borrowing in terms of borrowing and lending of various perspectives in varied contexts from within the educational exchange. Then, the theory of the seven principles of good practice by Chickering and Gamson will be implemented to improve the undergraduate education of good learning and teaching process. Lastly, best practices are presented that have applied in liberal arts institutions while also implementing the seven principles of good practice.

Liberal Arts

If one investigated and traced the origins of liberal arts education, the Greeks would serve as the starting point of this research as they devised the fundamentals of liberal education. The 'first teacher' for liberal arts was Aristotle. Later on, Abu Nasr Al-Farabi incorporated the liberal arts into his grand theories of Islamic philosophy. Al-Farabi was a medieval Islamic scholar who was referred to as 'the second teacher'. According to Al-Farabi, "learning includes intellectual and moral education, the acquisition of technical and practical skills, and, remarkably enough, something we today call "value education" – that is, education in universal values that forms a basis

for creative thinking. Together these areas lead individuals to attain proficiency in the arts and professions that they pursue. This refines their character, and turns theory into practices so that newly acquired knowledge is applied" (Günther, 2008, p.16). Liberal arts universities have an interesting opportunity to demonstrate educational ideals through curricular structures via the community and the on-campus environment. Educational interdisciplinary facets and training pedagogies portray learning outcomes that utilize insights and techniques of various disciplines. The structures of establishments and traditions must be constantly reevaluated and rediscovered to maintain its dynamic quality and power. Liberal arts universities, on the other hand, can assort such struggles with adaptability and agility. The best form of creation and revelations can be provided by liberal arts education (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013).

Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1056-1111), another important Islamic scholar, followed Al-Farabi's (872- 951) methodologies but in a way that more appreciated the deeper teachings of Islam, such as the basic rules of the religion and the Sunni tradition. Al-Ghazali urges students to "strive for comprehensive general education before devoting themselves to more specific studies. They must order their studies, deal with the most important discipline first, and not attempt to study everything at once. Students must also learn to appraise the core benefits and validity of each discipline. Finally, they should know that the attainment of inner virtue and spiritual excellence is the true goal of learning, not the gain of authority or recognition by others" (Günther, 2008, p. 24). Nowadays, higher educational entities continuously encourage students to be active learners and to be engaged in curricular and co-curricular civic functions in these pedagogical institutes. In order to develop a focus on co-curriculum civic engagements, students are exposed to experience it through courses within the university. They are required to grasp knowledge from general education courses by achieving the civic engagement and the teaching of civic responsibility, which again brings us to what we currently look at as "Liberal Arts Education" (Galatas & Pressley, 2010).

The Islamic scholars mentioned above influenced the sources of liberal arts education in modern education. The history of liberal education proves that the educational

system adapts to the generation of a specific era. These sources will aid in correlating and finding the roots of the liberal arts education which will, in turn, facilitate comprehension of the modern liberal arts system.

The aim of Liberal Arts education is to produce a person who is moral, well-rounded, knowledgeable and highly expressive in numerous areas. Back when, liberal arts had included two sections: trivium and quadrivium. From the period of the Greeks and Romans, until the Middle Ages, the trivium included grammar, rhetoric and logic. The trivium was considered a preparatory course for the more complex courses that were taught in the quadrivium, which included arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy (Jennings, 2014).

Liberal Arts Approach

The liberal arts approach structures the mindset of students so that they develop into critical thinkers, a vital necessity for any free society. Accordingly, a liberal arts education cannot be defined as a form of knowledge and learning that is acquired solely from books; rather, it must be deeply intertwined with the individual's thoughts, ideas and individual concepts. Likewise, such an educational experience should also include serious reflection on personal experiences (Paino, 2014). The empowerment gained from a liberal arts education enables the mind to be well-rounded in terms of thoughts, accepting of opposing opinions, and more transparent and receptive to counter arguments. Meanwhile, a liberal education main aim is not centered on career-related subjects; it focuses on a wide range from the humanities, social sciences, arts and sociology, which have their foundations in the *artes liberales*, or the trivium (punctuation, rationale, and talk), and the quadrivium (geometry, astronomy and music). This typical, or conventional structure, of the liberal arts education accentuates the individual opportunity for more guided practice which prompts critical thinking (Paino, 2014).

The Liberal Arts approach seeks different implementations of education through both academic and extra-curricular endeavors. Currently, the Liberal Arts curriculum has developed into a more in-depth interdisciplinary coursework that includes fields such as the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and formal sciences. By being exposed to and involved in activities specifically relevant to career

preference, the liberal arts methodology also shapes the student into an individual prepared to work in various work sectors (Logan & Curry, 2014).

Liberal arts universities occupy an esteemed position in the American Higher Education because its classes have a limited student body and there is an emphasis on direct interaction between professors and students, which encourages continuous class discussion (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013). This helps in the development of the academic standards quality of education in addition to student critical thinking skills rather than merely focus on a particular form of preparation with no criteria of external knowledge. There are three essential rules that frame the fundamental segments known as liberal arts education: "critical thinking, moral and common character and utilizing learning" to enhance the world (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013, p. 13).

Critical thinking is recognized as the key factor of a liberal arts education. It encourages students to refine their ability to think through the process of deep inquiry into ambiguous and complex topics, and attempts to guide students to resolve challenges. This is accomplished by assessing, clarifying and integrating evidence. Critical thinking supports student learning, which ultimately prepares them for workforce exposure. Critical thinking is self-guided, self-trained and self-observed. Furthermore, liberal arts colleges place an emphasis on development of the intellectual capacity of each students individual decisions. It is also essential to highlight the moral aspect of the students' individuality by incorporating developmental tools that help enhance moral character. Moral character does not imply the authority of a particular code of ethics, but instead it refers to the development of propensities and qualities that strengthen moral conduct independently.

Students are highly influenced by extra-curricular activities that are offered at universities such as sports, clubs, and social community gatherings amongst various departments and even different political associations. The dynamics of extra-curricular activities strengthen the social learning paradigms of the student's educational outcome. For example, a number of colleges offer a variety of leadership programs to enhance student education by referring and linking them to people who

intellectually benefit them in their particular field (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013). Lastly, in order to structure a rigorous method of interdisciplinary teaching, utilization of knowledge takes place within the departments, affiliation with different colleges and even faculty, and student exchange programs. This provides a well-rounded, developmental educational structure that encourages students to absorb all factors from the surrounding environment (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013).

The knowledge attained during a liberal arts education plays a significant role in naturally shaping the minds of students, especially the young ones. Students acquire comprehension through the various disciplines as they discover how to observe characteristic phenomena with a sharp and curious mindset (Roche, 2010). Students learn to apply academic motivation to shape ideas that are formed through their exposure or experience, and to identify patterns through a series of events (Roche, 2010). Through personal curiosity, they develop complex questions, and learn various ways of testing assumptions, or theories, against reality and recognizing supporting or refuting evidence. Moreover, they grasp courses with logical standards and open strategy by assessing their arguments based on solid research and knowledge.

The liberal arts further investigates the advancement of the individual, from the early stages to maturity, by expanding their intellectual horizons through various questions, opinions, comprehension and knowledge in addition to critical thinking. Students of the liberal arts create and survey hypotheses of identity and interpersonal connections. They are more aware of the familiarity of people groups and cultures. They contemplate human improvement over time and societies, developing a feeling of the intentions, states of mind, and values within. They investigate the routes through which social structures impact humans (Roche, 2010). They are able to comprehend the connections of social structures by including the economics that shape our reality, and they figure out how to approach issues and inquiries with formal and factual models. They explore types of contention and power and, additionally, different styles of administration.

The most idealized, advanced American education is the liberal arts universities. Liberal arts institutions and research universities accurately depict their mission as the art of instructing and exploring. When private institutions integrate a

strong foundation of the liberal educational model, and public funded colleges minimize the number of students within a class, they rival the liberal arts college system. Liberal arts universities designate a great portion of the budget to support extensive research for both faculty and students in order to enhance the educational experience and produce highly qualified thinkers.

The challenges faced in higher education for both the institution and the educational system as a whole lie within creating tangible and attainable academic opportunities in a constantly changing environment. Such components possibly affect the mission and motivation behind the purpose of higher education (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013).

The two most difficult acts confronting societies with liberal arts education are "diversity and globalism." Ironically so, diversity and globalism are also the most essential routes through which one can enhance the student's way of approaching obstacles. As mentioned by W. E. B. Du Bois, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (Katz & Sugrue, 1998, p. 61). Diversity and globalism are considered the main struggles within the twenty-first century. Additionally, globalism promotes the concept of a world without borders which automatically complements diversity wherever students gather; learning from one another supports the liberal arts system as this widens the social and cultural horizon of students (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013). Private liberal arts universities particularly help students build an intercultural society that articulates respectability and moral conduct. These crucial elements—alongside accepting different societies and cultural thoughts, and embracing community learning and engagement—help create a multicultural identity. The difficulties faced through diversity and globalism ought to be a key factor of the social motivation behind liberal arts universities (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013).

Students confront several challenges, on the ground level, when they start their career; for example, careers often require students to possess a rich background in the liberal arts. The knowledge gained from such exposure enhances their development skills. Most importantly, current employers are mesmerized by liberal

arts degree holders, as they trust that broad-mindedness to different topics—gained through the liberal arts experience—affords them the opportunity to think outside the box. This encourages individual creativity and innovation in solving problems and introducing new ideas into the business (Logan & Curry, 2014). Finally, in terms of pursuing graduate studies, the student will already possess a strong foundation that will facilitate the pursuit of any field of their choice.

Millennials

Millennials constitute the generation that was born from the early 1980's to the early 2000's (Park, 2013). They also fall under the name of Generation 'Y'. However, Generation 'X' they are the generation that is preceding the Millennials.

The Generation 'X' and Generation 'Y' division specifically differentiates between the unique demographic and societal upbringing of each generation. The nature of the developmental surroundings changed drastically from generation 'X' to generation 'Y'; the latter generation (Y), possessed a different nurture environment which created supportive social relations for its constituents. (Bolton et al., 2013). Generation 'X' was referred to as the "lost generation," given the many changes in family dynamics; at that time, women were more prone to join the work place, divorce rates were higher and minimal child care decreased compared to the previous generation (Wiedmer, 2015). Generation 'Y' was exposed to a new system through the different ways of parenting, education and career opportunities. Millennials are the most popular and the most exhaustively studied generation. It is the most e-generation in today's workforce as most technological innovation has taken place during the rise of this generation. Millennials are known for their ability to work effectively and efficiently in teams and groups (Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010, p. 283). Not only this, they are also, by nature, very confident. The millennial generation constantly seeks feedback on personal performance; in other words, millennials constantly seek a wise guide along their footsteps. They possess a very strong desire to achieve goals and overcome competition. This renders them the most distinctive generation up-to-date. Technological advancements, which have made information available at the click of a button, promote the concept of the liberal arts, as it is relatively easy for the millennial generation to broaden intellectual horizons and

widen general knowledge. They are flexible because they accept, and sometimes even adapt to, other cultures around them due to their general open-mindedness towards the other. (Park, 2013).

The liberal arts methodology nourishes the previously mentioned characteristics via certain strategies. The first strategy is credible guidance; students become more confident as they are guided with clear procedures, ensuring success in the classroom. Secondly, unique teaching techniques are applied; these techniques are technology oriented, which encourages confidence and innovation. Lastly, and in fact most importantly, feedback is implemented. This is a crucial aspect of the class in order to encourage students to produce new knowledge that benefits the world.

The Liberal Arts Education and Millennials

Generation 'Y' does not believe in individualism and they depend on teamwork to deal with various issues. They provide a lot of diverse ideas that would suit different situations; this proves their leadership and dependence on the new school of thought. All of the above features definitely place this generation under great pressure as their expectations heighten to unprecedented levels (Woodall, 2004). The characteristics of a liberal arts education enable the millennial generation to be almost anyone based on the form of education given to them using the liberal arts system along with the programs provided in helping to shape their teaching and learning strategy. The seven criteria that characterize Generation 'Y' are special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured and achieving. (Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010, p. 285). They are notably more resourceful than the previous generation 'X' due to the fact that there are various research tools available that make the new ideas they produce credible as it has a solid base. Furthermore, the millennial generation's confidence stems from its immense contribution to its own society (Woodall, 2004). In order to effectively educate different generations, by meeting their respectively unique standards, there is a need to innovate diverse educational strategies. As for the millennial generation, new educational methodologies are clearly necessary. For example, millennials depend on modern technology such as the internet, cell phones, digital music players, social media and different forms of communication. The earlier generation of educators is clearly

different than the millennial generation; hence, educators must have clear understanding of the technological adaptation of the millennials (McAlister, 2009).

Initiatives have been introduced in order to merge the gap between generation 'Y' and generation 'X'. This is reflected in projects that demonstrate improvement, execution, and results of an association between Garrett College, a private liberal arts college, and Worthington Charter School, a public Kindergarten to Grade 8 charter school in Baltimore, Maryland. The alliance, which was initiated in 2007, began launching the first yearly series of College and Career Institutes for Middle school undergraduates in the spring of 2009. This association was built around an idea of shared ownership, in which undergraduates and middle school students were similarly concerned with the development of commonly valuable learning experiences. (Rinke, et al., 2012). This provided space for building a solid establishment of earlier school-college organizations as Professional Development Schools (PDS), service-learning projects, and instructor training hands on work. It is imperative to connect the gap between generations 'X' and 'Y'. Generation 'Y' needs to communicate in generation X's language in order to create a more promising future adaptable to the fast paced, upcoming generation. The research above proves the intentions of creating this bridge with the effective initiatives that are being practiced in prominent colleges.

Arab Youth in the Region

The future of the Arab countries is likely to be prosperous because more than fifty percent of the population of these nations is under the age of 25 and they are receiving an education. Most youth within the Arab region are educated to the extent that they hold the possibility to make a significant influence on the future growth process of the nation. Today, Arab adolescent females and males have more access to politics and the political regime than before the Arab Spring. The desire and demand to place youth at the heart of social advancement is internationally expanding, as well as in the Arab region (UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States – Beirut, 2011). Arab youth have framed social engagement and social responsibility as elements of political science for some time, as stated previously, in Generation 'Y'. However, the decline of social engagement in the millennial generation has led some

faculty to encourage the reinstitution and revitalization of programs that promote social engagement and social responsibility in the university classroom. Faculty need to be aware that new methods of instruction may need to be used in order to truly engage the millennial generation in social responsibility and social action (Galatas & Pressley, 2010).

In 2010, the UN Inter-Agency Task Team on Youth in the MENA/Arab locale was recognized to improve collaboration and to form an effect on youth issues within the district, with a prominence on strategy reinforcement in the region of youth public commitment, as well as their economic contribution (UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States – Beirut, 2011). Five lessons are emphasized in the fiscal policy of social engagement. First, students are interested in learning more about influential issues in fiscal policy and its specific topics. Second lesson is the importance of federal debts and its impact on students. Third lesson is assuring that the professors of the policy are provided with the most recent and updated information available to tackle such a subject. Fourth lesson requires focusing on the importance of preserving students' 'pre-disposition' for social engagement. The final lesson is to indirectly intertwine social engagement in courses so that students daily practice social education (Galatas & Pressley, 2010). The liberal arts play a major role in accomplishing these five lessons by managing to merge the social engagement along with the development of the student.

There are many examples of implementation of the liberal arts educational system in the Arab region. Not only countries with high populations, such as Egypt, are adopting the liberal arts educational system, but also Gulf countries—such as Kuwait, Qatar and Emirates—started incorporating critical thinking and the liberal arts system in their institutions. This is manifested in the establishment of New York University, an inclusive liberal arts campus, in Abu Dhabi (Martin & Parrott, 2015). Also, Qatar is another country that took the initiative of merging the liberal arts education with its pre-existing educational system. Qatar, however, executes liberal arts education with a unique perspective that focuses on the society's heritage and culture. It incorporates Western conventions with its own objectives, teaching outcomes and learning system. The potential drawbacks of the liberal arts education

in Qatar from the perspective of globalization was also mentioned. One such drawback may be social and cultural opposition to liberal and co-education. Further areas that require effort are connected to the idea of implementing the the Western education as a system and trying to adjust it on the local system. However, Western education is perceived both as a risk as well as an opportunity. Additionally, communication, on an institutional level, between Western and local organizations can be convoluted by the diverse styles of management practiced (Rostron, 2009). The above information sheds light on the efforts exerted by higher educational entities in the Arab region in order to incorporate and integrate Western ideology by merging the liberal arts educational system with the existing curriculum.

Developing a Character using Liberal Arts Education

The educational process essentially gravitates towards an ideal and noble purpose. Any procedure of educational development inclines toward some condition of quality of education that is being taught to the students. "Liberal arts education positively affects intercultural adequacy, inclination to ask and long-lasting adaption, prosperity and authority" (Seifert, et al., 2008). Not only does the character play a role in the effect of liberal arts education but also the economic status of students has an impact on the quality of education. Difficulties arise from the liberal arts education due to on-going economic competitiveness. The typical four-years degree from the liberal arts institutions appear to reward the economically privileged upperclassmen students—or to society—as opposed to constrain and subjugated education. When universities and educational institutes primarily focus on the business aspect, this narrows the scope of the university's education and the quality of the education decreases. A cohesive liberal arts educational system develops and shapes the individuality of each student. This can be achieved through a contemplative pedagogy. Contemplative pedagogy is a form of character development that has been introduced which allows the expression of liberal arts in a way that nurtures the development of the student by enhancing knowledge in creativity, empathy and self-awareness. This induces mindfulness in classrooms and is applied specifically in Religious Studies classrooms. Contemplative pedagogy includes a variety of practices; one of them is *"contemplative practices."* Contemplative principle of good

practice varies through silent relaxation mode, empathy practice, and various techniques of meditations. The study incorporates direct reflections from students on teacher attempts to integrate particular strategies that are part of the pedagogy of learning and showing strategies into their courses. It extends from the individual accounts to highlight the work of numerous teachers in the field. These genuine cases are put into the setting of the latest educational development distributions in higher education by fulfilling the quest for mindfulness in education. It looks into exhibiting the importance of contemplative teaching to satisfy many aspects within the liberal arts education. *(*Grace, 2011).

The depth of knowledge and studies in a specific major provides the students with a better understanding and an enriched knowledge in this particular area. The more comprehensively specialized knowledge is taught, the better we can contextualize new and specific information within the grand scope of knowledge. Research has shown that when undergraduate students effectively take an interest in the learning procedure, they associate and merge what they learn with what is already known and deemed significant and relevant. Students in general tend to connect experiences within the classroom with external, outside the classroom experiences. They absorb information more profoundly and holistically, and they genuinely appreciate school experiences and educational outcomes to a greater degree. "The greater the student's degree of involvement, the greater the learning and personal development" (Roche, 2012).

Students who graduate from liberal arts education are considered important targets in the market due to their educational background and exposure. Students are not only selected based on their communication skills as employees, but also for their involvement in learning developmental skills. "The liberal arts are more essential than ever (Roche, 2012)." Students have the chance to acquire this form of education during postsecondary education without leaving their residential country, and this can be acquired through transnational education within a liberal arts system.

Transnational Education within a Liberal Arts Education

Transnational education highly depends on a rationality enlivened by the acts of transnational partnerships that always look to grow their business sectors by achieving clients' needs across nations (Francois, Avoseh, & Griswold, 2016).Students associated with a transnational educational program are foreseen to adjust to educational modules and instructional practices directed by organizations that are intentionally going to be within their nations of origin. The method of transnational higher education does not merely focus only on conveying the information; it also emphasizes diverse philosophical aspects, which introduces new ideas alongside the educational implications that current definitions neglect to catch. Educational projects can exist through perspectives, which can be philosophical or educational, with a focus on the method through which the message is conveyed.

Philosophical perception concerns the form of transnational education. It empowers higher education by urging it to reflect on the ways countries intersect and combine, along with merging the differences across countries. Transnational education provides the ability to communicate different methods of educational structure in order to possibly cultivate transcultural understandings through time.

On the other hand, the academic educational perception concerns the scholarly parts of the transnational education. This form of perception emphasizes educational programs and instructional methodologies that make the local, territorial or national settings a fundamental part of the instructing and learning practices. This ultimately encourages transcultural understandings.

Transnational education includes activities and practices that go beyond national limits. It refers to the possibility of exchange over nations with no barriers or limits (Francois, Avoseh, & Griswold, 2016). It also incorporates an arrangement of instructive educational projects by applying policies and strategies that are integrated by the connection to provision. The main concerns of transnational education are:

a) Educational activities or ventures which require standards to maintain the educational scholastic contacts among student and academic distributors. The education received apply the hosting country's system within the national borders.

b) Scholarship reflecting examples or cases over the nation's status.

c) Involving students in the MENA district by featuring the connection of the foundation established.

The second and third waves of international education can be classified as transnational education that is soared during the 1980's and became notable in the 1990's (Chen, 2014). Numerous universities in industrialized countries provide branch campuses abroad for undergraduate students studying in countries that are different from the actual country of the academic institution. Furthermore, a director from a higher education institute who settles on the choice to open a branch campus abroad is naturally required in executing transnational education. (Francois, et al., 2016). This type of approach of internationalization in postsecondary education is precisely transnational education. Due to the great success of the liberal arts education in the Western community, the Middle East has incorporated this education model into their academic programs. However, the model was adapted to suit the needs of the unique culture. The American University in Cairo (AUC) and the American University of Kuwait (AUK) are examples of transnational universities.

The discussion of transnational education directs our attention towards the two universities that I will discuss discuss in my paper: AUC and AUK. Both universities follow the criteria of transnational universities in education, allowing students to receive international degrees obtained from the university's home country without the student traveling to the country itself. AUC and AUK offer internationally approved higher education to students living in Middle Eastern cultures, specifically in Egypt and Kuwait. Further information about both universities, and the educational methods implemented, is emphasized in the following sections.

The American University in Cairo

The American University in Cairo (AUC), founded in 1919, is a not-for-profit research based liberal arts institution of higher education that focuses on research as well as contributing to the overall Egyptian community in various fields. Charles A. Watson, the founding president, hoped to establish an English-language university based on the elevated expectations of its pioneers. The Egyptian community was seeking through the development of individuals, who would be eager to carry on AUC's mission to the diverse communities (The American University in Cairo, 2016).

Throughout its history, AUC has maintained a solemn duty towards the liberal arts education with sympathy towards the locale's requirements for practical, theoretical and professional specializations. AUC today primarily focuses on the liberal arts; students study different sets of core curriculum from the disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, science encounters, Arab world studies and global studies. On the other hand, AUC maintains the responsibility to encourage comprehension of different cultures, societies and religions from all around the world. This helps foster diversity and acceptance amongst undergraduate students.

AUC's extensive and rigorous programs aid overall student well being and encourage intellectual freedom of the mind. AUC offers five distinct schools representing the various disciplines: School of Business, School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, School of Humanities and Social Science, School of Sciences and Engineering, and Graduate School of Education. The sub-schools, or particular departments of concentration, cover around 36 undergraduate programs, 44 masters' programs and two PhD programs. The vast field of concentration options enables students to develop into critical thinkers, and formulate innovative solutions in response to any obstacles confronted within their field of study or any issues encountered in the real world.

The diversity at AUC, however, does not lead to disjointed programs. Despite these diverse educational fields, the core curriculum is the shared common ground amongst the various specializations. The core curriculum at the American University in Cairo (AUC) lies in the Liberal Arts education. Certainly, for great tasks to be accomplished, this requires possessing a strong knowledge in more than merely one field. This includes being grounded in the arts and humanities, the social sciences, hard sciences, business subjects and other theoretical, practical and professional studies (The American University in Cairo, 2016). It gives the students a strong understanding of their culture and history in addition to introducing them to the American culture and history through a transnational campus and vibrant educational system that triggers and encourages student intellect and self-growth. The goal of the liberal arts educational system is to guarantee that all students, regardless of their major, have a strong understanding of the traditional liberal arts and sciences.

The Academic Advising Center guides undeclared students from day one of the university experience until they declare their majors. Thereafter, they receive advice from a faculty member. Of course, the academic advisor is the first person that the student meets once they are admitted and ready to explore different areas of studies. This, as a result, helps students form a better idea of what sort of career they would like to pursue as they are exposed to a greater variety of subjects. As such, advisors operate as mentors who stimulate student responsibility for oneself and others by fostering a concern for self-growth and desire to navigate the unfamiliar liberal arts system.

Since the establishment of AUC in 1919, AUC have always gained international recognition and it is very well-known across the globe. Undergraduate studies being the primary level of education at any liberal arts institution, AUC clearly has the best of both worlds. In other words, AUC does not only offer undergraduate studies but also graduate studies. Regardless of the massive campus, AUC complies with the liberal arts class style and size. Classes are seminar-like to encourage students to engage and frame their opinions inside the classroom. Furthermore, the class does not exceed 20 students in order to ensure individualized attention.

The American University of Kuwait

The American University of Kuwait (AUK) is a private higher educational liberal arts institution founded in 2003. AUK is a young comprehensive and co-educational university that fosters excellence in knowledge and skills that represents an American model of education. The language of instruction at AUK is English. Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, an Ivy League School, and AUK have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that encourages the student, staff and faculty community to cooperate in projects by their advisory and consultations. AUK has earned its first accreditation by Dartmouth in 2006 and was re-accredited recently by the Private Universities Council (PUC)–Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait– in June 2015.

AUK embraces its students by developing life-long learners who are well-rounded in society and encourages them to be critical thinkers, innovators and leaders

of the community. The curriculum provided to the students at AUK is expansive with in-depth studies from different colleges within the university, such as the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Business and Economics. Being a liberal arts university, the benefits gained through general education studies along with the concentrations qualify the students to be all-rounded and versatile. Like AUC, this is possible because of the various fields offered at the university. The major disciplines include: Business Administration & Economics, Computer Engineering, Information System, Computer Science, International Relations, Social & Behavioral Science, Graphic Design, Communications & Media, and English literature. Academic courses, extra-curricular activities and support service units and facilities are designed to prepare students for life after university.

The international faculty members are qualified for possessing experience of with of the American style of higher education. The AUK curriculum fosters student development by providing a broad education requirement in addition to in-depth study in a major concentration or discipline. The AUK community endeavors to sustain the developing values of students by accomplishing three main goals: (1) providing students the opportunity to become independent thinkers, (2) to express themselves thoroughly and become knowledgeable and reliable candidates, (3) and finally, producing members of society who possess cultural responsibility and are compliant to professional and ethical development.

The Academic Advising Center (AAC) strives to help students achieve their academic success. AAC advisors are dedicated to empowering students to ingrain a vibrant role within their educational setting by guiding them to acquire a deeper understanding of the liberal arts curriculum. The advisor handles undeclared students in terms of academic advising, educational planning, course selection and retention advising. Advisors and students work together to reach academic and educational goals that correlate with the students' major interests. Students are gently guided towards discovering the major, or field of study, they are willing to pursue; this is the pure essence of a liberal arts education. Advisors aim to foster academic and personal responsibility among their students.

AUK may, to an extent, lack global recognition due to the great competition amongst universities and colleges. However, it is well-known in the United States of America as according to the Office of Admissions many students are referred by their university or college to take a specific course at AUK if they are staying in Kuwait for a semester or so. In all such cases, courses taken at AUK are transferred to the mother institution that the student comes from because of an overall identical curriculum and exact course descriptions.

AUK has been in collaboration with Dartmouth since 2004. AUK aimed to guarantee quality of knowledge for approaching students; therefore, the university affiliated itself with Dartmouth, and now both institutions constantly work together on the liberal arts curriculum. While a small campus is usually seen as a negative trait, liberal arts, on the contrary, benefit from small campuses that ensure an intimate environment. In other words, a small campus quickly engages students in their first week as they rapidly familiarize themselves with the geographical contours of the campus, adding to intimacy that is essential to a liberal arts institution.

Regarding tuition fees, Liberal Arts Institutions such as AUK are relatively higher compared to other local and international universities. However, availability of both partial and full scholarships, and financial aid must be taken into account. Of course, as has been noted before, high quality leads to high tuition due to the wide variety of courses offered at AUK. Variety of courses fulfills the very function of a liberal arts university; it leads to student well-roundedness since they, as a result, possess a broader base of knowledge instead of having only taken career-related classes. Most importantly, to ensure maximum quality within the classroom they keep it at small classes of 30 or less. Implementing the liberal arts education in the Arab region such as AUC and AUK is achieved through borrowing foreign educational principles and incorporating it in an educational system.

Policy Borrowing

Policy borrowing in education is a phenomenon used to transfer academic reform from one country to another, articulating a professional educational strength and importing the best practices (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). In other words, policy borrowing is a form of educational transfer—with some adaptations—that

occurs from one country to another with a keen focus on the best curriculum and practices. To exchange and properly implement an educational model from one system to another is not expected to be successful nor fruitful unless certain factors are taken into consideration. The most important factor is the cultural difference from one nation to another. In this respect, before adopting any particular academic policy, the policy first ought to be contextualized, and thereby appropriately adjusted, in a way that would match the culture of the target nation—where it is to be applied. For example, this includes paying great attention to the particulars of the curriculum. The curriculum must be rightly tailored so that it is compatible to the unique context of the target country, focusing on the development of student skills that will benefit them in career choice. Because each country has its own unique system, this step is imperative so as to avoid failures of borrowed policies. Following this, the worldview of policy borrowing designated to the countries adjustment between the characteristics of the various guideline frameworks included and the overwhelming political belief system propelled change happening inside them (Zajda, 2015). Stakeholders from the very beginning should hire experts who are trained in this policy in order to prevent or entirely avoid any failure. Maintaining a level of Western education and implementing it into an Egyptian or Kuwaiti culture may give rise complexities and difficulties that lead to inevitable conflicts. AUC and AUK have both merged Western education with their individual curriculums, while adopting the academic context that matches the local culture.

Policy borrowing is mentioned in this study as it helps articulate student development, which is already adopted in Chickering and Gamson's theory. Since all the principles existed in the theory is related to a great extent to the learning and teaching process that aim to developing the student's educational outcome.

Chickering and Gamson designed seven principles of good practice as a guideline for faculty members and students to enhance the learning and teaching process. This theory was used in this study because it suggests ways of improving the learning process and developing the way faculty members implement teaching styles. Each principle is intended as a guideline for students, faculty members and administrators to enhance the educational system through teaching and learning.

The Seven Principles of Good Practice by Chickering and Gamson

The Seven Principles of Good Practice in undergraduate education, by Chickering and Gamson, are guidelines for students and faculty members to follow in order to improve learning and teaching techniques in primary, secondary and higher education (Chickering & Gamson, 1991). Implementation of these principles helps emphasize the significance of faculty members, students and staff in incorporating different tactics that improve student development in addition to cultivating student personal identity. This theory has been examined and implemented in different universities.

Chickering (1993) proposed seven factors that aid identity formation: competence development, emotion management, movement from autonomy towards interdependence, development of mature interpersonal relationships, identity establishment, purpose development, and integrity development. The seven principles are recommended for the development of both students and faculty members in higher education institutions. Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles were selected for improving the liberal arts education by offering an exceptionally precise approach to "improving teaching and learning given that a robust base of research undergirds these principles" (Sorcinelli, 1991). The seven principles of good practice pertain to the encouragement of student-faculty contact, development of reciprocity and cooperation among students, encouragement of active learning, faculty giving prompt feedback, emphasizes time on task, communicates high expectations and respects diverse talents and ways of learning. The reason for choosing the seven principles of good practice was due to the main guidelines requested for faculty members and students that enhance the teaching and learning process. These principles offer different ways to form a learning environment that promotes undergraduate student effectiveness as well as faculty teaching via different methods. These principles clearly demonstrate the main purpose of my research for creating the best outcome of a liberal arts education.

Best Practices

Chickering and Gamson's seven principles of good practice have been conducted in different liberal arts institutions and their success, after implementation, has been proven. The seven principles are that good teaching (1) encourages contact between students and faculty, (2) develops reciprocity and cooperation among students, (3) encourages active learning, (4) provides prompt feedback, (5) emphasizes time on task, (6) communicates high expectations and (7) respects diverse talents and ways of learning. To begin with, in Turkey during the year of 2012, Aydoğdu, Doymuş and Şımşek implemented the seven principles of good practice in the Faculty of Science.. This department comprised of 52 instructors teaching in universities. The seven principles of good practice were considered and characterized as standard teaching method. The study mentioned above focuses on the degree to which educators applied these principles. 70 questions were used as a scale for data collection while applying the seven principles and utilizing 10 items. The findings of this study has shown the major issue accordingly to the implementation of the principles, whereas they entered the classroom lessons showing teaching faculty is more than the number of students. Principle 6, the communication of high expectations, was the most well-known showing the staff standard since it focuses on the impact of motivation. Afterwards came principle 5, which emphasizes time on task, and was followed by Principle 3, good teaching encourages active learning, and Principle 2, good teaching develops reciprocity and cooperation among students" (AYDOĞDU, et al., 2012). In addition, another study conducted in the United States examined how classroom arrangement and instructional technologies (IT) can be utilized to implement great practices in accounting education and enhance center skills of undergraduate students. In undergraduate education, the seven principles for good practice and the core competencies offer a structure by which to reconsider educational practices and analyze the positive outcomes of IT within accounting pedagogy and curricula in addition to classroom structure. A three-section survey was conducted towards the end of the semester to evaluate the benefits of the improved classroom design and IT. Students stated that classroom setup and improvement use the Seven Principles of Good Practice in Higher Education, for example, appreciation

of different learning methods, diverse abilities and students' collaboration. Also, the improvement of core capabilities distinguished for accounting education, collaborating, communicating skills and leading skills (Mcvay, et al., 2008). Collected data proves the success of Chickering and Gamson's theory in good practice as well as the identification of significant issues faced by institutions.

The following chapter includes the research questions that emerged from analysis of the data gathered in the literature review. After the number of sources and research done, I was able to merge and eliminate the main points of interests which helped me in forming my research question.

Chapter 3

Methods

This chapter will focus on the research methodology of my thesis study. Furthermore, it will focus on different sections such as research setting, research questions, research method, data collection, entities selection, instrument, data analysis and ethical considerations.

I have selected the American University in Cairo (AUC) and American University of Kuwait (AUK) because they both follow the "American" liberal arts educational system. Additionally, AUC, in comparison to other American Universities, in the Middle East, is one of the oldest universities while AUK is considered one of the newest. Given the fact that AUC and AUK are located in dynamic regions in the Middle East, these countries are well connected to their heritage and roots. Also, both institutions have a student body containing different types of Arab youth.

Research Setting

This research focuses on higher educational universities in the Middle East. The American University in Cairo, established in 1919, is an English- language university. It is accredited in Egypt by the Ministry of Higher Education and accredited in the United States by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges. It is the focal point of developing a person's social and cultural existence in the Arab world, particularly Egypt. With a diverse faculty and student body on campus, AUC contains around 60 different nationalities. AUC has formed a society of long lasting learning, leaders and many services to enhance student experience. It is devoted to making critical commitments to the Egyptian community and maintains the standards of scholarly opportunity. The American University of Kuwait (AUK), established in 2003, is also an English medium university. AUK received its accreditation in 2006 from the Private University Council. This university provides its students with a well-rounded education that enhances overall knowledge and skills. AUK enriches Kuwaiti society by encouraging its students to be lifelong learners and leaders, and to always enhance their critical thinking skills.

AUC and AUK have one common feature regarding the student body. In the two universities, the student body is composed of individuals from various social and cultural backgrounds. While some are foreigners, others are local; as each student has their own customs and traditions, this constitutes the very diversity of the campus and the educational experience. Besides the diversity due to foreign students, the locals also come from different areas within the country; some are from suburbs while others are from the city. When it comes to spotting differences, the main factor of concern would be that the students joining AUC and AUK go through an overwhelming phase where they learn about the university and become familiar with not only academic matters, but also student life.

Research Questions

1. How is the liberal arts model of education interpreted by junior and senior students who attend AUC and AUK?

2. How does the Western liberal arts education model impact the development of students within the MENA region, as exemplified by AUC and AUK?

Research Method

A qualitative research approach was primarily used in this study to understand the reasons underlying diverging student perspectives. The interview was conducted based on questions, presented in the protocol in a manner that fostered trust between the interviewer and the interviewee. Interviews were prepared, analyzed and conducted thoroughly through the data with consideration. The interview procedure was developed in the form of open-ended questions. This offered students the opportunity to express themselves and share their challenges, and also allowed for the maximization of information gathered. The aim of these semi-structured interviews was to measure the effectiveness of the liberal arts education system on Middle Eastern students, specifically those enrolled in AUC and AUK. This was accomplished by decoding and sorting data gathered from the interviews. Before taking part in the qualitative research, I examined how my own perspectives about what is conceivable to study will influence my approach. After this act of introspection, I selected a proper approach to begin with. I started by transcribing all the interviews of students from AUC and AUK; then I highlighted the similarities and

differences between both universities and their liberal arts education system. Afterwards, I analyzed the common major theme that students from both universities discussed, and discovered how just because they are all studying a liberal arts education system they have similar and corresponding opinions and ideologies. Subsequently, I looked into the different themes and was able to merge the similar opinions from students interviews in both institution in the theme that best illustrates it. I thereby started collecting the responses of AUC and AUK students into the answers of the research questions.

The conducted research facilitated in determining the missing pieces, and the reasons and opinions of the participants. The qualitative case study was an in-depth research that combined the interview results with scholarly articles. This form of case study focuses on a specific field of interest and was analyzed in order to demonstrate the thesis statement. The thesis statement argues that this research emphases on understanding student development models that adequately demonstrate the effectiveness of a liberal arts education within the MENA region. Furthermore, arrangement between the frameworks supporting the research questions, the literature review and the theory itself are essential for thorough qualitative research. To improve the understanding of how the methodologies outlined the research, I utilized the study starting from the research questions towards the implementation conducted in the interview.

One form of qualitative research known as exploratory research is utilized to increase understanding of the fundamental reasons, opinions, and inspirations of the research conducted. I used qualitative research analysis as it determines insights and creates thoughts and speculations for potential research (Ospina, 2004). It concentrated on the issues and concerns that occur and the outcomes. Meanwhile, the qualitative interview gave the interviewee the opportunity to state personal perspectives without the pressure of any external factors. The interview process and questions were constructed in a way that highlighted student perception of the liberal arts education and its impact on education and individual personality. The emphasis of this paper is on Arab students within transnational settings, focusing on the American University in Cairo and the American University of Kuwait.

The research method process was as follows: a random sample of participants was extracted from each university, either from the research board of the university or the institutional research director. Then, an email was sent to 100 chosen students in request of student approval. Upon approval, students became official participants of the study. The students who expressed interest and approval were emailed individually in order to establish an appropriate date, time and location. The total number of students who fully participated in this study were a total of 25 students from both institutions. On the day of the interview, first the process of the interview was explained to participants and then an Institution Review Board (IRB) consent contract was distributed to all participants. Consent granted the interviewer approval for using collected data (Appendix C). The audio recorder started as soon as the form was signed and accepted. After completing this process, the interviews from both institutions were transcribed. Responses were then combined by coding the similar topics that were brought up in the interview and looked through further in scholarly articles to collect more data on the topics mentioned by the respondents. In the data analysis, similar responses from different students were grouped under major and minor themes to shed light on the discussed topics. The data is presented in a percentage format corresponding to the matched themes. The major themes that were derived from the interviews regarding the liberal arts education were: unpreparedness of faculty, awareness of liberal arts, applying theory to practice, lack of implementation, understanding one's quality and values, and diversity in course options. Also, there were minor themes that weren't as frequently discussed but are worth mentioning such as diversity among students, and global phenomena versus student welfare.

Inductive analysis was the research approach that was followed after the interviews were conducted and the collective data research was gathered. This approach, according to researchers, starts with a particular perception or element and finds connections among the interviews through theories that were applied in the research. The advantage of the inductive approach is that it begins with the analysis of the data, followed by a search for common patterns across separate interviewees'

information and experience, and then "arguing for those patterns as having the status of general explanatory statements." (Potter, 1996, p.151)

Data Collection

Interviews have essentially become amongst the most knowledge-producing practices over the social sciences, humanities and psychology. (Brinkmann, 2014). Interviews can be formulated and performed in a multitude of ways, ranging from, for instance, surveys through formal meetings, the Internet or the phone, to more casual discussions led for research purposes. For the purpose of this research, a face-to-face interview was conducted between the interviewer (myself) and the interviewed (the student). Interviews are essentially considered to be the most popular form of data collection due to its many advantages. They provide quite accurate information and the objectives of further identifying the themes that were mentioned continuously among the students.

As an interviewer, I facilitated a non-bias research by directing the responses of the interviewees towards the purpose of the question. The questions gave the interviewee the freedom to speak freely, and express her true feelings and opinions based on the student's occupational status as an upper-classman (Appendix A). During the interview, data was recorded which helped me as a researcher return to points that I found interesting or relevant to my research.

The seven interview questions were based on an inverted pyramid, focusing on all the angles that articulate the proper understanding of the liberal arts education in each student. The student learning process, along with the external activities within a university, builds student character. The questions however began with a brief description of student understanding of the liberal arts education, and then focused on a precise analysis of what the student hopes to do upon graduation.

Interviews took place in both AUC and AUK. I emailed the Provost of the American University of Kuwait (AUK) who forwarded my email to the University Research Board (URB); it was then reviewed for thesis acceptance. The reason for this vetting process, according to the Provost, was because my research required

having students as research subjects. The Chair of the Committee contacted me and approved my research. I met the officer at the Institutional Research department as soon as I received the approval in order to select a random sample of upperclassmen students. Interviews happened over 5 working days, taking place either in the Library in a booked conference room or a private room with only the presence of the interviewee and myself. Interviews spanned from twenty to thirty minutes depending on the interviewee's details and experience. Simultaneously at AUC an email was sent to the Director of Institutional Research and I awaited approval. Random sampling was also used in this study in order to determine participants. Random sampling aimed towards choosing cases from a list of specific criteria of students, focusing on cases from within a specimen of a specific criterion (Robinson, 2014). The selected criterion was based on class standing. The study mainly consisted of students who earned a degree of 75 credits or more. 100 students from each institution—AUC and AUK—were selected through random sampling. An email was sent to all students of which only 2 students from AUK and 7 students from AUC responded. Due to the minimal number of students from the random sample that actually responded, faculty members and colleagues assisted in gathering additional students to be interviewed. In AUK 13 students in total were interviewed; similarly, in AUC 12 students underwent the interview process. An email was sent to all students explaining the interview process (Appendix D). During the interview session, each student signed a consent paper, approving that gathered information would be later used.

Entities Selection

In this study, I focused on two universities in the Arab world: the American University in Cairo (AUC) and the American University of Kuwait (AUK). The two universities were selected based on the fact that they were established in different periods. I selected two universities that follow the American liberal arts education and have a student population that mainly consists of Arab citizens. Hence, I further discussed the adaptation process—in the missing points—in order to bridge the gaps between American ideology and Arab student identity.

The American University in Cairo (AUC).

AUC, a Liberal Arts educational system as stated in Chapter 2, shapes students to become critical thinkers that possess strong writing, logical and argumentative skills. AUC is a vibrant and diverse campus. Likewise, this diversity is also manifested in the students as the university aims to offer students a diverse body of knowledge and appropriate decisions.

Faculty members are instructed to teach the liberal arts curriculum. They apply this concept to every single subject rather than simply reduce all subjects to career or major-related topics. As previously mentioned in the previous chapter, AUC also offers graduate studies; therefore, the transition from undergraduate to graduate is reasonably easier as it is within the same liberal arts environment. Also, clubs and organizations encourage internship and student employment opportunities because they provide students necessary exposure to other groups and overall increased networking. Additionally, one cannot deny the strong relationship and bond that AUC maintains with its alumni. The university constantly informs them of available job offerings in the industry with all necessary details. Most importantly, help is always offered from AUC to its graduates, especially when drafting resumes and curriculum vitae.

The American University of Kuwait (AUK).

AUK greatly invests in creating an educational system that recruits faculty who have been exposed to and practiced in the liberal arts. The university pursues its mission of constantly recruiting qualified faculty, and ingraining excellence in its students in terms of teaching, research, and leadership that contributes to the development of new, effective and long-lasting knowledge (The American University of Kuwait, 2016).

Most of the teaching faculty staff members are student-focused and teaching-oriented. In addition, professors at AUK provide students individualized attention within the classroom and outside the classroom—during professor office hours. One of the greatest qualities of AUK—a feature that is part and parcel of being a liberal arts institution—is that it also has a very strong relationship with its students and alumni. AUK acts as a firm bridge between the students and the market in order to

ensure that students are constantly updated with the market requirements. While they are still students, the university provides internships and part-time job opportunities, and upon graduating, it offers full-time job opportunities.

Since students have the freedom of speech, they are constantly encouraged to be critical thinkers. In support of this endeavor, the dean is always accessible through "Tell it to the Dean," where students address their concerns and introduce new ideas without any strictures. AUC and AUK both follow the liberal arts system; specifically, they help shape its graduates into well-rounded individuals who are not only qualified on a career-level, but are able to relate to all things due to an intimate exposure to a broad knowledge base during the undergraduate experience. Students not only learn theory, but also practice through the internship and student employment programs. For instance, students are offered jobs inside the university to ensure that they experience the professional life before being officially hired elsewhere. Such a program, in addition to course internships, prepares students to handle and fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the professional world. As students are allowed to pursue on campus a career lining that they may want to continue in.

A random sample (gender, age and ethnicity) was collected, consisting of upperclassman participants from AUC and AUK. Permission from administrators at the research site was received before any taken action. The administrators also assisted in the collection of the random sample of upperclassmen students.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview protocol, containing open-ended questions, was utilized. Additionally, broad questions that lead to in-depth and detailed topic discussions were included. Interviews revolved around the liberal arts education and the interviewee was given the freedom to express personal opinion and educational experience. The interviewee would speak and express their own thoughts and feeling with no constraints at all. This encouraged participants to elaborate experiences and pursue different lines of inquiry that emerged during the interview process. Interviews followed a particular sequence, consisting of 7 questions centered on transnational universities—AUC and AUK —in the Middle East (Appendix A). Questions began with testing participants understanding of liberal arts to following a more specific

experience and exposure of the interviewee. The interviewer believes that these set of questions helped participants structure a better view and understanding of the liberal arts. Audio recorders were used to record the interview for later transcription.

Data Analysis

According to the explanation mentioned earlier, a coding of the sample was applied during the interview session as shown in Appendix 5. Due to confidentiality reasons, in the coded form, each student was represented by an 'S' followed by a student number and university name.

Ethical Consideration

In order to proceed with this study, which required certification to conduct the interview, I was required to attain approval from the IRB. Consent to proceed was received in the form of a signed approval from the Chair of the IRB sent to my email with the thesis advisor copied in the email (Appendix B). All students who participated expressed written consent by signing an official consent form (Appendix C). Written consent reassured participants that this research is optional and not mandatory, information provided by students is confidential, and that students may withdraw at any point during or before the interview. Besides this, students were completely aware of the purpose of the study, with the honest feedback and response given from their side. They were not, by any means, hurt or abused during the interview. Conversely, my aim as a researcher was to encourage an atmosphere where students felt comfortable and free enough to provide honest feedback on the research topic.

Chapter 4

Findings

While hearing the responses of the interviewees, I was able to link themes that were stated by the students from the two different institutions. Each session took place in a conference room in the library or a private room. The session, depending on the information the student provided, took a maximum of an hour. Towards the final interviews, I compiled data that worked with the themes. The objective was to accumulate data that supports the objective of the research via analysis, theories and interviews. The results of the qualitative study, in the form of thematic responses to the interview's open-ended questions, are presented in the graphs below.

Figure 1 Liberal Educational Charts
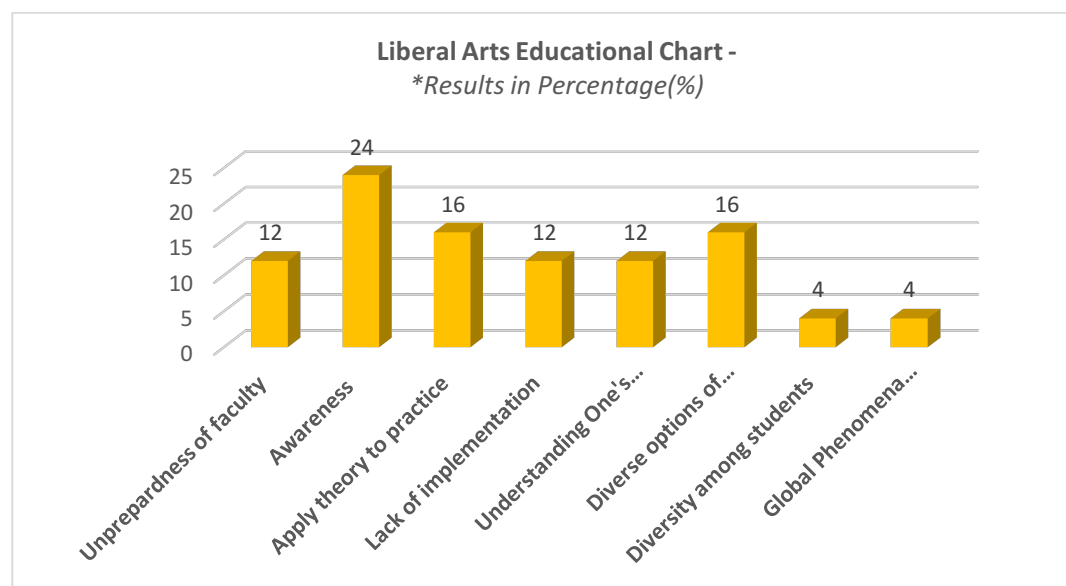
Figure 2 Liberal Arts Educational Pie Chart
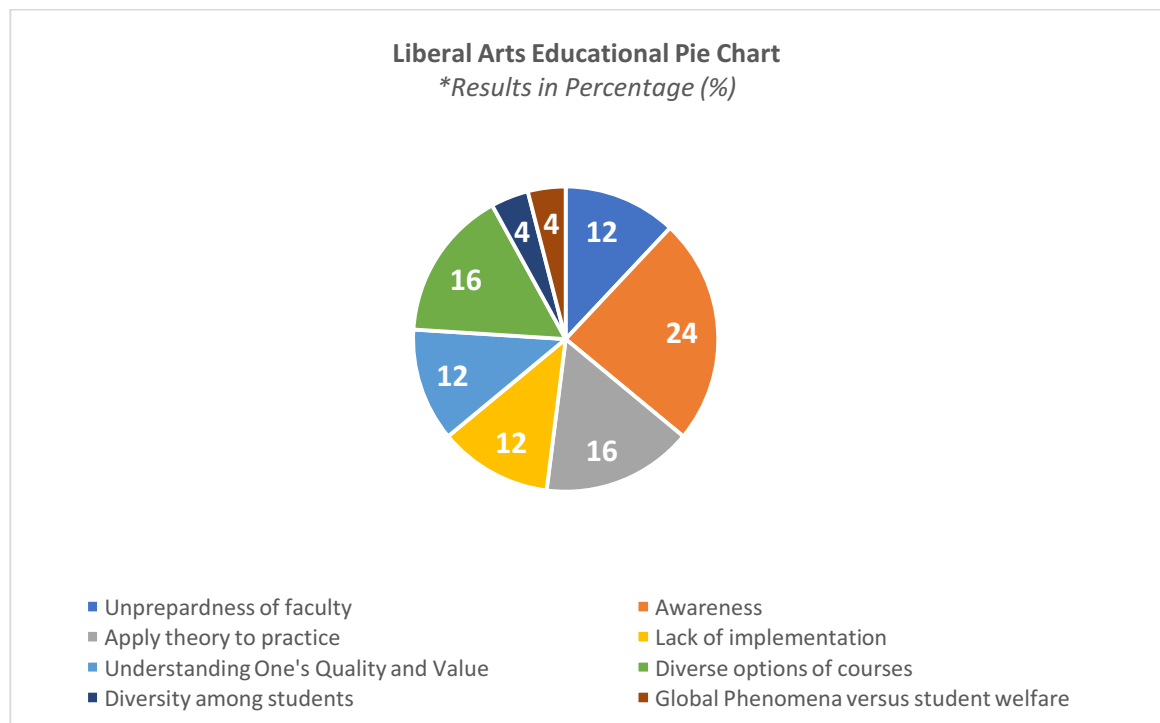
As shown in the graph, 24% of students share a concern about the lack of awareness of the liberal arts education within their university. Students expressed the need for a better vision and understanding of the purpose of a liberal arts education. They feel that the benefits of such an education should be well communicated through different entities within the university. 16% of students stated the need for increased diversity of courses to choose from. Students also pressed for having more disciplines to match diversity of student interests. Moreover, 16% of students emphasized the importance of practicing what is merely learned on a theoretical level. Students believe that in order to grasp and fully understand concepts within a liberal arts education, they should be entitled to apply theory to practice and deeply reflect upon acquired knowledge. Three different themes emerged during the interviews, each individually occupying 12% of the thematic diversity. These themes are (1) unpreparedness of faculty, (2) understanding one's quality and value, and (3) lack of implementation. Diversity among students, and global phenomena versus student welfare were two of the minor themes that were mentioned during the interview

process. Students mentioned the need of benefiting from the merging of different cultures through a system that encourages the exchange of knowledge and broadening of understanding. These students represented 4% of the data. 4% of the sample also expressed concern for the global phenomena versus student welfare.

Inductive Analysis

The inductive approach for analysis of qualitative data is best illustrated by the following: "Inductive thinking proceeds from the specific to the general" (Hatch, 2002, p. 161). Data is best comprehended by first beginning with particular components, and then discovering associations among the particulars. Utilizing an inductive approach is suitable for many reasons. It allows for the ability to consolidate informational data into a concise format; to build transparent connections between the assessment or research goals and outline discoveries received from the interview information; and build a theory of the fundamental structure of encounters or procedures that are obvious in the collected data. The inductive approach produces an deliberate arrangement of methods for examining data collected on subjects information that can create legitimate and reliable findings (Thomas, 2006).

It is expected that the inductive approach will clarify the data, thus lessening process evident by depicting an arrangement of systems for making significance in complex information through the improvement of outline methods from the information. These methods are obvious in a number of clear subjective information investigations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analytic techniques, or fundamental utilization of a general inductive approach, are portrayed in five points. Data analysis is guided by the assessment goals that distinguish areas and themes to be investigated. The analysis of the inductive component is determined through different interpretations of the information. In spite of the fact that discoveries are impacted by the assessment goals or inquiries, as outlined by the researcher, they emerge specifically from the examination of the information, and not from prior desires. Assessment targets provide a concentration or area of pertinence for leading the investigation; this, however, does not emerge through an arrangement of assumptions about particular findings. Secondly, the essential method of analysis is the transfer of classifications from the raw data into a model or system. This model is designed to

organize the main themes noted by the researcher during the coding procedure. Thirdly, the researcher gathers the findings from the vast data collected. These findings are based on the presumptions and experiences of the researchers leading the gathering and reviewing of data. In order for the findings to be accessible, the researcher must decide which aspects of the data are more valuable and critical. Fourthly, different evaluators may generate findings that are identical. Finally, the reliability of findings, which is due to the particular method of inductive analysis, can be evaluated by utilizing comparative techniques and even a different qualitative analysis (Thomas, 2006).

By discussing the inductive analysis approach—which resonated throughout my study—and thoroughly explaining the purpose of my research, I have thus highlighted all major and minor themes that I encountered throughout the interview process with the students at AUC and AUK. Six major themes emerged while analyzing the interviews: unpreparedness of faculty in the liberal arts education, awareness of liberal arts education, application of theory to practice, lack of implementation, understanding one's quality and value, and diversity in course options. Few minor themes also developed during data analysis. I categorized diversity among students and global phenomena versus student's welfare as minor themes. These phenomena were included as minors themes because they were not mentioned as many as times as the major themes. Nevertheless, minor themes should be considered for future reference. However, I did incorporate the previously mentioned seven principles of good practice, analysis of data and the findings in this section. The themes I have selected resonate with the collected data along with the qualitative research methods that were implemented.

Major Themes

Major Theme One: Unpreparedness of Faculty in Liberal Arts Education.

The first major theme, which sparked the researcher's attention, is the unpreparedness of faculty in liberal arts education. High expectations are not fulfilled unless students and faculty effectively communicate and interact to improve the educational experience for the student. In response to this issue, Chickering and Gamson responded with principle one—encouragement of student-faculty contact—

and principle six—communicates high expectations (Chickering & Gamson, 1991). As for principle one, student-faculty contact is the most significant form of connection that inspires undergraduate students, and encourages them to contribute and be involved inside and outside of class. Faculty concern enables students to overcome unpleasant circumstances and helps students maintain stable working process. Anna Neumann affirmed that understanding faculty members and their academic learning is imperative in light of the fact that the essential action to be taken by the faculty is to designate, share, and implement professional knowledge and curriculum that will help enhance student development (Neumann, 2009).

Interacting with faculty members improves students' intellectual perspectives. Regarding principle six, it is important to hold high expectations because to expect more is to receive more. It is important to have expectations for all types of individuals, for those unwilling to strive as well as motivated people. Expecting that students will perform well often leads to a self-satisfying prediction. This occurs in the scenario that instructors and universities hold higher expectations for themselves as well, and consequently undertake additional endeavors for educational improvement. A particular AUC student mentioned the impact of faculty and student communication is essentially significant in addition to faculty members assuming a high level of responsibility within a liberal arts education. As mentioned by an AUC student:

> The problem in Liberal Arts in American University in Cairo is that not all the professors understand the meaning of Liberal Arts to begin with because we always have this thing that we need the best professors in the field that they are in and professors lack this capacity to learn at their age. They feel like we have been used to doing this that way and we will be continuing on doing it in the same manner. So, they teach us in the same way that they teach in other non-liberal arts universities. And that restricts our chances of getting the most out of this university. The professors themselves need to understand the meaning of the liberal arts university and how to incorporate this concept into their courses no matter what discipline they teach and

understanding that there a lot to learn outside of the class and not just strictly to theory, hence they are going to be able to give a better experience to the students. (S7-AUC)

Faculty members cannot (or should not) be hired at a university merely to occupy the number of places needed for a particular department or major. The faculty is a vital element that enables and supports student ability to obtain an enriching educational experience. Neumann (2009) noticed that the idea of scholarly learning—synthesis of learning, teaching and researching through higher education—ought to be connected as a focal point for higher education to contemplating the work of the faculty. However, scholarly learning is generally ignored as stakeholders and policymakers concentrate rather on quantifiable measures of scholarly work, such as the number of instructive hours, economic effect and research productions. In any case, Neumann (2009) cautioned that failing to see "how teachers encounter their insightful learning" (p.7) will probably not bring about capable arrangements and institutional practices coordinated toward academic development and faculty advancement.

Major Theme Two: Awareness of Liberal Arts Education.

Students are often not aware of the purpose of a liberal arts education since, as freshman, they lack an understanding of the importance of taking liberal arts courses. As mentioned by an AUC student, the Advising Center is expected to explain this:

I think people [believe] it is a requirement that they tick off and I think it starts when being a freshman and going to the advising center, the idea of getting it out of my list. So, the only thing I think of is my declaration and my major and so on and so forth (S3-AUC).

As reported by Bloom in 1987, at the point when an undergraduate student enters the university, the student feels confusion because of the vast range of courses offered by the particular departments or the advising center. Also, there seems to be no agreement or harmony within the university, and no official direction about what the student ought to learn (Bloom, 1987). This demonstrates that students held high expectations upon entering the university. In fact, the advising center should encourage and motivate students to have high expectations and concern for the

significance of the core courses, which lead students to implement what they learn from their courses and improve their educational endeavors as mentioned in principle six. On the other hand, undergraduate students from both AUC and AUK mentioned student understanding of the importance of the liberal arts courses yet they believe that they haven't received the prompt feedback that should be offered in order to understand the concept of liberal arts education. In illustration of this point, an AUC student mentioned:

> I think that many students don't see the benefit of a liberal arts education because they feel forced to take courses they know nothing about and maybe they're not interested in and most students just go for easy A or the minimal workload (S10-AUC).

Reflecting on the previous notion of the importance of awareness, an AUK a student stated that:

> The liberal arts education in itself is very under-rated its importance mainly because it lacks the awareness. Lots of students, I have tutored students here in AUK they come complaining Oh my God, why do I have to do this, why do I have to this I'm doing finance why do I have to do English. So, I don't think they are aware, I always give them the same answer you need to give it a chance and then wait. The affect doesn't happen as soon as you start taking a class so university or an academic university starts to build awareness for students, explain to them why this is important for their education and maybe they will have a broader understanding and therefore they start the learning process earlier rather than they spend time complaining about LA education (S11-AUK).

Students require proper feedback on achievements and performance during courses as stated in the fourth principle. To begin with, students require assistance in evaluating their current learning capability. Students in classrooms are entitled to present individual perspectives and opinions, and receive feedback for the sake of personal development. At different stages of the student's life in university, he

requires opportunities to reflect on what has been realized. Despite everything, students must learn to self-evaluate and measure personal progress.

Major Theme Three: Apply Theory to Practice.

It is very beneficial for students to be exposed to a variety of learning techniques that enhance their abilities both as undergraduate student and graduate students. Liberal arts courses serve to expand student knowledge, however this effect fades away because active learning techniques were not applied, according to an AUK student. This is obvious in the students claim:

> I'm sure there is something we need to change or strengthen, I think
> we need to add and teach us how to practice what we have learned.
> Not actual practice. For example, I learn its stored in my mind but like
> if I don't practically do it you will forget it. For example, like
> psychology or all the courses it helped developed m y characteristic
> but by time they will fade away. What I think should be done is there
> should be a practical way (S4-AUK).

Subsequently, the third principle corresponds with student perspectives and states that undergraduate students don't learn by sitting in a classroom while passively collecting information from faculty members, memorizing discussions and chapters, and merely regurgitating answers. They should be able to discuss what they have learned, expand on it through writing and debating, relate to and critically reflect over new knowledge by noting the similarities and differences between past and present data. Students are entitled to connect the learning process and reflect on it themselves in order to acquire new, intimate knowledge of the topics being studied . On the contrary, an AUC student stated:

> Definitely, when I think about it in architecture, when I relate it to
> architecture, when I compare myself to others, I see that maybe if my
> institution doesn't give the best architectural learning experience and
> another institute that is not liberal arts university but teaches a much
> better architectural background I can translate my project my design to
> the client way better because I can understand him and relate to him no
> matter what field he works in or whatever background he's from

because I have learned diversity and how to communicate my projects
in a simpler way and understand the clients that I have way better than
the other people. I can actually have them understand what I am
talking about instead of just talking technical. The way other people
who might have way better projects but they can't communicate their
projects with their clients hence they'll not be able to sell it the way I
would be able to (S7-AUC).

This student believes that AUC respects and appreciates diverse talents and
ways of learning. This proves the seventh principle whereas students have distinctive
abilities, experiences, styles and methods for learning. Faculty ought to give students
the chances to display their abilities and utilize their styles of learning in order to
develop and accomplish the most ideal outcome. Supporting this notion, the holistic
approach to education was the main concept of Dewey's theory, which depended on
the connection between the person and the world. Dewey believed that if we were to
interrogate those who are most favorable disposed to the introduction of this work
in the schooling system, we should find the main interests of the child. This will
also help prepare studies for the duties of life later on. We should give each person
a chance to explore instead of giving students a rigid way to learn; we should foster
connections between the person and the world. Forcing students to do something
beyond the range of their skills will not necessarily help in their development
(Miettinen, 2000). Dewey urged making students aware of the social significance of
what they are doing, helping them connect between classroom activities, and
assisting them in understanding what is going on in the outside world. Dewey
attempted to pin point the need to return to the natural way of learning. He provided
examples of how education can be a natural learning process for people (Simpson, &
Stack, 2010). Students require the chance to demonstrate their learning techniques
that work best for them along with learning new ways that effectively enhance
learning ability.

Major Theme Four: Lack of Implementation.

Faculty will not succeed if knowledge is not properly transmitted to the
student, especially if there is no proper time management nor utilization of variety of

active learning techniques. Evidence is demonstrated by Chickering and Gasmon in two principles that coincide with one another. The third principle is *encouragement of active learning* where students are more involved if stimulated by the usage of different learning methods. *Emphasizes Time on Task* is the fifth principle. There is no viable replacement for time on tasks. It is essential for students and professionals to realize how to utilize one's time. It is necessary to teach time management to all undergraduate students. Assigning reasonable time means productive learning for students and sufficient teaching for faculty members. In this regard, a student stated:

> We lack implementation, it's more of theoretical. The courses are very interesting, looking back but I think we need more of the implementations and more options because sometimes we look at the core courses, as the easy courses to take and hence the grading system and not the 'A' behind it (S4-AUC).

The fifth principle is a continuation of the third principle in the sense that proper time, in addition to active learning methods, guarantees the success of the development process. Therefore, in AUC, students are missing one of the principles that are essential for this development process.

Major Theme Five: Understanding One's Quality and Value.

A liberal arts education includes three values in order to achieve one's maximum capacity; it "involves an experience of intrinsic value, the development of formal skills and capacities, and a recognition of greater purpose and service to others, including a modest overestimation of one's abilities" (Roche, 2010). Due to the myriads of available courses and unique exposure in classes, student understanding greatly expands through liberal arts courses. Moreover, this gives students the opportunity to hold high expectations of themselves as illustrated in principle six, *Communicates High Expectations*. This also proves how critical liberal arts courses help students in identifying "…[personal] interest and it grounds them as they begin to understand what they like and don't like" (S11-AUK). When asked about personal expectations upon graduation from the university, another student stated, "so I am currently exploring so I think it's not that I don't know because there is nothing but I don't know because I am discovering that there is a lot to do and I

need to explore all of that" (S7- AUC). Liberal arts education courses help students explore their interests and skills through introducing students to numerous disciplines that student may invest in academically.

Major Theme Six: Diversity in Course Options.

Liberal arts education courses provide a diversity of disciplines. It respects and serves the different talents of students since students differ in abilities. Diversity in course options allows student to broaden their intellectual horizon with courses that spark personal interest. Regarding the core curriculum model, particular courses are offered that are general in degree and meet essential and wide ranged goals. This approach assumes that distribution alone is insufficient. Instead, particular courses ought to be customized to give a more rational and reliable learning background, and to also take into consideration the integration of subjects along different disciplines in significantly more detailed than a dissemination prerequisite (Boyer and Kaplan, 1994). Latzer (2004) contends that the demands of the students and the need of certain faculty members to teach within their disciplines has urged the failure of the core curriculum because students often seek the faculty member with the style of their preference. As mentioned by an AUC student, "I think giving people the choices of selecting the courses is a good thing. I can't take a course about everything in the university but I have a choice to take whichever I feel is suitable" (S11-AUC). Meanwhile, a student in AUK stated that liberal arts courses not only help student academics, but also teach students to interact with various types of peoples. Upon the student being asked, as a senior do you see that the implementation of the liberal arts education distinguishes you as an individual from those who don't study using the liberal arts system, the student responded:

> Definitely, the most important thing that I noticed is it makes [you be] able to present yourself. [It provides you with] general knowledge about everything which also helps you understand different types of people. For example, you deal with different subjects it gives you a general knowledge about stuff you are interested on. You get the chance to meet people who you begin

> understanding where they are coming from to know more about
>
> the different lifestyles. (S9-AUK)

This clearly elucidates the importance of principle seven, where faculty are required to give students support in developing and learning new knowledge, and respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

Minor Themes

Minor Theme One: Diversity among students.

Knowledge exchange and cooperation amongst students is very essential. Learning improves when students collaborate in groups, presentations and discussions. A good model of learning actualizes when more cooperation and participation occurs rather than aggressive and enclosed behavior. Sharing one's own particular thoughts and reacting to others' responses develops and strengthens understanding. Engagement with others regularly expands the learning process stated in the second principle. In support of this, an AUC student mentioned:

> And it helps students be more aware of the world and I think it makes
>
> us more accepting because the more you learn about other people the
>
> more you learn to start relating to them and say oh that's like me… we
>
> are so different but we are so alike and it's kind of everything together.
>
> It makes me feel like it just broadens the horizon of everything of my
>
> mind and everything I think of and everything I know. (S10-AUC)

According to Khmelkov and Hallinan in 1999, it has been discovered that ethnic diversity within a classroom increases interaction amongst people of different ethnicities and races Despite the possibility that the young students do not necessarily form friendships through such interactions, contact within the classroom, and positive encounters during cooperative assignments, may be sufficient to enhance students' states of mind (van Geel & Vedder, 2011). The effects of student interaction on the educational experience are quite obvious.

Minor Theme Two: Global phenomena versus student's welfare.

Students have certain expectations when applying to a university. They tend to believe that they will receive a high quality of education that will elevate and develop their educational capabilities and points of strength. Some student responses from the

interviews reflected that this was the initial conception students had of their education in the university; this was also how they imagined to benefit from the educational system after graduation. Several students highlighted that they were surprised—after exposure during courses and spending years in the university—that the institution focuses on the market needs over the individuality of each student. According to Chickering and Gamson, the above findings fall under principle six. Principle six clearly demonstrates the expectations of students from freshmen to seniors. According to one AUC student, the mission statement does not correlate with reality. The student stated:

> The board is very much inclined to make the university marketing journey and they think what the job market needs, what the entrepreneurs need and they prepare us as students or let's say they shape us as students employable and very attractive in job markets. And I would have wished AUC fight back this global phenomenon, fight back capitalism by actually focusing on hammering on the idea for education for citizenship not necessarily national citizenship. (S3-AUC)

Such job market restrictions form obstacles that hinder student creativity and innovation. This ultimately limits student exposure to different interests and fields, and students are, therefore, never able to experience growth and development in unfamiliar fields.

Implementations

The structure that was suggested by students to improve the liberal arts education included offering new higher education courses, hands-on real life practices, cohesive understanding of the liberal arts ideology through students, and service learning courses. However, such implementation endeavors—to integrate all departments, units and students—may initially give rise to significant challenges.

Offering new higher education courses.

Students had already questioned their potential in improving quality of education gained from liberal arts. For example, AUC political science junior student mentioned:

> So, I think if you already have the capacity to require students to go into particular experiences in order to graduate then why not use these tools to get them to do social work but in the same way. It's kind of a difficult balance because again you are not trying to force them into something that again it's not the idea of checking off my list but I think we need to offer a bit of more diverse courses. (S3-AUC)

Even with the idea of having certain courses as general requirements, students still need increased exposure to a diversity of courses in order to select the most appropriate path. "I think we have enough courses to have a broad view but I think we should add more because everyone has a different interest," as mentioned by AUK student (S3-AUK). In addition to general requirement courses and major courses, students expressed the importance of a liberal arts education, but complained of a lack of exposure to enough courses. This exposure is crucial to such a system of education; it is necessary from the beginning of the educational experience, and not just upon graduation as mentioned by an AUK student.

> We can take other courses like social media as social media is being used as a main source in all companies and it's the most that is being used. No more newspaper courses of real life. When I said major courses, I meant courses towards marketing major like branding we need some courses that are not offered (S6- AUK).

Establishing new courses in higher education institutes improves the development of the students. These courses ought to help and prepare students for various aspects of life, such as occupational, organizational and societal roles.

Hands-on real-life practices.

Students sometimes feel that they lack hands-on and real-life experience in university courses, which leads to the notion that education is not developing parallel to the economic, occupational, and business world. An AUC stated:

> I think since liberal arts lets you know something about everything, I
> think it is important to learn by application and not only by theory. So,
> I think if liberal arts would include more ungrounded studies or more
> ungrounded activities I think it would shape lovely individuals because
> you would have all the dots connected and you know the underlying
> message of everything you do and would know the political aspects
> and you are not living in utopia. It would shape everything you do and
> place them together to make a clearer vision and understanding (S8-
> AUC).

The idea of merging knowledge gained in classroom with the experience gained through extra-curricular activities helps students move in parallel with the undergraduate degree. As mentioned by two other students in AUK, the need to practice what has been taught is essential. Not only by practically applying gained knowledge, but also applying it in other courses, which helps to link theoretical knowledge with real-life examples.

Cohesive understanding of the liberal arts ideology through students.

Different entities within the university should collaborate so as to achieve a cohesive understanding of the liberal arts ideology (Mainardes, et al., 2010). According to a few student participants from AUC, it is of utmost significance to understand the notion of liberal arts education within the students' exposure. As mentioned by one of the students:

> Well the thing about liberal arts is that it is not the modern day
> understanding of liberalism. I think it is really important to understand
> that. It is not about this idea of individual freedom; it is in the core of
> social work in building a true community people, not just a word that
> we use all around. (S3-AUC)

Additionally, another student confirmed the statement above by mentioning how, "it is also important to be aware of other things and to know what's happening around you. It is also important to be informed of what's happening in your major and in other fields if you later on decide to switch your major" (S5-AUC).

Service learning courses.

Service learning courses are generally acknowledged as a type of experiential education process in which students participate in humanitarian and community needs (Jacoby, 1999, p. 20). Faculty members discovered the outcome of service learning experience, as well as noting that development and growth of students are important factors in the learning process. However, faculty report an assortment of difficulties and challenges, "including unpredictability and occasional unprofessionalism of the community-based clients, the role service-learning plays in retention, tenure, and promotion, and the time commitment required" (Witmer, et al., 2009). As stated by an AUC student:

> Yes, I think so. I don't like to work in a bubble when designing, or
> when we are thinking of a building or when we are thinking of like
> even in advertising for example those award-winning designs were not
> designs that were super shiny or super technically wonderful using
> Photoshop. They were designs that people would instantly relate to
> even if it includes a very small message or a very small analogy that
> the people would relate to. So, I think courses that constantly learn
> through doing, community service is important. (S8-AUC)

The turning point for student success can be determined by the implementation of these various recommendations offered by students themselves, based on their personal experiences. On the other hand, other students, who accept the current implementations of the liberal arts education and are not seeking change, feel secure and content. After conducting the interviews, collecting the data and analyzing the results, it was revealed that most junior and senior students, who attend either AUC or AUK, have different understandings of the liberal arts educational system. These differences arise depending on their exposure to the liberal arts from

courses and the way these courses are structured by professors. Hence, it was found that the interpretation of the liberal arts model of education various depending on the approach of educational concept. The outcome, based on the student participation in this study, showed that a liberal arts education plays a big role in enhancing and developing student critical thinking skills, widens their perspectives, exposes them to different fields of studies and overall helps shape student personality. Also, according to the findings, students highlighted that a Western liberal arts education broadened their knowledge in different fields of study across different cultures. Accordingly, this elevated student understanding in the MENA region, as a whole, and helped students compete in the international market place and make a mark in the globalization wave.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendation

The research provided refines current understanding of a liberal arts education in both institutions—AUC and AUK—while acknowledging the challenges and limitations associated with the two examined institutions. A discussion and recommendations were derived from the interview sessions. Students proposed several recommendations for incorporating the liberal arts in their daily lives.

Discussion

Junior and seniors student at AUC and AUK emphasized certain common challenges regarding the implementation of the liberal arts education in the MENA region. Students came across these challenges through their interactions with some unprepared faculty members. Some students struggled in grasping the idea of the liberal arts since it was not implemented in some of their courses. For example, some classrooms did not include in their curriculum discussions or reflections that trigger critical thinking. Also, a serious flaw was student unawareness of the liberal arts education; freshmen students were not familiarized nor, well-prepared with an understanding of the process, importance and meaning of the liberal arts. It is also worth mentioning that upperclassman students seek more diversity in course options that prepares them to be well-rounded individuals ready to implement in their career what they learned from the liberal arts. Students from both institutions expressed the idea of implementing the Western liberal arts education system in the Arab world. Most students viewed this form of implementation as an eye-opening experience that allowed them to know more about the Western world. Moreover, students noted that this also granted them both an edge to compete in the international market and a unique identity in the local market. Interviewed AUC and AUK students appreciated the concept of merging Arab world studies section in general requirements with the liberal arts education. The inclusion of Arab culture in this system gives (Arab) students an opportunity to explore their own culture and history. Meanwhile, a few students mentioned the frustration of learning more about other cultures and not having the chance to fully understand one's own culture first. According to the findings mentioned above, offering new higher education courses, hands-on real-life

practices, cohesive understanding of the liberal arts ideology through students, and service learning courses will improve student learning outcome.

Improvement of the liberal arts education for undergraduate students was the main purpose of this study. Students from both institutions brought up various recommendations in order to improve the liberal arts education for undergraduate students. Students felt it was essential that they be heard when suggesting options that would help make them successful individuals prior to graduation.

Creating courses for students that will develop and prepare them for the "real world" needs to be done gradually; otherwise, may create an opposite reaction i.e. shocking the student. Absence of an organized outline, with a specific agenda to guide students to the proper graduation path, will lead to an unsatisfying educational journey for students in many ways, including socially, intellectually and financially (Ross 2008). This is one of the aspects that AUK students feel they are lacking. While students in AUC emphasize political and the scientific approach in the curriculum just like having a mandatory course such as scientific theory, they still believe that their exposure to such courses will prepare them for the real world. Students in both institutions, as mentioned earlier, believe it is essential to fill the gaps and enrich the courses in order to aid students during the developmental stages. It is imperative to intertwine real-life matters, such as politics, history and religion, in order to combine theoretical education with the external world.

Meanwhile, faculty should incorporate service learning in their courses based on the belief that students will willingly enhance and broaden personal development by applying theories to real life practices as well gain valuable experience interacting with colleagues, clients and higher managerial standings. This is exactly the recommendation of an AUC student; if a liberal arts education would include more practical studies or activities, students are likely going to connect the missing dots and realize the purpose and core message of material taught in classrooms. One student, as mentioned above, constantly insisted that we do not live in a utopia; we need to be aware of the real-world before forced exposure. If faculty members encourage such courses or programs in their classes, it will be beneficial for the

student's character. AUK, for example, does not face this struggle as much as it is a mandatory requirement for all majors to complete a job internship. This however doesn't entirely solve the need for preparing the student for post-graduation life. At the very least, AUK's internship requirement is a step towards this noble endeavor. As an ongoing improvement for both institutions, adapting a real life experiential course at an early stage will provide a sense of reality for students to know what they will eventually experience in the outside world.

Recommendations

Three different recommendations were suggested during the interviews to develop student and faculty outcome: academic module, mid-semester review and adding more disciplines to the primary courses. The academic module consists of a committee that will be formed in charge of the primary, secondary and capstone level courses in order to regulate and unify each course's teaching outcome. Their main task will be to set certain outcomes for students to accomplish at each course level, and to structure a solidified program that guarantees equal educational outcome. For example, at each level, such as the freshman level, students will be required to think critically, and practice creative thinking and problem solving. As a result, the committee will have a specific set of modules that will be distributed to all faculty members. For any given course, the faculty member will apply the committee's requirements as it is mandatory that the curriculum inside the course coincides with the established criteria. As for AUC and AUK, a major obstacle is that a course in the core curriculum may be taught by four different faculty members, each professor following a different criterion and each class presenting different experiences. In this case, one class may be privileged over another class.

Secondly, the mid-semester review requires that each professor offer an assessment session to each and every student halfway through the semester. This process is a face-to-face short meeting between the professor of the course and each student individually. This gives the professor an opportunity to provide students with a detailed evaluation and advice tailored to each student's capabilities and background. The rationale behind this assessment is to evaluate student performance and understanding of the material so as to ensure that students maximally benefit

from the course. This assessment will also clarify common struggles or educational difficulties students face, and this will, in turn, help faculty members take constructive actions appropriate to each student. For example, during a mid-semester review, faculty will be able to recognize academic difficulties and reach out to the appropriate department. This could be in the form of contacting the student support office that can then aid students in their academic challenges. Student exposure to this type of constructive criticism will help students develop a sense of ownership of their success *and* failure. Apparently, faculty feedback will only help students assess personal progress at an early part of the course, which allows for more time to study and exposes them to different ways of learning that best suit their educational capabilities. This activity in itself can be manifested as an independent liberal arts course where students learn self-assessment, set priorities and manage their time in the best way possible. Indeed, there is no better way to shape a student's character and prepare her for the work industry. This assessment will also be considered a mandatory session that is as brief as a ten minutes session and connects faculty and students. It will be a face to face discussion and feedback.

Finally, there is the need to add more disciplines to the primary courses. Freshman level courses of the core curriculum should include more courses that are related to the majors offered by the university. This will ease, for freshmen students, the process of choosing the major that most interests them. Through my interviews with students, it was demonstrated many students were hesitant in choosing a specific major due to the lack of course offerings. Students had to wait several semesters to merely experiment with their major, which ultimately lead to a delay in degree completion. Therefore, it is fundamental to maintain a more structured form of implementation that aids in the development of learning outcomes. This will support student exposure to a diversity of experiences that will expand their analytical thinking skills.

The above recommendations will help enhance the overall quality of education for each student, and preserve the individuality and differences among students of different backgrounds. This process will also help faculty understand and

assess the effectiveness of their teaching method, class activities and syllabus on different students.

Overall, it is clear that implementing the Chickering and Gamson seven principles of good practice is critical as it may benefit the development of undergraduate students. Applying the seven principles into the study allowed for the discovery of different methodologies and approaches that improve student capabilities. These principles also help the learning process of each student, and contribute to the formation and development of a well-rounded individual prepared to lead a successful life.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Based on the research, findings and data analysis of this study, a common result constantly appeared within both institutions. In this section I will present the conclusion, support and the future research of the thesis study.

One of the central goals of a liberal arts education is to teach undergraduate students to go beyond the limits and explore various disciplines. They should have the motivation and capabilities to argue, debate and disagree (Chopp, Frost, & Weiss, 2013). Students are encouraged to not accept answers without due clarification; they must look for the reason behind all claims. They are encouraged to bring such questions to the classroom for discussion. In such way, different disciplines will be bought forth and examined. Faculty members should assist such students to invest more time in such pursuits, and guide them towards reaching different approaches of which will help in their academic and career development. Also, it is vital for faculty to be willing to teach material that they are not fully familiar with or related to their teaching courses. Faculty willingness should be taken into account because this is not merely a learning process for students; faculty also benefits.

When conducting this research, it was extremely challenging to compare two distinct institutions that were established in completely different eras. Established in 2003, AUK has developed a strong liberal arts foundation but still lacks a few elements that can aid student development and student educational experience. On the other hand, even though AUC was established decades before AUK, students from both universities share the same concerns, problems, distresses and challenges. As for AUC, its extensive academic history provided a notable advantage. From the vantage point of research, it affords researchers the opportunity to accurately evaluate and assess the impact of the liberal arts education across different generations.

To introduce a unique education system and adapt it to another culture is not an easy process. Policy borrowing is a challenging theory and it needs to be properly investigated in terms of cultural aspects. These adaptations should be revisited from time to time as the culture itself may change due to several local factors. Testing these

changes periodically across the cultures will yield more success in matching foreign policy with host cultures (Zajda, 2015).

To sum up, this paper highlights the importance of collaboration within an institution to fill the gaps and connect the missing dots in order to achieve the best educational outcome for students.

Support.

Several units within an institution must be approached in order to implement this ideology in any educational institution. The main entities that should be targeted include deans, chairs of each school, director of different departments across the university such as the Academic Advising Center, and the Career and Advising Office. The importance of these two units cannot be overstated because these units interact with students on the very first day of university until the day students seek job opportunities. So as to sculpt the learning experience of the student, there should be a cohesive sense of learning and criteria that students follow in three phases, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Transitional Stages – Academic Journey

PHASE 2: DEAN – SCHOOL DEPARTMENTS

PHASE 1: ACADEMIC ADVISING CENTER

Transitional Stages- Academic Journey

PHASE 3: CAREER ADVISING CENTER
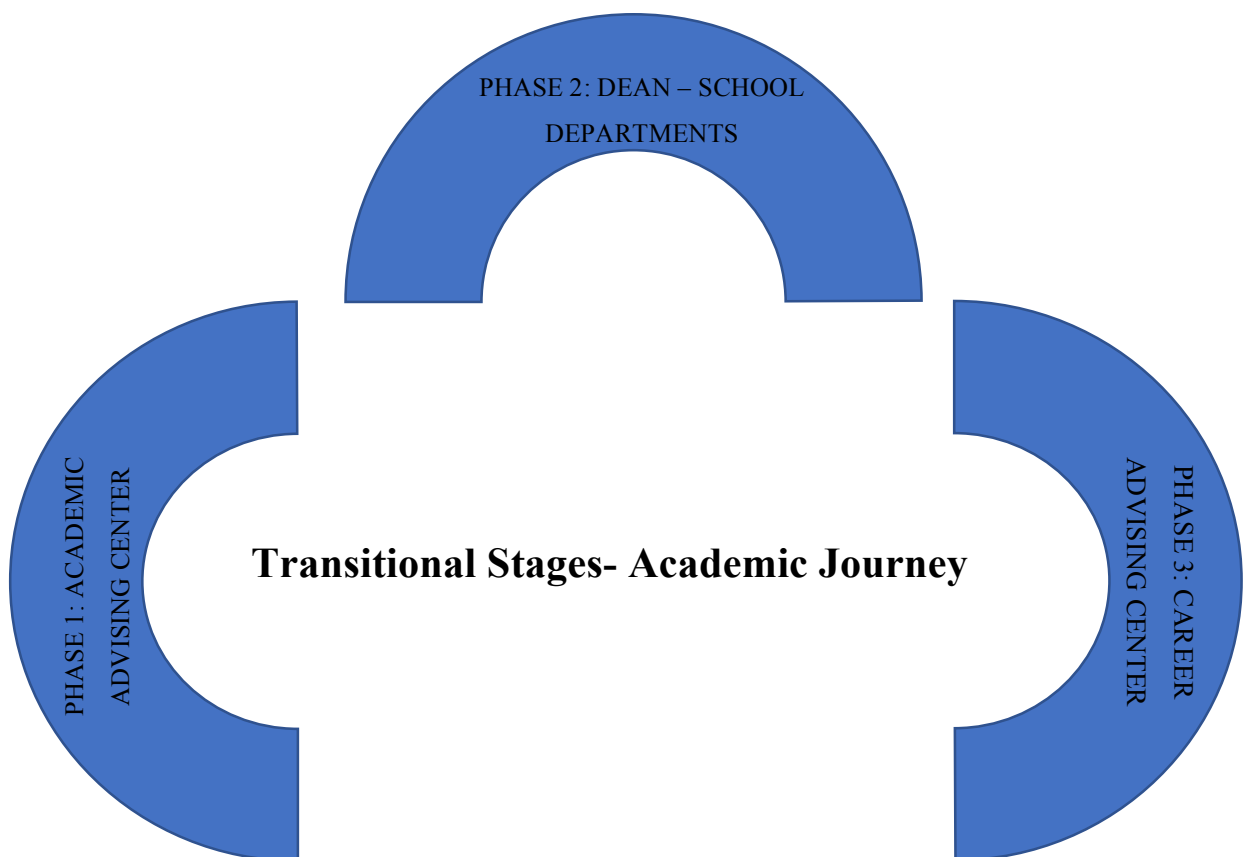
The committee that will be part of this case study should include candidates from these three different units and students should also be part of the committee. This type of research will supplement the study and will reflect positively on the exposure of this educational system as it seeks variety in student opinion. Finally, this will boost the process of creating a rich module and criteria to follow. Students, faculty, administrators and deans will all benefit from this research since the core understanding of developing a better educational system is the most important aspect of any higher education institution.

Research Limitation

In spite of the fact that more research can be conducted, the outcome of this thesis study has led to critical discoveries in the field of liberal arts education in the Middle East. Hence, having recognized the limitations of available information while preparing this research, we can affirm that there are a few drawbacks of this study. Despite the fact that this research was thoroughly prepared, I am aware that some constraints and limitations occurred. When conducting this research, I encountered various challenges. Firstly, students did not promptly check their emails, which lead to a delay in the study. There were either students' who did not regularly check their emails, or found no interest in being part of such a research. There were also limitations regarding interviewing students. Because the study focuses highly on students –the number of interviews were minimal due to the responses received to be part of this study, causing a small student representation. Secondly, due to time constraints during travel to Kuwait, it was unfortunately a busy time for students since this was during their midterm examinations and projects. The time available for actual research investigation was limited. This may also have caused a few students who were on campus. On the other hand, at the AUC campus, not many students expressed interest in participating in the research. Thirdly, the questionnaire could have been more detailed and precise in order to collect accurate data. Fourthly, the language used during interviews could have led to difficulty when transcribing or explaining the point of view of the interviewee. In few interviews with student they would express their opinion in Arabic. Lastly, AUK does not use Dartmouth as an actual source for liberal arts education; it merely uses it as an economical form.

Dartmouth is the selling point for AUK in which that they have a collaboration with a liberal arts university. AUK is not marketing the exchange program available with Dartmouth. I discovered that there is an exchange program in which students undergo an application and interview process that is not feasible to all students. It is merely a privilege that selected students' experience. However, AUK should have used such an affiliation to help introduce liberal arts education with the greatest exposure.

Most students enrolled at AUC and AUK seeks to continue higher education in order to wholly obtain the American educational experience that focuses on the liberal arts. This form of education is appealing to many parents and students as it is a new approach of learning that prepares the individual on many levels. However, there is a significant percentage of students and parents who do not fully grasp nor understand the meaning of a liberal arts education, yet still pursue learning in such institutions because it is considered the 21st century method of education. In such cases, it is the duty of the university to demonstrate and communicate the meaning of the American liberal arts education, its benefits and expected outcomes.

After deeply delving into this study, I came across similarities and differences between AUC and AUK. One of the major similarities is that both universities follow the Western educational system and both preserve the Middle Eastern identity in their education. They focus on enhancing student character development by providing a well-rounded education that is prospering in the region. As I gained deeper insight into the study, a number of differences were brought to light. AUC is considered one of the oldest American liberal arts universities in the Arab world, containing a diverse number of students from all around the globe. It offers a wide range of majors that provide students many career options to choose from, and a diverse cohesive educational path. Due to its decades of experience, faculty members are more exposed to different forms of education and instruction. AUC's ranking among the American liberal arts education institutions is considered to be higher than AUK. AUK, on the other hand, has formed an alliance with another institution, Dartmouth, in order to guarantee a better liberal arts education. AUK, in comparison to AUC, has been a small campus offering only a limited number of majors. Given the location of AUC in Egypt's capital, it attracts students from all around the world to pursue their

higher education. This diversity of cultures adds to the learning experience and compliments the meaning of a liberal arts education.

Future Research

Researchers for future studies can examine different ways of applying and implementing good practice in undergraduate education. They might take into consideration developing a self-assessment instrument for faculty members by applying each of the principles. Application of the seven principles on undergraduate students will enhance the academic development of the upperclassmen students and carry out studies of teaching practices and faculty discipline. For academic development to be successful, researchers must put theory to practice. I recommend consideration of the various suggestions offered by students during the interviews.

After prolonged research and studies, the importance of the liberal arts education system and its impact on the quality of education is quite palpable. However, it is crucial to understand, respect and consider the cultural differences between the east and the west by adapting the liberal arts model to the host culture. In addition to merging eastern and western ideologies in the educational system, it is important to introduce practical practices in the liberal arts system. As stated by Alayan & Rohde (2012), "Education is also viewed as an important socializing factor that influences the formation of individuals as enlightened state citizens who are capable of independent and critical thinking. If this is successfully accomplished, it will yield a great opportunity in the Middle East by enriching the quality of education and diversifying learning experience for Middle Eastern students, giving them the opportunity to compete internationally in the work place while producing well-rounded individuals. Also, incorporating real-life practices is important because it helps students go beyond mere theoretical learning. This will ultimately help bridge the gap between university life and the career phase. It will also aid in holistically preparing students by teaching them the liberal arts system through diverse tools such as core curriculum classes, various courses other than major courses, seminars and internships. Part of a liberal arts education is to ensure a safe environment for students and to provide them the flexibility to cultivate active learning, problem solving and critical thinking skills.

Political measurement, which is not generally famous with Middle Eastern state elites especially in disciplines like history and civic education, is a very important discipline that should be freely discussed in universities in the Middle East (Alayan & Rohde, 2012). Despite the political restrictions, there should be room for questioning and discussing the country's political views. Achieving this ideal standard will truly help millennial students, in this critical age of development, to establish their own ideology and personality.

To conclude, to create a progressive educational system in a higher education institution, students seek opportunities for exposure and encouragement. The liberal arts education necessarily equips students to be academically successful. This particular study discusses the importance of the impact of the Western liberal arts educational model on higher education within the transnational university settings. A comparison of two transnational universities was presented and thoroughly analyzed by interviewing undergraduate upperclassmen students. The main focus of the analysis was pedagogies of student learning outcome.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. What is liberal arts?
2. How did the experience of receiving the Liberal Arts education affect your decisions?
3. As a senior, do you see the implementation of the liberal arts education distinguishes you as an individual from those who don't study using the liberal arts system?
4. Given that under the liberal arts education you were assigned certain courses, did these types of courses broaden your intellectual horizon that helped inform your major courses?
5. Do you see liberal arts education as an important form of education or not? Elaborate? If yes or no, in your opinion is there any way we can strengthen the liberal arts education?
6. If no, what aspect of education is most important?
7. What are you planning to do upon graduation? Is that what you want to do?

Appendix 2

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

To: Heba Mansour

Cc: Dena Riad & Salma Serry

From**:** Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB

Date**:** March 15 **,** 2017

Re**:** Approval of study

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled " **Resolution and Reform: Influencing Western Normalization to the Middle Eastern Millennials**" and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" heading. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

This approval letter was issued under the assumption that you have not started data collection for your research project. Any data collected before receiving this letter could not be used since this is a violation of the IRB policy.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Amr Salama. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

Dr. Atta Gebril
IRB chair, The American University in Cairo
2046 HUSS Building
T: 02-26151919
Email: agebril@aucegypt.edu

Institutional Review Board
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Appendix 3

Consent Form

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in Research Study

Project Title: Working Title: Resolution and Reform: Influencing Western Normalization to the Middle Eastern Millennials

Principal Investigator: [Heba Mansour - 01204480444]

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is designed to understand the concept of liberal arts education taken from a Western perspective and tailored to the MENA educational institutions. The purpose of this study is to alter and develop the liberal arts educational system by integrating the cultural aspect and belief in the desired area and the findings may be *published and presented*. The expected duration of your participation is six months.

The procedures of the research will be as follows a random sample (gender, age and ethnicity) will be conducted for the upperclassman participants at university level – students will be over the age of 18. Permission from administrators at the research site will be formed before anything takes place. They will help in the random sample of the upperclassman students.

A number of 40 students will be contacted from each institution and will filter the students who are willing to be part of this study, narrowing it down to 10-15 students per university. The participants will be contacted for the first time through emails, where they will be provided with in depth information regarding the study. Without being informed the questions that will be articulated to them during the interview. Later on, based on the selection of confirmed students they will be contacted through a call to set a time and day. The researcher will have personal contact of the participants through the in-depth interviewing.

An Institutional review board (IRB) consent contract will be distributed to all the participants whereas the interviewer will be given an approval for using their data.

A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions will be used on the participants and will answer broad questions that will lead to discussing topics in more depth and details. It will help the participant elaborate and follow different line of inquiry that might be introduced to the interviewee. It will be conducted as a conversation and discussion manner. A list of questions that will articulate the research, on transnational universities – AUK and AUC – in the Middle East is provided. Through the research process the interviewer believes that those set of questions will help in structuring a better view and understanding. Audio recorders will be used to record in-depth interview for transcribing.

There *will not be* certain risks or discomforts associated with this research.

There *will be* benefits to me from this research.

If millennials are somehow struggling with their education their would be me whom is providing them with indirect support to encourage their educational progress. If this research becomes accurate and successful student will benefit from it later on and the outcome would be outrages.

The information I provide for purposes of this research *is confidential*.

Questions about the research, my rights, or research-related injuries should be directed to Heba Mansour at 01204480444.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature   _____

Printed Name   _____

Date   _____

Appendix 4
Student Interview Email

Dear Student,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Heba Mansour, I was a graduate of the American University of Kuwait and a former Senior Retention Advisor. I am currently on my last semester of my Masters of Arts in International and Comparative Education with concentration in Educational Leadership in the American University in Cairo. I would like to ask you to be part of my thesis study as it will help me in analyzing the mainstream of this research.

Below is the abstract of my thesis, as I am focusing on AUK and AUC.

This study focuses on the development of the millennial generations within the liberal arts education setting. Student generations are divided into different principles of how a university articulates the distinctive sociological, ideological, and psychological variance of each generation to provide an equally suitable education. Follow-up researches in different educational systems should be conducted regularly in order to maintain the rapid changes of the millennial generations. This research will focus on understanding student development models that adequately demonstrate the effectiveness of a liberal arts education within the MENA region. The emphasis of this paper will be on Arab students within transnational settings: Focusing on the American University in Cairo and the American University of Kuwait.

Please let me know if you are interested in being part of this research. Please also provide me with a day and time that works best for you. The interview will take place at the university based on your own convenience. It will take almost an hour.

Best regards,
Heba Mansour

Appendix 5

Inductive Analysis Coding

Coding	University	Standing	Major	Number of Credits
S1-AUC	AUC	Junior	Mechanical Engineering	76
S2-AUC	AUC	Junior	Mechanical Engineering	88
S3-AUC	AUC	Junior	Political Science	90
S4-AUC	AUC	Senior	Political Science and History	105
S5-AUC	AUC	Junior	Business Marketing	81
S6-AUC	AUC	Junior	Mechanical Engineering	76
S7-AUC	AUC	Senior	Architecture Engineer	139
S8-AUC	AUC	Senior	Architecture and Graphic Design	188
S9-AUC	AUC	Junior	Computer Engineering	82
S10-AUC	AUC	Junior	Double major Computer Science and Mathematics	83
S11-AUC	AUC	Senior	Construction Engineering and Economics	153
S12-AUC	AUC	Senior	Finance and Economics	103

Coding	University	Standing	Major	Number of Credits
S1-AUK	AUK	Senior	Management	110
S2-AUK	AUK	Senior	English Literature	120
S3-AUK	AUK	Senior	Communication and Media Studies	112
S4-AUK	AUK	Junior	Graphic Design	78
S5-AUK	AUK	Senior	Marketing and Accounting	104
S6-AUK	AUK	Senior	Marketing and Finance	120
S7-AUK	AUK	Senior	Computer Engineering	120
S8-AUK	AUK	Senior	Marketing	90
S9-AUK	AUK	Senior	Accounting	104
S10-AUK	AUK	Senior	Marketing and Accounting	105
S11-AUK	AUK	Senior	English Literature	119
S12-AUK	AUK	Junior	Accounting and Marketing	89
S13-AUK	AUK	Junior	Graphic Design	78