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**EXPLORING THE IMPACT ON STUDENTS OF WESTERN UNIVERSITIES
ON FOREIGN SOIL: A CASE STUDY OF QATAR**

by

Richard Bakken

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2013

Dissertation Committee

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University of San Diego

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Abstract

The development of branch campuses in higher education is not a new phenomenon. Over the past decades, however, branch campuses have expanded throughout the world as Western universities have begun to deliver their programs and course offerings in countries that expect the West to provide educational (and, by implication, economic) success. Middle Eastern countries in particular have rapidly expanded the number of Western-style branch campuses for native students in their countries. This qualitative research study focused on one specific Middle Eastern country, Qatar, and explored how native students respond to attending a Western university that has been transplanted from the West into their country.

This case study/cross case research investigated what is leading native students in Qatar to attend one of the branch campuses of American universities that have been established in their country. The study also explored the impact of this decision on the students' social lives and religious beliefs, as well as what motivates them to remain in school. At a more general level, the study explored how students have integrated Western values encountered while attending the universities with their own family traditions and religious beliefs. Individual student interviews, a focus group, and administrator interviews were the primary methods of data collection, and a cross case analysis was conducted to discover patterns that cut across the individual cases.

This study offers insight into motivating factors that led students to choose study at one of the Western universities in Doha, Qatar. Participants described how family influenced their decisions about where to study, and expressed concern about outside influences potentially affecting their culture and beliefs. The study also examined how

students describe their educational experience, and the resulting themes focused on factors of influence that contributed to student success, including the effects of a mixed-gender environment, changes in societal and familial beliefs, and participation in extra-curricular activities. Students also considered adjustments related to their educational experience, especially with how they cope with personal cultural changes within an academic setting. Along with changes in perception about their university experience, students considered adjustments to study habits and time management in order to be successful within their chosen academic program.

DEDICATION

For the students in Education City...

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the last several years, numerous non-Western countries have begun to look to the West for models of how to approach higher education. Some countries have even encouraged and actually provided support for Western universities to establish branch campuses in their countries. The apparent assumption has been that the West's economic success must be linked to educational success, and that the economic success of the West can be duplicated if other countries adopt higher education programs used in the West. Some wealthy countries in the Middle East have even offered incentives to specific American universities to establish branch campuses in their countries and offer programs similar to the ones that the universities offer in the United States. In Qatar billions of dollars were invested in a foundation project that would eventually fund the American universities invited to open branch campuses in a special designated area in the capital city (Krieger, 2008). These universities purportedly offer students an experience similar to the experience they would encounter in a Western educational institution, including co-ed recreational activities and other campus life events such as dances or club meetings.

Even though the campuses are providing native students with a Western approach to education, students are still required to wrestle intellectually with the question of faith and religion when considering other aspects of their lives as well as certain educational choices (Asquith, 2006). It is common for students to struggle with life decisions and the role their family plays in their educational decisions, of course. However, Muslim

countries rely heavily on the influence of family and religious considerations to structure daily life and guide decision-making processes (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2011). It is not surprising, therefore, that students are also asked to take family and religious considerations into account both at home and when attending one of the Western education institutions that have been set up in their countries.

Throughout my professional career I have enjoyed discovering how best to meet the needs of students and have worked to identify their motivations to succeed. These considerations became apparent to me during my first trip to Qatar, when I took part in a Global Study course through the University of San Diego. The trip to Qatar, sponsored by the Qatar Foundation, focused on student engagement and higher education in Qatar. The experience helped me consider new questions concerning the student educational process. I worked together with Western and expatriate students and staff along with Qatari students and staff as part of a Young Professionals Institute – as we made use of an inquiry-based approach throughout our group work, some questions became evident: What is leading these students to attend these schools? And how can we engage with each other to better the learning experience for native students attending these universities?

Statement of the Problem

Unfortunately there have been very few, if any, attempts to study how native students respond to attending a Western University that has been transplanted from the West into their country. My exploration of a number of journals and databases, in fact, netted no studies with this particular focus¹. There is a growing body of literature

¹ ERIC; Education Full Text; Chronicle of Higher Education; International Educator

describing the inclusion of these programs in Middle Eastern countries (Green, Venturing Abroad: Delivering U.S. Degrees Through Overseas Branch Campuses and Programs, 2007), the reasoning behind the invitations being extended by the countries (Jaschik, 2005; Green & Koch, U.S. Branch Campuses Abroad, 2009), and the need to create educational systems that are responsive to students without regard to gender or class (Al-Misnad, 2009). With respect to the last point, for example, I wrote the following concerning women's education within the Middle East in 2011:

In 1948 the United Nations (UN) passed the UN Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), which recognized that everyone has the right to education (Zaher, 2010). This was an attempt by the world body to address the right to education, which was left out of the original UN charter. The UN further clarified its intention on education when it adopted the International Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR) in 1966, and an Implementation revision in 1986. Its Article 13 states that individuals have a right to education for the "full development of the human personality and the sense of dignity", in ways that "strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (p. 184). These acts by the United Nations show intent to focus on the importance of access to education for all citizens.

As a complement to the ICESCR, the Arab Charter on Human Rights addresses the current status of education in the Middle East. The Charter was revised in 1994, adopted by the League of Arab States in 2004, and went into effect in 2008 (Zaher, 2010). The Charter specifies that each state will "provide education directed to the full development of the human person and to strengthen

respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (p. 186). Several Articles within the charter also speak to the right of citizens to have access to education, without stipulating gender. Along with the Charter, many Arab countries have also signed and ratified the ICESCR. Of the 22 member states, 14 have ratified the agreement, and others have accepted its terms provisionally. Along with the right to education, ideas for reform and their effect on home life have been the focus of recent case studies in countries such as the United Arab Emirates (Crabtree, 2007). Perceptions of family related to gender norms and intra-family roles are just a few of the areas being researched, along with the notion of how easy it is for students to access education (p.8ff)

Recent developments within Qatar have also influenced students and contributed to changes in educational choice. The creation of Qatar’s National Vision 2030 plan has outlined four areas of focus, including Human Development. This “developmental pillar” directly addresses education in the following ways:

A national network of formal and non-formal educational programs that equip Qatari children and youth with the skills and motivation to contribute to society, fostering:

- A solid grounding in Qatari moral and ethical values, traditions and cultural heritage
- A strong sense of belonging and citizenship
- Innovation and creativity

- Participation in a wide variety of cultural and sports activities
Well-developed, independent, self-managing and accountable educational institutions operating under centrally-determined guidelines
- An effective system for funding scientific research shared by the public and private sectors and conducted in cooperation with specialized international organizations and leading international research centers
- A significant international role in cultural and intellectual activity and scientific research (Planning, 2013)

The Vision 2030 is a continuous reminder of the commitment of the Qatari government to the well-being of its citizens. This commitment includes a focus on education and the emerging development of the population. As students make decisions about their education, they are being directly and indirectly influenced by parents and other family members who are interested in them becoming successful and choosing a prominent place of study, which may include the Western Universities at Education City.

Unfortunately, as has already been noted, there have been virtually no attempts to study systematically how students in places like the Education City campus in Doha, Qatar respond to attending what is essentially an American university-in-exile on foreign soil. Consequently, it has been difficult to assess student success in combining Western values with their Muslim religious beliefs and family values. Therefore, there is a need to systematically study the relationship that exists between the Western universities that have been transplanted into their country and the native students who attend those universities.

Purpose of the Study/Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to begin to respond to the need for research outlined above by focusing on the perspectives of a small number of students in Qatar who are currently attending branch campuses of American universities in their country. Attention was given to the reasons why students chose to attend the university, the resulting impact on their social lives and religious beliefs, and what motivates them to stay. Specifically, the study was organized around the following research questions:

1. What led students to study in a Western university?
2. How do they describe their educational experience in Qatari schools compared to their Western education experience in the American universities that have been transplanted in their countries in the form of branch campuses?
3. What adjustment problems (family, religion, etc.), if any, have the students had to confront and how have they managed these problems?

The subsequent chapters of this dissertation will focus on a thorough review of the literature, the research design and methodology of the study, findings as a result of participant interviews, and subsequent discussion about the findings and related implications.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an extensive overview of literature concerning several areas related to educational access for native students who wish to attend a Western University on foreign soil. There is significant research on the strategies for and effects of branch campus development throughout the world, but there is a gap when looking to discover how native students perceive the inclusion of branch campuses from outside their country. This chapter will discuss the gap in literature on this topic.

The chapter is divided into several sections. First, literature that investigates the role of branch campuses within the Middle East and abroad will be presented. Next, student expectations, motivations, and the case for supplemental education within non-western countries will be explored. Finally, perceptions concerning education within Islamic culture, and its impact on women, in particular, are discussed. Some common terms that will be used throughout this study include:

Host country: The nation that invites a school to develop a school or campus on their home soil

Home country: The nation from where the school or campus has its base

Native student: A student who is a natural citizen in their home country

Branch campus: A satellite campus that is developed separately from a main campus location, typically in an area outside of the location of the main campus

Role of Branch Campuses

Branch campuses have become a vital part of the internationalization of education for many Western institutions (Altbach & Knight, *The Internationalization of Higher*

Education: Motivations and Realities, 2007; Brustein, 2009). As universities look to expand their curricular offerings and generate new demand within the global economic downturn, some research suggests that the development of branch campuses offers a new method by which universities can expand programs worldwide without requiring students to leave their home countries (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2011). The economic impact on institutions cannot be underestimated. Countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates that have considerable financial resources and, consequently, are capable of making huge investments in efforts to attract Western Universities to their countries to meet the demand for access to higher education in their geographic area and among the native population (Green & Koch, U.S. Branch Campuses Abroad, 2009). As one study notes, the continued expansion of this model has seen the number of branch campuses globally increase 43 percent to 162 locations since 2006 (Altbach, GLOBAL: Why Branch Campuses may be unsustainable, 2010). Unfortunately it is unclear from the available research whether or not the increase is related to successful curricular implementation or a result of other factors.

This section looks at several bodies of literature that focus on the motivations to expand and develop branch campuses in foreign countries. It is also focused specifically on educational reform in Qatar, and whether market forces have been influenced in any way by these changes. The continued development of the Education City model is of particular interest to this research. As Qatar continues to evolve their educational model and expand it to include graduate degree programs under a new organized structure called Hamid bin Khalifa University, the effects of these changes on students within the host countries are an important consideration.

Motivations for Branch Campus Expansion

The motivation to expand and develop branch campus locations in foreign countries encompasses several points of view. The success of Western universities has prompted emerging countries to reassess their current education offerings in the hope of joining a renaissance of global education development, sometimes referred to as the internationalization of education (Green, Marmolejo, & Egron-Polak, 2012). Expanded educational offerings can impact smaller countries by growing human capital, accumulating knowledge both individually and culturally, and integrating more data through technology initiatives (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011). In order to survive, it should be noted from the study that these countries “must ensure that their higher education systems have strong quality assurance and accreditation systems, international validity, and stability of services offered and are tailored to meet the needs of the importing country” (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011, p. 410). The literature also describes how social forces may influence the development of branch campuses, both from the perspective of the host nation as well as country investing in the campus development. In particular, there seems to be a desire to uncover how the inclusion of branch campuses may affect global competency in culture, and what effect, if any, culture change has on the population that is being served in the host country. Yet the available literature does not expand on this idea, and the resulting impact of culture remains unclear.

The internationalization of higher education. Development of branch campuses, combined with the concept of internationalizing education, is not a new phenomenon. Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman (2011) define international branch

campuses as educational facilities, based on their own premises, where students take part in face-to-face instruction in a foreign country. Countries that have developed these types of campuses often seek to engage with students from countries all around the world in order to attain a degree from a Western university, and, in some cases, also learn English. The universities who are asked to develop a branch campus see the invitation from a host country as an effective strategy to expand the student base, while also strengthening the main campus brand globally (Chalmers, 2011; Jaschik, 2005; Mills & Plumb, 2012). Once initiated, branch campuses hope to offer students better access to specific programs and integration with key academic offerings from the main campus. In many cases the branch campus offers students a chance to experience academic programs that are similarly offered on the main campus. And typically, countries who have invited a branch campus to be developed allow the newly formed school to keep control over curriculum and academic quality within the operating agreement so as to maintain an atmosphere that models the main campus (Mills & Plumb, 2012).

Countries hope that the inclusion of these programs will bring about change within the current educational system being offered, centered around the following: (a) that the population has increased access to higher education; (b) that the domestic education program is improved through access to academic programs and pedagogical practices that are otherwise not available in-country; and (c) that the inclusion of these programs helps to improve the host country's international reputation (Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National Sovereignty*, 2011).

The literature suggests that there is an increasing trend toward higher education institutions “transcending” national boundaries, while giving the host nation authority to determine the rules and regulations that govern the inclusion and development of these campuses (p. 81). What is unclear is the effect that these branch campuses are having on the native population, and, in particular, the native students who are choosing to attend these new campuses. Formal resources focused on the concept of branch campuses are limited, and few academic journals exist dedicated to the study of its development (Hoyt & Howell, 2012). The National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA) is one small collective that is focused on this area of research.

The concept of internationalizing education can be seen directly through the development of branch campuses in foreign countries. Shams and Huisman (2011) suggest that the growth of these institutions is associated with several evolving social ideas, including the globalization of economies, marketization, and neoliberalism. The inclusion of these new branch campuses purportedly helps the host country “reduce brain-drain, enhance the level of national education, support income generation, increase technology transfer, and build capacity while it benefits the home countries (exporters) by creating an extra source of income, the opportunity to exploit foreign markets, and expand the range of their research activities” (p.4). The literature suggests that these concepts work together to augment educational programs already in existence in many foreign countries that are viewed as lacking, or insufficient to meet the demands of the population. The host countries desire an educational system that is rigorous and respects the many socio-economic and political forces at play, especially in Middle Eastern countries. Gopal (2011), however, sees the internationalization of education as a process

of weaving an international perspective into higher education. The process “involves many stakeholders working to change the internal dynamics of an institution to respond and adapt appropriately to an increasingly diverse, globally focused, ever-changing external environment” (p.199).

Internationalization and the development of branch campuses must be done cautiously. While expanding educational opportunity would seem to be at the forefront for the establishment of branch campuses, Green, Marmolejo , and Egron-Polak (2012) believe that internationalization may instead be a way to emphasize competition, prestige, and income. These ideas suggest a focus on international business, rather than international education and preparing students for “global citizenship...and well-being through collaborative efforts” (p.453).

Another study takes this idea a step further, suggesting that the growth of multinational universities poses numerous challenges to the traditional models of education and formal structures of quality assessment designed to validate the academic offerings of higher education institutions (Kinser, 2011). These types of assessments (and accreditation processes) may not translate equally into branch campuses established in foreign countries that must be respectful of local rules and regulations. The challenge for these institutions would be to demonstrate that the academic programs are just as rigorous as the programs offered on the main campuses, and the research does not currently address strategies for branch campuses to demonstrate these standards.

The inherent assumption in much of the literature is that the academic programs are transplanted from the main campus, so no changes have occurred. But the research does not address how the native student population perceives these newly implemented

academic programs, nor is there information about where the students come from and where they go after graduation (Lane, *Global Expansion of International Branch Campuses: Managerial and Leadership Challenges*, 2011). The creation of a formal educational policy framework concerning international branch campuses may be one way to assist host-nations in answering these questions, and provide information to home campuses on how their academic programs are being received by the native student population.

Global competency and culture. The internationalization of education is not the only impetus for the expansion of branch campuses overseas. Gopal (2011) suggests that transnational higher education initiatives, such as branch campuses, are growing in part due to the infusion of diversity into the student population, influenced by interactions between multicultural populations and international learning experiences. Global, international competency is defined as “a person’s ability to interact effectively and appropriately in cross-cultural situations based on his or her intercultural attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and skills” (p. 2). The assumption is that individuals who value openness about different cultures will foster a positive attitude for learning and share that with others. Exposure to new cultures and ways of thinking may promote new awareness of surroundings and develop an understanding about ethnocentric attitudes from certain countries. But this concept is difficult to measure, and the literature does not address how native students perceive changes within their culture or interactions with students from other nationalities.

Countries are increasingly interested in having the newly developed branch campuses promote the values and traditions of the host country for their students, while

still desiring the branch campus to maintain its identity with the home campus. When the foreign country invites the institution from abroad to start a branch campus, the government assumes that the new institution will create a culturally relevant and socially acceptable environment that is desirable for the native students (Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National Sovereignty*, 2011; Wood, 2011). Depending on how different the cultures are between the home and branch campus, Wood (2011) notes the following:

There are likely to be certain values and traditions that will be difficult or impossible to replicate. It is important for leaders to be conscious of how certain customs on the home campus might violate the mores of the host country or offend the local students (p.36).

An effort to learn about the local culture and how it could be adapted into the academic program is one way to bridge the gap between competing cultural priorities. The literature does not mention specific strategies to address these concerns, but future research could investigate ways that institutions are working with native students to address any areas of concern in social and religious settings.

The potential role that branch campuses are asked to play in promoting global competency in the host country, therefore, seems to be unclear. Deardorff, De Wit, and Heyl (2012) note that institutions are increasingly looking to have their students develop as global citizens and become aware of the many changes that are occurring around them. Specifically they believe the following:

Institutions engage as global citizens through partnership, collaboration, and authentic dialogue, measuring success in terms of mutual benefit and global

action, with internationalization becoming a process of increasing synergies among scholars, deepening student and institutional engagement in the world, and creating even larger networks of discovery, which could transform the very nature of higher education (p. 458).

The concept of internationalization discussed previously is, therefore, woven into the framework of global engagement, and the suggested impact is noted as a transformative process undertaken by both institution and student. For the student, this new process could include a focus on knowledge and evolving competency regarding cultural self-awareness, gender roles, and language (Gopal, 2011). The institution's focus would then be centered on understanding the local culture and expectations of the government, engagement of local and civic administrative leadership, and establishing timelines that sufficiently meet the needs of the new academic program (Harding & Lammey, 2011).

Throughout this process, respect for the culture is understood as a point of reference to alleviate any possible areas of tension between local officials and the new branch campus partners. This increased cooperation could mature over time as individuals begin to come together and develop programs and activities desired by the students. But the effects of these changes remain unclear and are not currently addressed within the available literature.

Despite the desire to increase global competency and sensitivity toward culture through branch campus development, themes present within the literature suggest challenges in implementing a formal process to address these areas. One study notes that the expansion of branch campuses may have a limited effect on the host nation's ability

to improve higher education on its own (Chalmers, 2011). Cultural relevance is noted as a stumbling block to legitimacy for this type of foreign education. The fear is that, over time, branch campuses will become more of a “niche” market, instead focusing on “centers of excellence”, such as the institutions that make up Education City in Doha, Qatar (p. 447). Another study cautions that, though cultural competency is desired, Middle Eastern countries are increasingly concerned about a loss of cultural identity through branch campus development (Pike, 2012). The social arguments for inclusion often attempt to outweigh those concerns, namely that: (a) there are advantages to “diverse, multicultural and multilingual classrooms”; (b) there are benefits to international exchange partnerships “that provide opportunities for domestic students to study in other countries”, and (c) that international students contribute to the development of global citizenship on these campuses (p. 139).

Some argue about the validity of cultural competence and whether or not cultural development should even be considered as part of branch campus development (Harding, 2011; Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National Sovereignty*, 2011; Pike, 2012). As countries look to expand their educational offerings to students, an awareness of how changes in culture may impact the inclusion of new programs within the population may influence how successful these programs are in meeting the needs of the host country. Future research may discover the role that culture plays within education, and how this may be influencing student choice. The current available literature, though, seems to lack consensus on how best to approach concerns regarding culture and topics on the global

competency of students and its effect on how institutions are developing branch campuses overseas.

Branch Campuses and Educational Reform in Qatar

Educational reform within Qatar, specifically, has been an area of significant change within the past few decades. As a system that started in the early 1950's based on an Egyptian model, Qatar's educational system was originally not intended to support changes based on the needs of stakeholders. Rather the goal was to make use of a centralized platform that would distribute free education evenly (Brewer, 2007). Wealth from oil and natural gas discoveries fueled a desire within the country's leadership to invest in changes to an educational model described by some as being hierarchical and outmoded in support of native Qataris successfully entering the workforce (Gonzalez, 2008). Access to this wealth has given Qatar a unique opportunity to affect educational change within a relatively quick period of time.

Why such a focus on native Qataris? Research conducted in 2004 showed that non-Qatari's composed the bulk of the labor force within the county. From a working-age population of 567,368 in Qatar, only 105,238 individuals were native Qataris, or 18.5%. The remaining 81.5% of the workforce were expatriate non-nationals.

The ratio of male participation was even more notable: only 51,614 Qatari males were in the workforce compared to 353,928 non-national males, or 87%. As a way to counter this trend of more non-national males participating in the workforce compared to Qatari men, the National Vision 2030 was one initiative that hoped to expand on the participation of Qataris in education and the workforce, and Hamad bin Khalifa University at the Education City campus plays an important role for native students

seeking elite-level higher education (Qatar Foundation, 2011). The desire to grow the economic and social status of their population is an influence that most countries have a difficulty ignoring, and this has included Qatar. Combined with the global economic downturn, countries like Qatar are beginning to consider the effects of education on market forces, and are seeking alternatives that will sustain the majority of their population beyond standard economic success or reliance on natural resources that have funded a majority of initiatives up to this point in time, especially in geographic areas such as the Middle East.

Efforts to reform education in Qatar. Qatar has played an important role in the successful development of the branch campus model worldwide. The construction of Education City and its invited universities was seen by many as a model example of how to create a focused, education hub that replicates a Western, or American, style of education and recreates a similar student experience to that of the home campus (Bertelson, 2012; Chalmers, 2011; Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National Sovereignty*, 2011; Wood, 2011). The available literature, though, does not seem to acknowledge that the notion of inviting universities to establish branch campuses in Qatar was created in concert with a careful K-12 reform process.

The Supreme Education Council (SEC) in Qatar oversees the country's education efforts, and is charged to direct educational policy and implement necessary reforms (Supreme Education Council, 2013). An analysis conducted in 2001 concluding in 2007 investigated Qatar's overall education system and whether it was meeting the needs of its population (Constant, Goldman, & Zellman, 2011). The study was commissioned due to

concerns about student needs not being met and low levels of academic proficiency. A key issue was the rigidity of the Ministry of Education, whose structure “discouraged innovation and limited communication, both within the Ministry and with stakeholders (p. 33). Authority structures were unclear, student and school performance metrics did not exist, and accountability measures were absent.

Several reform options were presented to the Emir to correct these problems. Specifically, he chose a “decentralized charter-school-like system with independently-operated, government-funded schools that would agree to abide by a set of regulations specified in an operating contract (Constant, Goldman, & Zellman, 2011). The notion of Independent Schools was a change from the Ministry School model, and included a focus on four new education principles: autonomy, accountability, variety, and choice. Ministry schools would slowly transition into Independent Schools, and most activities would be tied to funding.

Student pedagogy became the focus of the reform design, which put student need “at the center of educational practice” (p.36). The SEC was formally established out of this initiative, along with several other institutes to oversee Education and Evaluation. The first school transition occurred in 2004, and by 2011 nearly 165 schools were classified as Independent.

The government of Qatar also embarked on a parallel reform effort to specifically strengthen its higher education offerings, while the school transitions were taking place. Since 1995, the Qatar Foundation has focused its efforts on improving the educational capacity of its population by investing in state of the art facilities and programs to raise the competency of its people and overall quality of life (Qatar Foundation, 2011). This

effort has brought nine world-class universities to Education City, and increased the post-secondary capacity of the country (Al-Misnad, 2009; Asquith, 2006; Stasz, Eide, & Martorell, 2007). The literature suggests that this effort stems from a “desire to legitimately qualify the national population for work in the growing mixed and private sectors...stimulated by wealth generation from prodigious natural gas reserves” (Chalmers, 2011, p. 33).

The international branch campuses are seen as long-term consultants, with the hope that capacity building over time will empower the Qatari’s to take ownership of the system. The inclusion of the branch campuses is seen by some as a way for Qatar to avoid the long and difficult process of building its own educational capacity, while sharing the imported expertise with other in-country entities (Anderson, 2012; Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National Sovereignty*, 2011; Lazar, 2012). The literature does not discuss what impact this expertise sharing is having on other in-country institutions, such as Qatar University, that looks to admit the same student population. Future research could explore changes that may be occurring between various in-country governmental structures, and what impact, if any, it has had on developing and supporting existing educational institutions.

Despite a renewed focus on education, what remains unclear from the literature is how these educational changes have affected the Qatari population. The inclusion of independent Western Universities has increased educational capacity within Qatar, but the available data suggests that the country’s historical adherence to religious instruction grounded in oral theory and rote memorization could make learning for Qatari students

difficult (Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National Sovereignty*, 2011). The learning expectations around active dialogue, group learning, and critical thinking could be stumbling blocks for students if not properly introduced and respectful of religious traditions.

The literature also suggests that it may be possible for transplanted education to inspire a population with a new commitment to learning and increased conviction for continuing new educational processes as they mature over time (Anderson, 2012). Yet concern for the large commitment of resources to just a small, targeted audience may introduce other deficiencies throughout the educational system and undermine the ability for resources to reach the majority of the student population. At this time it is unclear whether or not the Qatari educational model of Education City is sustainable. Future research could focus on the compatibility of Western Universities and related culture with traditional Qatari values, and further investigate how the inclusion of the Western branch campuses may have affected educational access for Qatari students across all learning groups, not just the students choosing to attend Education City.

The effect of branch campus development on market forces. Market forces are also influenced by the development of branch campuses overseas. More than just supply and demand, the concept of market forces can include those things that will both affect an economy and cause changes to occur within the marketplace between individuals, goods, or services. Some research has suggested that the globalization of the markets throughout the world has had a perceived impact on education and fostered a heightened competition among nations for economic and political superiority (Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National*

Sovereignty, 2011). It is suggested that the notion of international branch campus development has emerged as an important strategic resource in this competition.

Education, in fact, is seen as a way to directly influence economic development, especially in developing countries. Rather than attempting to invest money into a domestic educational system that could take years to see tangible results, some nations have chosen to recruit international branch campuses “as a way to quickly expand capacity and access to academic programs offered by reputable and established colleges and universities in other countries” (p. 81). The available research suggests that this development is mostly restricted to countries that are resource-rich and can afford to make such a large financial commitment (Bertelson, 2012; Chalmers, 2011; Pike, 2012). This process has been particularly prevalent in the Middle East, as countries rely on revenues from natural resources to fund the development of international branch campuses.

As nations look to make this investment in education, the data suggest that countries have shown an expanded awareness concerning the role that higher education can play within their countries. One study in particular notes that educational institutions have labored to produce workers who meet the host nation’s need for certain skills in the workforce, individuals who are able to positively function within society (in roles as voter, parent, or taxpayer), and citizens who will defend the sovereignty of the nation (Pike, 2012). The hope is that the introduction of the Western university systems, along with Western values, will help to sensitize citizens of the host counties to the idea that there are global implications for their actions, and that other countries educational and economic systems may be impacted in a similar way and be in need of similar resources

in order to properly support the native population. The notion of information sharing and educational collaboration, while foreign for some countries, may be a positive result of the growth and development of the branch campus model, and a possible area of focus for future research. At this time, though, the available literature does not address any global implications within the framework of these ideas.

How have these ideas played a role specifically in Qatar? Some research has suggested that higher education helps to prepare the workforce, fuels innovation through research and development, works to disseminate knowledge, and educates the population for responsible citizenship as accepted within host countries (Green, Marmolejo, & Egron-Polak, 2012). Greater equality of opportunity, technology enhancements, and increased globalization are seen as ways to “level the playing field” and enhance further educational opportunities for students (p. 440). Education, therefore, could be seen as a catalyst in transforming an economy and putting the country on the map (Chalmers, 2011). As mentioned previously, Qatar has used natural resource wealth as the catalyst to transform its own education system in the hopes of building the knowledge capacity of its population and driving forward its economy. As a side benefit, the research also notes that this effort to build knowledge capacity has succeeded in building the transnational worker capacity of Qatar through its business relationships with other companies, such as ExxonMobil, Microsoft, Chevron, GE, and other foreign companies (Bertelsen, 2012). Increased collaboration, therefore, could be seen as an effective way to transform a country from a resource-based economic model to a knowledge-based model. Future research could investigate this relationship, and whether or not branch campus development is the specific driver for this type of economic change. Education could be

viewed as a way to motivate a country to introduce market changes while still maintaining its identity and respect for other religious and social pressures that may be prevalent.

Conclusion

The role of branch campuses and their continued development in the Middle East, as it relates to education, continues to be debated among scholars. The internationalization of education is seen by some as a way to increase the educational capacity of certain nations, thereby allowing students to remain in country and with family (Brustein, 2009; Altbach & Knight, *The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities*, 2007). Typically, though, the option to invite Western universities to create branch campuses seems to be limited to those countries that have the necessary financial resources to support such a focused education model.

Countries have looked to the branch campus model as a way to supplement their own in-country education system in the hopes of growing human capital, accumulating knowledge both individually and culturally, and integrating more data through technology initiatives (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011). Research has shown that the host countries desire an educational system that is rigorous yet respectful of culture and religion, and branch campuses are seen as a way to augment existing resources without too much cultural upheaval. Future research may investigate how a native student population receives branch campus programs, and how successful these students are once they join the workplace after graduation. This may lead to a possible discovery about what is driving student success post-graduation, and what influence attending a Western University branch campus has on student choice and job placement.

Another motivation to expand branch campus offerings is a desire by host countries to increase the global competency of their student population. Some literature suggests the inviting countries hope the inclusion of branch campuses will promote the values and traditions of the host country for their students, while still maintaining the identity and traditions of the home campus (Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National Sovereignty*, 2011; Wood, 2011). Respect for cultural differences is seen as a way to promote global competency among students and encourage exploration of new relationships and learning teams. Pike (2012) maintains that cultural identity could be lost through branch campus development, and the effects of this remain unclear from the available literature. Even though the available literature does not address changes in cultural identity specifically for native students, future research may look at how the inclusion of branch campuses has affected culture longitudinally, and whether or not this has impacted student success. This could be of particular interest to Muslim countries in the Middle East whose decisions are motivated by the teachings of Islam.

This section also considered research concerning educational reform within Qatar, and the effect of branch campus development on other market forces. Qatar's effort to improve its higher education offerings paralleled a countrywide effort to streamline its independent school system. The hope was to improve the educational capacity of its population and raise the competency of its people through the development of Education City and the invitation of the Western Universities by the Qatar Foundation (Qatar Foundation, 2011). The available literature, though, is unclear about how the educational changes have affected the Qatari population, and whether this type of learning model is

sustainable over time. Future research could explore how Western branch campuses may have affected educational access for Qatari students choosing not to attend Education City, and whether or not there is a comparable success rate for those students compared to those attending one of the Western branch campuses. This may also answer questions concerning the role of Qatar University, and how it is perceived between both student populations.

The effect of branch campus development on market forces was also considered from the available literature. Some research suggested that the globalization of markets has an impact on education, and has fostered a heightened competition among nations for economic and political superiority that has increased a desire for the development of branch campuses (Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National Sovereignty*, 2011). The hope is that the branch campus model will supplement an in-country education system that is lacking, and offer students elite educational options to spur economic development and strengthen markets (Pike, 2012). What is unclear from the data is whether branch campus development is the specific driver for economic change, or just a side benefit to increased educational capacity. One possible solution would be to look at other countries with similar branch campus development, and construct a metric to measure economic success against students who have entered the workforce from the branch campuses. This may offer a way to try and correlate market success with educational capacity within a specific population group, and investigate other relationships that may exist.

The Student Experience

The notions of student expectations and motivation within the educational experience at branch campuses are another important area of consideration for administrators, including those who administer branch campuses abroad. Initial research has suggested that student satisfaction and opinions about university life could be an area of greater focus for administrators and institutions looking to increase student retention and recruitment. The competition for students between international universities continues to increase, and enhancing student satisfaction is seen as a way to draw students into attending (Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006). Satisfaction, purportedly, leads to customer loyalty, which is spread by word of mouth and through other social outlets between students (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011). Unfortunately there have been few studies that have looked specifically into student expectations and satisfaction, and its effect on student success.

This section looks at several bodies of literature, including how countries and branch campuses may be competing for students through focusing on increasing student satisfaction. It is also focused on changes taking place in student perceptions of their education experience, and what institutions may be doing to address concerns related to student retention as they choose to study at branch campuses over other educational alternatives.

Effects of Student Satisfaction

As discussed previously, the development of branch campuses and their effect on transnational higher education as a whole are relatively new topics of discussion. The idea is that universities offer their programs of study without students having to leave

their home country (Altbach, 2010; Lane & Kinser, *The Cross-Border Education Policy Context: Educational Hubs, Trade Liberalization, and National Sovereignty*, 2011; Mills & Plumb, 2012; Wilkins & Huisman, *Student Recruitment at International Branch Campuses: Can They Compete in the Global Market?*, 2011). There are many issues that students must consider when deciding on their educational choice, whether that be in country or abroad (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011). Educational access, career, socio-cultural motivations, work opportunities, and family influences are a few areas noted within the available literature. The prestige of attending a top-tier university and attaining a meaningful degree is another draw for students looking to increase their educational capacity without leaving the comfort of their home environment (Douglas, Douglas, and Barnes, 2006; Green & Koch, 2009; Homayounpour, 2012; Mills & Plumb, 2012). With students considering so many factors, along with increased competition between universities, the notion of “student satisfaction” has become an increasingly important issue for universities looking to increase student recruitment and retention (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011, p. 414).

Some studies (Li & Bray, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007) have looked to the push-pull method to help explain student choice for attending a university. McMahon’s (1992) initial work on this theory illustrated how economic weakness, national interest in education, and the availability for development all play important roles in student decisions to pursue an international education. More recent studies (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011; Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, *Student Choice in Higher Education: Motivations for Choosing to Study at an International Branch Campus*, 2011; Wilkins & Huisman, *Student Recruitment at International Branch Campuses: Can They*

Compete in the Global Market?, 2011) have used this model as a springboard for trying to determine student satisfaction related to destination choice. Unfortunately, these studies only investigate the external forces that might be at play for students and do not consider individual preferences and the personal characteristics of students. Future research could explore the role that personal preference has on student satisfaction in making their educational choice.

How do universities account for student satisfaction? Some studies suggest that the student service experience has a direct impact on overall student satisfaction (Guiver, 2012; Oracle Corporation, 2012). The customer service that students receive as part of their education experience contributes student satisfaction, and gives students a positive impression of their learning environment. In other studies (Jones & Sasser Jr., 1995), customer satisfaction is shown to increase customer loyalty, which in turn changes several other behavioral “intentions” such as repurchase and positive word of mouth (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011, p. 414). The assumption is that students who show a lack of satisfaction-loyalty are more prone to withdraw from the university or transfer, so universities have to consider activities that promote greater interactions among students.

The investment in new facilities and other infrastructure projects becomes a promotional tool that schools can use to attract students to attend, but those alone can not sustain student satisfaction. Once enrolled, students become more sensitive to the quality of teaching and learning they are willing to tolerate, and this can directly affect satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the overall environment (Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006; Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011). Some studies note that satisfaction

levels of this type differ by gender and nationality, but these differences are supposedly consistent when considering the motivations and satisfaction levels of males and females (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2011). Students of different nationalities are viewed as having different motivations and attitudes, which in turn affect their decision-making.

The way forward for institutions to address student satisfaction remains unclear from the available literature. One study suggests that targeting specific nationalities and catering to their specific needs may address whatever satisfaction needs may be present (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2011). This strategy hopes that by increasing satisfaction, student retention is improved and spread through word of mouth. It does not address how to measure the effects of this strategy or solidify a reporting structure capable of assessing its viability. Another study proposes that satisfaction can only be achieved if “all the services that contribute to “academic life” are delivered to a suitable standard” (Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006, p. 264). The students become the primary assessment drivers, and regular surveys of their attitudes and perceptions on the university’s service offerings could be acted upon to bring about change. While the survey method seems appropriate, the study does not address survey fatigue and what steps should be taken to followup on data that is collected. Being able to differentiate service offerings may be a way for universities to address this need. Future research could explore ways that universities use the collected data to address student concerns, and whether or not the changes being implemented are affecting student choice and overall satisfaction with the university.

Changes in Student Expectations

Student satisfaction is not the only consideration for universities looking to establish branch campuses overseas. The available research suggests that student satisfaction, as it relates to motivation and the competition between schools, may also be affected by outside influences such as culture and socio-economic need. As students apply and attend a university, a difference could exist between student expectations and the reality of their experience, based on outside influences (Darlaston-Jones, 2003). Awareness of the changes taking place in student expectations may help universities and administrators better meet the needs of a growing and diverse student population.

Altbach (2010) suggests that in order for a branch campus to provide an equivalent educational experience mirroring the home campus, the student body should largely match the one at home in terms of “quality and selectivity” (p. 1). There is an assumption that students attending a branch campus would expect a similar environment like that of the home campus, but variances in attracting top students could affect how student populations are formed. In reality, student expectations are typically shaped prior to arriving at the university (Hill, 1995). These expectations are based on the following: personal needs, previous experience, word of mouth, and the image of the institution (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011). This study also suggests culture plays an important role in forming these expectations, and can vary depending on whether the branch campus is developed within a certain culture.

The environment within the university purportedly plays an important role in meeting student expectations. Services being provided influence the environment and make the students feel comfortable and treated well. Examples of this positive treatment

include friendliness and approachability of staff, concern for problems, staff availability, respect for feeling and opinions, and overall staff competency (Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006). The data implies that universities who address environmental concerns relating to the facilities offered and the professionalism and competency of staff in curricular areas will sufficiently meet student expectations and foster a positive learning environment. This focus on overall service quality could be perceived as a driver for institutions to make continuous improvements in physical plant and internal support structures, but does not directly address student need.

While much of the literature on student expectations concerns physical and internal change within the university structure, the research does include a few examples of student feedback on expectations within the university experience. In one case study (Darlaston-Jones, 2003), the results speak to a significant gap between student expectations and the reality of their experience. Though limited to one country, this study reports that student expectations center around tutors, word load, isolation, and university culture. While some expectations were met, the university experience was found to be different than what was anticipated. In the case of another study (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011), student expectations shifted from in-time services offered at the university to external motivations, including employment prospects, new culture, and the ability to learn English. The ability to study close to home while having a top-tier university experience was seen as a positive result of the inclusion of branch campuses within the region (Guiver, 2012).

What seems to be unclear from the available literature is the extent to which outside influences might affect a student's judgment in making a particular choice of

university, and whether or not that is typically a positive or negative outcome. Students have many educational options in choosing a university, but what they expect from their university experience and how they judge it to be positive or negative remains uncertain. It is also unclear whether or not it is feasible for universities to attempt to manage every aspect of the student's interaction with service offerings in order to address expectations. Future studies could investigate whether schools are employing quality assurance measures to gauge whether student expectations are being met, and whether or not these measures are accurately reporting back meaningful data to administrators making decisions on university services. This could go a long way in addressing student need, and quantifying whether expectations within the student's university experience are being met.

Student Retention

Even though student satisfaction and student expectation are two key areas of focus for most university administrators, the literature also briefly mentions one other important area for consideration: student retention. Altbach (2010) notes that some of the branch campuses already established are beginning to encounter enrollment problems, with some even operating under capacity. Since most are funded directly via host governments, one study suggests poor retention rates may begin to affect funding and resources dedicated to student services (Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006). The view from this study is that student recruitment, retention, and satisfaction could be closely linked.

Student engagement appears to be the glue that keeps students engaged and more likely to stay at their chosen institution. Some research has found that students may be

more likely to stay at a university when involved in campus activities that make them feel wanted and valued (Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011; Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999). Other studies have suggested that the notion of a person-environment fit is important for student retention, as the institutional incompatibility is seen as a primary cause for attrition (Darlaston-Jones, 2003; Tinto & Goodsell-Love, 1993). In each of these cases, it is unclear whether these concepts can be directly applied to students choosing to attend a branch campus in a foreign country, as most of the research pertains to student populations in Western university home countries. Conceptually, Darlaston-Jones (2003) suggests that institutional commitment is identified as a critical factor for retention, and this idea could be applied across a variety of university structures, including branch campuses. It may also be a way to determine whether institutions must make a more concerted effort to establishing connections with students, outside of traditional offices such as student affairs. While institutions possess a wealth of data concerning the students they are admitting, as well as graduating, it is unclear from the available research what strategies institutions are using to address student retention and overall satisfaction. As universities consider opening branch campus locations throughout the world, this type of information could be a valuable resource for administrators looking to develop a sufficient support operation for students. Future studies could focus on the student experience specifically within branch campuses, and whether or not the available data correlates with student populations on home campuses compared to the branch campus locations.

Conclusion

Student satisfaction, expectations, and retention continue to be important concepts for universities and administrators looking to actively address student need, both at the home campus as well as at branch campus locations. As universities grapple with how to increase student satisfaction, realizing the many decision makers that students must consider may help steer decision-making and help generate ideas for programs to address student concerns (Douglas, Douglas, and Barnes, 2006; Green & Koch, 2009; Homayounpour, 2012; Mills & Plumb, 2012). While some studies have relied on the push-pull method to help explain these concepts, it is still unclear from the available research what external forces might be influencing students, and what role individual preferences, personal characteristics, or other family and social factors play in their educational choices. Surveys may be one way to investigate student satisfaction, but future research could include strategies for institutions to conduct appropriate needs assessments that evaluate whether or not student service areas are meeting student needs. This may offer a new perspective on how current programs relate to overall student satisfaction.

The available research also suggests that students are choosing to attend universities with pre-determined expectations about their student experience (Hill, 1995; Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011). While outside influences are seen by some (Darlaston-Jones, 2003) as a key driver for students, the overall quality of the learning environment seems to be a key influence on student choice (Altbach, 2010; Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006). While some studies (Darlaston-Jones, 2003; Wilkins & Huisman, Student Recruitment at International Branch Campuses: Can They Compete in

the Global Market?, 2011) include student feedback, further research could be supplemented with student viewpoints to offer a valuable perspective when considering student expectations of the campus environment. Additional insight may be found by investigating how institutions are employing quality assurance measures, and what impact, if any, this has on gauging student expectations.

Finally, student retention is an important consideration for universities looking to address concerns related to student satisfaction and the overall learning experience. Poor retention rates are seen as affecting funding and resources dedicated to student services, and this in turn could affect student satisfaction and impact expectations for service (Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006). Encouraging students to participate in campus activities is one way to offer a viable campus connection, and this may demonstrate to students that they are a valuable part of the university. It remains unclear from the available literature what strategies institutions are using to address student retention and satisfaction, and how this may directly impact student retention. Focusing on the student experience specifically at branch campuses, and whether or not the available data correlates with student populations on home campuses compared to the branch campus locations, may be one way to inform administrators of activities to increase student engagement and overall satisfaction with their learning experience.

Education within Islamic Culture: Impact on Women

Finally, the perceptions of family related to gender norms and intra-family roles within Muslim education are another area of influence on students. A recent study in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) looked at perceptions of family related to gender norms and intra-family roles (Crabtree, 2007). The study noted Islam as one area of influence on

family life, and cultural values became a derivative of those faith teachings applied in practice. Family units are, for example, structured according to the teachings of Islam (Stowasser, 2007). Over time, though, the gap between the teachings of Islam compared to more western-oriented values as learned through education is narrowing. In countries such as the UAE and Egypt, case studies have researched the influence of social change on students and family units, and how countries are coping with change (Al-Sanabary, 1985; Crabtree, 2007). The studies suggest that parental expectations, sibling responsibilities, and male and female roles are changing. As western culture continues to influence new regions of the world, new attitudes and behaviors are being experienced by families within countries that have had limited exposure to those belief systems. This in turn has caused a change in traditional family roles and gender norms especially within the framework of education. For women, this may foster new opportunities for involvement outside of the restrictions of Islam in areas that have traditionally been reserved for men. In this review I will examine literature that discusses the culture within Islamic society towards women in education, by exploring literature on Islamic society and education, religious implications, and countries in the Middle East that cope with western notions of gender equality and inclusive education for women.

This section looks at several bodies of literature including: the role of Islam on women's inclusion within education, the effects of Western values on women's access to education, and the perceived socio-economic impact of women's education in Arab countries. It is focused in particular on Muslim women in the Middle Eastern region, as the research within the literature does not include Muslim women who live outside of the region. Tradition, current belief patterns, and the role of the Qur'an are also topics of

interest related to this research. Modernist views of Islam suggest that the impact of Western values on education continue to drive social and other contextual changes within society in Arab countries (Stowasser, 2007). Student attendance is an indicator used to determine female participation in education, and the assumption from the available literature is that access for female students has progressively increased over time as social changes are implemented (Ibrahim, 1989; Kepir, 1989; Moore, 1987; Zaim, 1989). The effects of increasing female access to education, impact within the workplace, and effects on economic development will also be considered.

Islam and Women's Education

Islam permeates daily life for families in Arab countries and impacts social practices, including education (Engineer, 2005; Stowasser, 2007). The teachings of the Qur'an directly influence government, family life, and expectations within social groups. Arabic women seeking educational opportunities have been bound by the teachings of Islam and the structures it has put in place for directing family life, but how do these teachings affect Arabic women's access to and engagement in educational opportunities? To understand the role that Islam plays, it is necessary to investigate what the available literature discusses about the background and history of Islam, and specifically whether the teachings have impacted women and their access to education in these countries.

What Islam says about women. Traditionally interpreted, the Qur'an establishes men's authority over women specifically within the home and concerning discipline when appropriate (Stowasser, 2007). The author cites a section of the Qur'an to show this:

Men are in charge of/are guardians of/are superior to/have authority over/ women, because God has endowed the one with more/has preferred some of them over others/, and because they spend of their means. Therefore the righteous women are obedient, guarding in secret/guarding the secret/ by what God has guarded. As to those from whom you fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to separate beds, and beat them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. For God is Exalted, Great. (p. 21)

Over the last several hundred years traditional interpreters have struggled to explain the strictness of the text. In one interpretation, guardianship and superiority were likened to how subjects are ruled by sovereigns or kings (Stowasser, 2007). The natural gifts and superior attributes of males compared to that of women were noted as special or endowed by God. Therefore if men had the superior talent, they alone would be able to foster their intellect and improve their literacy. In comparison, women were seen as “mentally deficient and religiously and legally incapacitated” (p. 23). As a result a hierarchical tradition was created that influenced what was considered right or wrong within the relationship between husband and wife at home (Stowasser, 1994; Stowasser, 2007). It later expanded into a notion of public and private authority founded on the belief that women should be obedient to their husbands, just as men should be obedient to God. The relationship has been described as the “dominance of the one and subjugation of the other” (Stowasser, 2007, p. 24). This model has been passed down through generations defining gender roles in the home (Watt, 1988).

What Islam says about women’s education. The literature also discusses how Islam emphasizes the importance of acquiring knowledge and education. Jawad (1998)

notes that education is an integral part of Islamic religion, and that Islam encourages its followers to be knowledgeable about their religion as well as other branches of knowledge: “The Prophet recites unto people God’s revelation; causes them to grow and imparts to them knowledge and wisdom” (quoted in Jawad, 1998, p. 16). Thus it would suggest that the Divine desires broad intellectual knowledge for Muslims. The Qur’an includes many verses that praise learned people and the fostering of creative and original thought. The Prophet is believed to be the original teacher, and his actions and teachings have become the basis of the traditional Islamic educational system used by many Middle Eastern countries today, including Turkey, Qatar, and UAE (Jawad, 1998; Zaim, 1989). The Islamic system typically consists of an elementary level followed by University; high schools have only been added in the last several decades.

Islam does not specify a preference for men over women in relation to the right to education (Jawad, 1998). Qur’anic verses that relate to education and the attainment of knowledge suggest an application of knowledge acquisition to both men and women equally. The implication therefore from the texts suggests that the obligation to seek knowledge would then be an inherent right shared between both men and women as a means to move forward intellectually. While the Muslim woman should always be respectful of her role within the home, her duty to Islam and her husband would not preclude her from seeking knowledge through education in a respectful and thoughtful manner. Jawad offers examples from early Islamic history of women participating in education provide a brief glimpse into how this was accomplished, and offer a contemporary lens for modern Muslim women seeking to take advantage of educational opportunities.

Unfortunately local practices interfered with this ideal. Pre-Islamic societies in some countries such as Egypt subjugated women to men. Men enjoyed all privileges and women had no rights, even to inherit or have power over their own children (Engineer, 2005). It was not until Islamic laws were adopted that women began to enjoy similar privileges to men and were recognized as a “legal entity” within society (p. 122). Yet not even laws could guarantee rights for women, and eventually societal pressure caved to more traditional perspectives on the role that women play in the home and in public (Brand, 1998). A case study on reform movements in Egypt and Saudi Arabia by Engineer (2005) described this notion as a patriarchal society with power resting in men over women in most countries. Despite a desire to adopt and bring about reform based on universal values, Engineer suggests that countries that still adhere to this type of societal norm continue to wrestle with how to be inclusive of women. The author sees this as a divergence from the notions laid out in Islam. Rather than accept what is written, he instead postulates that man’s attitude is the stumbling block for women. This would appear to contradict earlier research (Stowasser, 2007; Watt, 1988) that contends Islam is the primary stumbling block for the inclusion of women, and instead suggests that tradition has a more prominent influence on efforts to bring about social change outside of religious influence. Unfortunately no current studies have been found that attempt to explain the difference between the attitudes that men have developed within Islam and the actual teachings of the religion. A more thorough examination might discover underlying tendencies that influence how men learn to interpret the teachings of the Islam and apply within their own families.

The modern perspective. What can be done about tradition? Haddad (1998) suggests that even though traditions have stunted progress for women, some Middle Eastern countries such as Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain have adopted a more progressive stance towards women. But while most national constitutions call for equality, countries like Morocco and Egypt also interpret tradition more narrowly and accept the Islamic principal of men in charge of women as expressed in Islamic, or *Sharia*, Law. The author explains the three types of constitutional parameters that exist: traditional, progressive, and accommodationist. Each version has a progressively different stance on the role of women, yet affirms Islam as the source of the constitution. This would seem to guarantee equal access to education for men and women as laid out in the Qur'an. But Haddad's work notes that despite an affirmation of rights, traditional gender norms dominate and seem to deny educational access to females.

Some research has described how modernization is the next way forward for women to bring about certain changes in society and family life. Where some might see a contradiction in roles and expectations for women, others see a potential for duality that may exist to further national interests along with religious respect (Haddad, 1998). A perception of inequity in the burden of work has given women an opportunity to expand their role while still respecting their place in society. Some Modernists have even called for restoration of dignity for women by advocating for reforms, including the right to educate themselves, vote and stand for election (Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation*, 1994).

Unfortunately there does not seem to be any consensus in the available research as to how each country should proceed with these reforms. As more women take

advantage of the opportunity to participate, education is suggested as a determinant and indicator of women's status (Brand, 1998). In the country of Jordan specifically, illiteracy rates have continued to drop from a high of 84.8% for women in 1961, to only 28.1% of women fifteen years of age and older in 1990. Societal attitudes toward women's participation in education may evolve as they move to have a larger impact in the workplace. But religion may continue to impact traditional views of the role of Islamic women and affect their ability to participate freely despite Islam's high regard for a learned population. Additional research that looks to investigate the role of religious influence in educational settings could provide a unique perspective into factors that have an effect on women attending these schools, and also provide an updated perspective on culture changes currently taking place within the Arab community.

The Effects of the West on Women's Education

In 1948 the United Nations (UN) passed the UN Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), which recognized that everyone "has the right to education" (Zaher, 2010, p. 184). This was an attempt by the world body to address the right to education, which was left out of the original UN charter. The UN further clarified its intention on education when it adopted the International Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR) in 1966, and an Implementation revision in 1986. Its Article 13 states that individuals have a right to education for the "full development of the human personality and the sense of dignity", in ways that "strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (p. 184). These acts by the United Nations show intent to focus on the importance of access to education for all people. But as countries in the Middle East grapple with inclusive education for women, what impact if any do western values

and modernity have on women's education in the Middle East? The literature reviewed looks at the impact of the west on women in the Middle East, and offers perspectives on progressive changes taking place within the home and in public.

Education as a human right. As a complement to the ICESCR, the Arab Charter on Human Rights addresses the current status of education in the Middle East. The Charter was revised in 1994, adopted by the League of Arab States in 2004, and went into effect in 2008 (Zaher, 2010). The Charter specifies that each state will "provide education directed to the full development of the human person and to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (p. 186). Several Articles within the charter also speak to the right of citizens to have access to education, without stipulating gender. Along with the Charter, many Arab countries have also signed and ratified the ICESCR. Of the 22 member states, 14 have ratified the agreement, and others have accepted its terms provisionally.

Despite this effort by the Arab countries, the data suggests that overall access continues to be a concern. The Net Enrollment Rate (NER) for each Arab country is significantly lower than other comparable regions. For example, the number of children who reached grade 5 in Yemen was only 67.3%, compared with other East Asia and Latin American countries where the average was 90%. Illiteracy is also a concern. Of the total population aged 15+ in Yemen almost 51% are considered illiterate, and among women, 71.5% are considered illiterate (Zaher, 2010). The literature would seem to suggest a more market-driven approach without restriction would help foster better individual development and increase access to education, but does not examine the underlying reasons for such a high rate of illiteracy and the factors that contribute to it.

The notion of free and compulsory education does parallel the western model of the United States, and future research in the region may uncover whether access to education is tied to gender or perhaps even influenced by religion.

Role changes in public. Over time the view of women's access to education in the public realm began to change. One early theologian and jurist, Muhammed Abduh, adopted a modernist-reformist position that advocated a view of Islam as compatible with modernity. Scholars at the time believed that modernist views of the role of women stressed social contextualization in society when considering female participation and access in Arab countries. The research discusses a belief that the Qur'an speaks about a complimentary relationship between the sexes – equal, but different (Stowasser, 2007). This complimentary relationship is described in terms of social change within education, and can be seen as a partnership for countries looking to expand workplace involvement by all citizens, regardless of gender. A country such as Indonesia is an example of an early adopter of more progressive rights for women to access education. Free education since the early 1970's has offered a pervasive method for women to participate in education that is supported directly by the government. While considered a change in religious tradition for Arab women, research by Doorn-Harder (2006) suggests this access has fostered greater national pride and produced a model acceptable to mainstream Muslim believers.

At the same time, arguments for female participation within more conservative Arab countries continue to grow. For women, work by Swantz (1985) proposes that access to education and the workplace is seen as a way to affect status and further social autonomy. And access to education can be seen as a way to facilitate a transformation of

social, economic, and emancipatory dimensions (Findlow, 2007). As more and more women take advantage of education opportunities, they begin to expand their role beyond what is outlined in the Qur'an, and Arab countries are forced to consider how best to respond to what may be considered a step away from Islam both at home and in public. The transformation of lives and individuals by higher education is seen as a new phenomenon that conflicts with typical societal norms. In the end, the process of higher education today in the Arab world for women has changed from being an "exclusive" concern to an accessible option facilitating informed higher learning (p. 59). This in turn has provided more opportunities for Arab women to be involved in higher education, and further their ability to access programs of choice.

It is critical to acknowledge what social impact the West has on educational access. Each culture distinguishes the goals of education differently, taking into account social context and individual development (Doorn-Harder, 2006). Some western cultures look at education primarily as a tool for preparing young people for future responsibilities within the workplace. Research has shown that Middle Eastern education has taken a different approach, focusing primarily on history, the Islamic value system, the institution of the extended family, role of marriage, and care of the elderly (Kittrie, 1989). The training of citizens is not just seen as a way to foster responsibility and increase participation within the workplace, but also to think critically about citizen participation, the dangers of bureaucracy, and expected roles within each system. Religious tradition is seen as a strong influence that can affect the ability for new reforms and progressive ideas to be developed. Despite many social and technological advances within the West, Arab countries still work to fit those changes within a religious framework dominated by

specific gender roles. A progressive Muslim country like Indonesia, which allows women to teach men in formal educational settings, can be a model for other Middle Eastern countries struggling to properly adapt social change with more western philosophies (Doorn-Harder, 2006). Countries that see how Indonesia structures this change may allow women in their own country a greater opportunity to participate in the workplace, while still maintaining an adherence to the values of Islam. Future case studies in Indonesia could explore whether the country has been effective in implementing progressive reforms by researching the impact of the inclusion of women in society and on the economy, and whether or not changes can be sustained successfully over time.

Role changes in the home. Role changes have occurred for women within the home over time. As western values have crept into more traditional Islamic societies, conservative values exert a heavy influence on the roles expected of women. For example, Muslim women are not able to wear western clothes in public, and are still expected to dress in accordance with Islamic standards. Even though women are claimed to be equal to men within Islam, one piece of research suggests that most conservatives feel women should only engage in domestic duties (Watt, 1988). These objections are the result of an apparent “upheaval” brought about by the impact of western values on very conservative religious environments (p. 114). The feeling is that women should not stray from their intended role of domesticity and staying at home.

Some examples from contemporary literature on Muslim women in education suggest disagreement with the notion that restricted home life is preferred. While the family is considered an important social institution worthy of protecting, Stowasser (2007) suggests it should not occur at the expense of women’s freedom. The idea of

“*shura*”, or mutual consideration, is seen as a way for women to balance domestic and public activities (p. 33). Similarly, contemporary Arab women have begun to acknowledge differences between traditional or conventional roles and professional roles. Dividing responsibilities between family obligations and work has become the norm for women seeking to be working professionals. One study suggests that this is done in a society full of misconceptions and stereotypes, where women wrestle to redefine their social roles in order to be accepted (Kirdar, 2007). The process of redefinition by women is seen as a direct result of both educational and professional aspirations, regardless of religious observance. Despite challenges in that process, the educational experiences that women have in the Arab and Western worlds is seen as a balance. The duality of their educational experiences along with realization of their cultural identity reinforces their self-awareness and promotes success. They serve as a model for other women, and are taking part in what may be considered “historical” changes to the notion of how women are viewed in most Arab cultures (p. 54). The literature though does not offer comparisons between each Arab country, and further research would be needed to gauge the impact across countries to determine whether the duality of educational access is bringing about any type of measureable change, whether positive or negative.

Women’s Education and the Economy

Over time the role of native women in Arabic countries has begun to evolve. Western thought and ideas have crept into what has been described as a traditional environment and caused conservative governments to re-assess the role of women within Islamic culture (Doorn-Harder, 2006). At the same time, women seek to find a balance between what society says their cultural identity should be, and how educational

experiences have furthered their own self-awareness and opportunities within the workplace (Kirdar, 2007). As more women take part in opportunities to further their education, is there a relationship between female education and participation in the workplace? And what role, if any, does female participation have on the economies of the Arab countries? The literature reviewed looks to discover what relationship may exist and the role of education on successful female participation in the economy.

Background. Traditional gender roles and cultural norms are discussed within contemporary research as an influence on a woman's place within society, specifically in the family and socially (Kirdar, 2007; Haddad, 1998). Though not directly related to Islam, traditions weigh on the ability for women to progress past familial obligations and be more active within society (Findlow, 2007). It is the region's economic structures and conservative cultures that enforce strong gender roles and are largely responsible for the lower levels of female education and labor force participation (Kirdar, 2007). As discussed earlier, women's roles continue to be redefined as cultural traditionalism and modernity begin to merge.

Education has contributed to the success of women reaching the workplace beyond their traditional role within the family. A case study of one country (Riphenburg, 1998) highlights how education has presented women with far greater options for participation than ever thought possible in the country of Oman since 1970. In the largest cities that contain literacy centers, a greater percentage of women attend than men – 74% in Muscat, 90% in al-Batinah, and 95% in al-Sharqiyya. Monies allocated for education are nearly 11.4% of total spending, and as a result primary school access has greatly increased beyond three schools in 1970 to 388 schools in 1990. Pursuing an education is

seen as an acceptable outlet for women in Oman, because it will ultimately benefit their families and allow them a greater opportunity to be exposed to Western influence. The influence of the West in this case is seen as positive by the author, because it has allowed women to expand their knowledge for future opportunities. And most women speak of a “father’s positive influence” in encouraging them to break with tradition and pursue an education (p. 156). Education is seen as a way for women to advance, positively affecting their position within the family and fostering opportunities to facilitate greater socioeconomic development and employment. The impact on the economy is supported by developmental research that shows a positive correlation between female education and economic development (Kirdar, 2006; Heward & Bunwaree, 1999). Unfortunately the case study and research does not include any data on those who do not see the influence of the West as positive within the culture, nor does it address any possible concerns from within the government or from religious leaders.

Arab governments throughout the Middle East have made progress in increasing female access to education. In a study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the number of female students participating in education has increased steadily between 1975 and 1985 are up as much as 36% (Al-Sanabary, 1985). This gain is in part due to a belief that education is a means of transforming socio-economic conditions in these countries, despite the heavy influence of cultural tradition on how resources may be allocated. The gain is also seen in oil producing countries such as Kuwait and Qatar, as increased oil wealth has allowed a greater allocation of financial resources in support of equal access to women’s education. Current data shows that the percentage of female participation in education is now well

into the 90% range (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013). The availability of natural resources is noted by Al-Sanabary as a “major factor” in the progress of female primary education (p. 97). Religious culture would suggest that boys are still the priority, but as wealth is more prevalent, women see greater access and availability to participate. As one study notes, the enrollment of Arab girls in education has improved employment opportunities for women and increased their mobility in the workplace (Kirdar, 2006). The following mini-case studies by Kepir (1989) of two countries in particular highlight the influence of female education on the economy – Turkey, and Egypt.

Turkey. Turkey is geographically close to the other Arab countries in the Middle East, but is one of only a few countries that are Muslim and not specifically Arab. While being influenced by the other Arab countries religiously and socially, Turkey is also the only Muslim country where religious and governmental affairs are separated by law in a secular state (Kepir, 1989). In Turkey, civil law guarantees equal educational rights to both sexes. This in turn has given women much greater access to education and the workplace. While primary education is compulsory, merit determines educational access for secondary study and beyond. Research in the 1980’s showed uneven enforcement of the equal opportunity law for women, and high illiteracy rates were common. At one point the female illiteracy rate was just under 52%, compared to the male rate of 24.9%. Despite such a poor environment for educational access, Kepir notes that those few women who continued their study beyond primary education were generally more successful than men. Even though 52% of females in 1989 were illiterate compared to 24.9% of men, a higher percentage of men (20%) didn’t complete their primary education compared to women (14%). Possible causes included merit-based selection, as well as

more convenient access to funding. The research in this case also postulated a direct relationship between the level of economic development and the availability of educational opportunity for women. In Turkey, 35% of the total workforce is women working in service occupations, up from 11% in urban areas based on this case study. As more women enter the workplace, they influence job creation and availability across any number of areas, including semi-skilled work and other domestic industries (Kepir, 1989; Kirdar, 2006; Kittrie, 1989). Unfortunately, the data does not discuss whether gender has directly influenced positive trends in socio-economic development.

Current data shows that between 2007 and 2012, female participation in secondary education in Turkey increased 16.5%, from 3,847,336 students to 4,484,254 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013). As more women access available educational opportunities, this has also caused the literacy rate to increase from a low of 48% (Kepir, 1989) to 96.57% in 2009 for female youths, aged 15-24 (Trading Economics, 2013; World Bank, 2013).

The conclusion of the mini-case study on Turkey determined that the roles and status of women in Turkey are much closer to women in western societies than to those of women in the Middle East (Kepir, 1989). Even though the data was quantitatively focused on the overall statistical distribution of women's roles, as well as on literacy rates compared to educational attainment, the research did not investigate working women under 25 years of age despite the demographic being listed as a primary focus area. Further research would be needed to determine whether there has been any change statistically in the illiteracy rate or access to employment for women as reforms have continued over the last several years. It was helpful to see the data show how

participation has changed over time, as the workforce becomes more diverse and expands to include a different demographic that includes women. Unfortunately this was the only study found that highlights this area of change within the Middle East, and the age of study makes it difficult to draw a comparison with current events. An updated study may provide a better view of literacy and employment access for women, and if any changes have been positive or negative. Subscription resources such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Database provide a link from which to explore data concerning literacy and employment across many populations.

Egypt. Governmental changes in the 1950's within Egypt brought about many changes in educational access for women. President Nasser's decision in 1962 to declare that higher education would be provided free of charge dramatically changed student access to education (Ibrahim, 1989). As a result of this decree, female participation increased from as low as 6,000 in 1952 to as many as 237,000 in 1975 (Al-Sanabary, 1985). Recent data shows that over the decade between 2002 and 2012, overall female participation in secondary education in Egypt decreased slightly, from 4,849,147 students to 4,677,264, or about 3.5% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013). Literacy rates over a larger time period increased significantly from a low of 54% to a regional percentage of 86.5% in 2011 for female youths, aged 15-24 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013).

Research has described modernization as a driver for change, and this notion has continued to be seen by the author as a way forward for greater female participation (Kirdar, 2007). While overall participation numbers have varied based on age level and sector, female enrollment doubled in the late 70's and was as much as 33% higher through the mid-80's (Al-Sanabary, 1985). The research also notes that in the case of

Egypt, the wealth of the oil states has contributed to a much higher rate of change than in other countries (Al-Sanabary, 1985; Ibrahim, 1989). As the regional economic focus shifted from agriculture to a mixed industrial model, more women ventured out from the home in search of paid labor. The higher cost of living meant men had a harder time providing for families, and women provided another means of support. Educational opportunity, combined with changing economic conditions, necessitated a shift in thinking for women from more traditional familial responsibilities to the mainstream workplace (Ibrahim, 1989). At the broadest level, Kirdar (2007) notes that increased education “improved women’s literacy” and “increased their participation in the workforce” as the government focused on increasing the scientific and technical capabilities of the population (p. 199). This was done despite class differences and a conservative male-dominated society.

This particular mini-case study of Egypt described a fairly progressive outlook for female participation in the workplace, and noted a relationship between female education and workplace access. The mixed-method approach, in which the author combined interviews along with the case study data, provided a good context for understanding how women were affected by changes in access to education. Given the downturn in the global economy, additional research on women’s studies compared with placement in the job market might also report how women are currently viewed within the workplace.

Qatar. While not specifically included in the above-mentioned case study, Qatar has also seen remarkable changes to its educational offerings for female students over the last decade. The inclusion of the Western branch campuses in Education City beginning in 1995 has increased educational capacity for women and offered more choices for

specific programs and careers. As a result, female participation in secondary schools in Qatar has seen a year over year increase across all grade levels, from a low of 20,983 in 1998 to as many as 35,509 in 2011 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013). It is important to note that education is free at all levels for Qatari nationals, including women - Article 49 of the Qatari Constitution states that education is the right of every citizen (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2011; Qatar, 2013).

Social and religious reforms undertaken by the former Emir, His Heiness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al-Thani, have allowed female students to take part in many new educational and professional work opportunities. The Gross Enrollment Rate for Qatari females has seen year over year increases since 2002 from a factor of 92.9 to 98.6 in 2010, peaking at 102.8 in 2008. The rate for men has grown from 75.2 to 94.6 over the same time period (Qatar Statistics Authority, 2013). Compared to overall enrollment, the net percentage of women participating in secondary education in Qatar has increased from a low of 76% in 1991 to 96% in 2011 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013). The Qatar Population Status 2012 Annual Report (2011) details female participation numbers in secondary higher education as increasing year over year from 7,231 in 2007 to 9,854 in 2011, with an annual growth rate for women of 3.16% (2005-11) and for all students of 8.1%. These increases are attributed to a growth in graduation numbers coupled with an increased range of academic options that are now available in Qatar (p. 37). These increases have contributed to a high literacy rate among Qatari females (15-24 years), which has grown slightly from 99.4% to 99.5% between 2007 and 2011 (p.69).

Participation by Qatari females in the workforce has also increased over time. Despite a huge imbalance in the national labor force between Qatari and non-Qatari

workers (5.9% Qatari; 94.1% non-Qatari), the data shows that females make up 35.3% of the economically active population and have increased their proportion to the total workforce to 12.4% (Qatar Permanent Population Committee, 2011). This despite an unemployment rate of 8% for Qatari females, compared with 1.7% for males (p.22).

As Qatari women continue to take advantage of educational opportunities and join the workforce, it will be important to align the needs of the marketplace with current educational offerings. The Qatar Population Status 2012 Annual Report (2011) notes a number of challenges facing education with regards to the local population. Despite acknowledging that “efforts regarding gender empowerment for educational opportunities access have increased female participation in education” (p.37), there remains a need to “link higher education disciplines” with the needs of the national workforce, as outlined in the report (p. 43). Successful implementation of the priorities in the report will help the country prepare for opportunities to increase its exposure in other markets, and allow the Qatari workforce to play a more active role in running its national businesses.

Conclusion

The role of Western influence continues to be debated today within Islamic countries. While conservative and traditional influences continue to affect societal and family roles, some Arab governments like Turkey and Egypt have made efforts to improve educational access for women. Al-Sanabary (1985) describes the subtleties of traditional influences on forming governmental policy, and notes that major changes only occur deliberately over time and are more complex than generally seen by the West. These types of gradual changes also apply to social change within the traditional Muslim home and to the ability for women to access education and the workplace beyond what

has been the traditional role of caretaker in the family. Additional research may compare the attitudes of men as influenced by Islam and the actual religious teachings in an attempt to explain the underlying tendencies that influence the interpretation of Islam and its application within the home. Further studies may also investigate whether the traditional views of the role of Islamic women have changed enough in other countries as to positively affect participation in education. This may lead to discovery of possible factors that influence these outcomes, considering current events taking place within the Middle East.

In addition to cultural considerations, wealth and income levels also influence the level and type of female participation in education. Wealthy countries are able to allocate more resources toward education, and this fosters more opportunities for women as educational opportunities grow. Qatar has made a significant investment in its education structures, and as one of the wealthiest countries in the world, has dedicated a considerable part of its resources toward building up its educational infrastructure to support its population when access to its natural resources has diminished. Yet it is unclear from the available research as to whether a market-driven approach is the best way to increase access to education, or if some other factor such as gender or regional influence contributes to the change. Further research could investigate how the socioeconomic needs of the Arab countries relate to female education, given how female participation in education has increased over the last few decades (Al-Sanabary, 1985; Kirdar, 2007). Countries that continue to promote these social reforms may find a valuable partner in women looking to expand their social role and education to the betterment of their country's future. Given the limited number of studies focused

specifically on female access to education, one possible solution is to develop a partnership with each country and construct an instrument to collect and analyze data from family units. This in turn could help determine what impact if any increased financial resources play in educational access.

The body of literature reviewed contains historical literacy rates, student attendance, and participation of women from a number of different countries, but the data was primarily collected and studied between 1950 and 1990 and is not current. As noted earlier, it also does not report on trends relating to socio-economic development or whether any changes in the illiteracy rate have had an impact on women's access to employment.

Recent changes politically and socially within Middle Eastern countries may offer areas of future research based on current literacy rates among women and trends based on previous data. Current studies also do not report on the acceptance of Western influence in education, and whether proposed changes for Muslim women are viewed as positive or negative. New research could look at whether overall attendance rates have changed in countries that have adopted progressive social reforms, and what impact these changes have had on the workforce within each country. It could also note areas of concern from government and religious leaders and detail how changes were implemented.

Unfortunately there does not seem to be any consensus in the available research as to how each country should implement these reforms (Zaher, 2010). They may find that a careful and measured approach, based on contextual factors in society and a thorough understanding of available data and influencing factors, is a good way to start the process.

The literature reviewed for this study helps to inform how native students perceive the Western branch campuses established in their country, and how this may affect their motivation to attend one of these schools. Careful consideration of how branch campus development has affected academic environment and culture, in particular for female students, may help explain student motivation to want to attend these campuses and how they describe their learning experiences. This study looks to further examine this relationship between the Western universities and the native students who attend those universities.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the methods and process of the study. It describes the research sites, the research design, the research participants, and the data collection and analysis procedures.

The Research Sites

Qatar was the Middle Eastern country chosen as the site for this study primarily because of my experience in the country as part of a previous global study course. Qatar is a small country located on the Arabian Gulf; it is similar in size to the state of Connecticut. It only recently became a sovereign state, and between 2004 and 2008 saw its population double a second time from an initial surge in the late 1980's (Moini, Bikson, Neu, & Desisto, 2009). Today, about 1.8 million people live in Qatar.

One striking demographic feature of Qatar is the number of non-Qataris living in the country. Almost four-fifths of the population over the age of 15 is considered to be expatriates (Stasz, Eide, & Martorell, 2007).

Concern over the rising non-Qatari population and the lack of educational preparation of Qatari students to assume high-level jobs due to perceived inadequacies in the Qatari educational system led Qatari leaders, in recent years, to embark on a series of reforms designed to update the country's education system. The specific objective of these reforms was to more closely integrate the overall educational system with broader social, political, and economic advances that continue to occur as a result of increased wealth from oil and natural gas reserves (Brewer, 2007).

This educational reform effort culminated in the creation of the Qatar Foundation in 1995 and the creation of the Education City campus (Qatar Foundation, 2011). Several world-class higher education institutions have been invited to participate in the newly renamed Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU) at the Education City campus. The branch campus schools include: Texas A&M University, Weill Cornell Medical College, Virginia Commonwealth University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, Carnegie Mellon University, HEC Paris, and University College London. As Qatar moves forward with its National Vision 2030, an initiative that envisions expanding the participation of Qataris in education and the workforce, it uses the initiative's headline aim of *unlocking human potential* to steer a course and focus attention and effort on educational initiatives (Qatar Foundation, 2011). The intention and scope of this study was to engage with students from the Education City institutions who were first invited to participate in the campus. But I was encouraged by my committee to reduce the scope of the study given my limited access onsite as well as access concerns across each campus. In the end, I was able to secure access to students from both Texas A&M and Carnegie Mellon after meeting with administrators from each school.

The Research Design

The study used a case study/cross case analysis design. Each of the students participating in the study was treated as a case, and each set of students from the original Education City universities that participated (Texas A&M University and Carnegie Mellon University) that participated were grouped together and their thinking compared. In addition, a single focus group of freshman students from one class at Texas A&M was included, and their participation and responses were treated as a single case, using the

same interview guide from Appendix A. Administrators from each school and from Qatar Foundation were also interviewed and each treated as a case during data analysis. Two administrators came from the United States, one from South America, and one from the local region.

A case study/cross case analysis design was chosen for a number of reasons. First, this design is feasible due to the limited number of students being asked to participate in the study. In contrast to a more formal comparative design model described by Patton (2002), this method provided the best option to compare and contrast factors in each case within a limited sample size. The lower sample size, of course, allowed for greater depth of understanding of the thinking and perspectives of each student participant.

Second, a case study/cross case analysis design offered the most flexibility to take into account all of the issues and concerns that emerged from interviewing and allowed me to compare and contrast new themes and issues that emerged as a result of questions and participant reflection. Wolcott (1990) suggests this flexibility allows for time to adjust the details of the study if necessary to fit within the specified timeframe and also help to develop a deep understanding of whatever is being studied in order to better understand the context being examined.

Research Participants

The study was conducted using a sample of eight Qatari students attending two of the American universities that make up HBKU at the Education City campus in Doha, Qatar, a focus group of one class of eight students from one of the institutions (Texas A&M), and four administrators. This 2500-acre complex near the middle of Doha is where students are enrolled in one of six American universities (Texas A&M University,

Weill Cornell Medical College, Virginia Commonwealth University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, and Carnegie Mellon University) that have arrived in recent years to offer Western-style education and degrees (Asquith, 2006). Initially I had intended to reach out to 10 students from each of the schools in Education City for a total of 60 students, but I was advised by my committee to reduce the total number of participants in my study in order to focus more closely on the data being collected given the short timeframe allowed for data collection. The lower sample size allowed data collection to be more manageable and fit within the timeframe I had onsite in Education City. The final number of student participants was eight from two of the schools in Education City (Texas A&M and Carnegie Mellon) and a focus group of one class of eight students, who met the following criteria:

- (a) English speaking;
- (b) male or female over age 18 who is currently attending one of the American universities in Doha, Qatar; and
- (c) are native Qatari; and
- (d) are able to articulate the experience.

Students who did not meet one or more of the above criteria were excluded from participating in individual interviews. Ten total students were made available to me between both of the institutions, but several no-shows reduced my participant pool down to eight. I also was given access to a focus group of one class of eight students from one of the institutions (Texas A&M), and the entire class of students was treated as a single case for the purposes of this study. Of the students who chose to participate in the individual interviews, five came from Texas A&M (three females and two males) and

three from Carnegie Mellon (three females). The focus group consisted of four females and four males, with four students being Qatari and the others of other ethnic backgrounds including Sri Lankan and Palestinian. Other demographic information concerning the student participants include:

- (a) Individual interviewees consisted of two from each grade (freshman through senior)
- (b) Focus group participants were all freshmen
- (c) Of the individual interviewees, four came from segregated educational backgrounds, three from mixed gender educational environments, and one who was individually tutored.
- (d) Focus group members were not polled about their past primary school experience

To assist in identifying students who were willing to participate, share their learning experiences, and discuss the resulting religious and social impact of being part of a Western University system, I made use of several acquaintances from both HBKU and the Qatar Foundation, the organization that oversees the American university presence in Qatar. The students they helped to identify formed the basis of my convenience sample for the purposes of this study. I reached out to these students personally by email and phone to ask them to participate. I also worked with designated school representatives to identify and schedule student participants, as both institutions preferred to be directly involved in the process. In each case the purpose of the study was explained to each identified student and an opportunity given to each individual to ask questions about the study before agreeing to participate. I also asked the initial participants identified in this

way to connect me with other students who may see things differently than they do as a modified version of snowball sampling. I hoped that this would help to identify alternative opinions without using an official designee from the institution.

If I fell short of generating my stated number of participants using the snowball sampling method described above, I had two additional options to identify and select participants: (a) I could ask my contacts for names of other students who may have a tendency to see things differently than they do and would be willing to participate in order to gain alternative viewpoints; or (b) I could reach out to several student acquaintances from Qatar University that were part of my small-group experience during the Young Professionals Institute, and ask about possible friends and other contacts that might be willing to participate. Since I fell short of my target number of participants at one school, I asked my initial interviewees for names of other students that might be willing to participate and offer alternative viewpoints. I identified an additional number of students to contact, but due to several no-shows was unable to reschedule them to participate due to time constraints in completing the study.

In addition to the student participants, I also interviewed several administrators who were willing to speak with me and share their perspectives on student engagement. Four administrators agreed to participate, one from each of the identified schools from this study (Texas A&M and Carnegie Mellon) and two administrators from Qatar Foundation. To assist in identifying administrators who were willing to participate, share their experiences, and discuss their engagement with native students who attend a Western University branch campus, I again made use of several acquaintances from both HBKU and the Qatar Foundation. The administrators identified formed the basis of my

convenience sample for the purposes of this study. I reached out to these administrators personally by email and phone to ask them to participate. The student interview guide questions were used as the basis for these interviews.

Data Collection Procedures

I used interviewing as my primary data collection method for my study onsite in Qatar during the fall of 2012. Patton (2002) describes several interviewing alternatives as options for qualitative researchers. I used what Patton calls a general interview guide approach, and developed a list of questions in advance to ask each student during his or her interview. A copy of the script for the interview guide portion of the interview can be found in Appendix A.

I must add that, consistent with the interview guide approach as outlined by Patton (2002), I did not necessarily ask all of the questions as written or in the order in which they are listed on the guide. Rather, I structured each interview in such a way as to encourage a conversational approach, providing opportunities for me to explore unanticipated points or themes that were raised by the participants. I successfully combined the interview guide and the conversational interview strategies by using the interview guide to begin the conversation and function as a roadmap to return to, if the participant began to shift too far from the purpose of the study. The interview guide was also used at the end of the study as a checklist to make sure that all relevant topics had been discussed during the interview session.

Interviews were conducted on location at HBKU and the Education City campus, Doha, Qatar in a designated conference room, office, meeting area, and at other mutually agreed upon settings where privacy was maintained. I successfully contacted each

institution by email letter, and received permission from each institution to conduct the study and use the facilities by confirming in person, onsite. I audio recorded and took handwritten notes on all interviews. Formal appointments were made with staff from each school as necessary to gain access to the buildings and reserve interview rooms at times convenient for the participants. Due to the distance between the research sites and myself, I had planned to make use of video conferencing technology to schedule initial consultations with school administrators to confirm student participation, but found that email consultations were just as effective in communicating about the study. Once onsite, formal appointments were made with staff from the participating schools to gain access to each facility at times convenient for the participants.

I conducted only one interview per person, given the limited time available to carry out the study. The interview times lasted from thirty minutes to no more than one hour. With prior permission from each participant, I asked to follow up with a 10-minute online chat interview or email if needed at a later time during the data analysis portion of the study for clarification and/or member checking purposes.

If participants preferred to participate outside of a formal meeting location, I was willing to make accommodations to conduct interviews using other face-to-face technologies. Two possible approaches were available: a formal video conferencing room or Skype. I would have determined which technology to use based on available access to equipment. The video conferencing room at Carnegie Mellon-Qatar was one possible option, pending availability. If needed a formal appointment would have been made with staff from Carnegie Mellon to gain access to the facility at times convenient for the participants. Use of this technology would have allowed me to view the

participants just as I would see them in person, and also given me the opportunity to record the session with both video and audio for later transcription, if necessary.

Fortunately, I did not need to make use of any video conferencing or remote video options as participants were willing to meet with me face to face in a secure meeting room.

Participant observation and analysis were used to supplement interview data. While onsite in Qatar doing related coursework as part of an initial global education immersion, I took detailed field notes as suggested in the syllabus for the intercession class I was taking at the time. My notes were collected in a yellow notebook for each student and staff interview conducted as part of the campus immersion visits to each branch campus at Education City. Each campus immersion visit consisted of a sit down meeting and interview with university students, as well as student affairs staff members representing each university. Some topics during the interviews included the role of home and campus life for students, participation in groups and activities, and student interaction between segregated classes and social groups.

After I returned from Qatar, I discovered that the notes I collected from each of our interviews followed a pattern based on descriptive and analytic note taking highlighted by Glesne (2006). The time with each group allowed me to observe and describe the interactions taking place. My note-taking process turned out to be consistent with the recommendations offered by Glesne regarding cross-cultural research, a process that involves noting differences in how individuals and groups interact with each other based on their religious beliefs. I followed a similar process while conducting this study,

and had access to classrooms for observation. I took detailed notes of those experiences, and recorded my findings in a notebook.

As part of one initial classroom observation, I also had an opportunity to engage with students directly in the form of a focus group interview during one entire class period. The students shared their experiences from their first year of study and offered reflections on their learning experience working together. The focus group interview was recorded for the purposes of data analysis and detailed field notes were taken in a notebook during the interview process. The entire interview lasted just under an hour.

In addition to the interviews, I also summarized my experiences at the end of each day in an online wiki-space. Glesne (2006) encourages researchers to expand on notes later in the evening, to help retain recall ability and remember key details. I felt a personal wiki-space provided the best opportunity to reflect on the experiences each day in a secure manner without the worry of losing handwritten notes.

Data Analysis

My content was organized by category and filtered appropriately using codes and sub-codes that correspond to my research questions. For example, I used a code to designate: (a) what led students to study in an American university and the role that family played in the decision (sub-codes include motivating factors, internal and external motivations, the role of parents and siblings, and roles of other family members), (b) how they described their experiences and interactions with other students and social groups (sub-codes include participants' reactions to working with the opposite gender, reactions to student group activities, and examples of group interactions), and (c) what adjustments they had to at least consider making to be a successful student in a Western

university system (sub-codes include peer influences, religious influences, and home influences). Based on the data collected I added several codes and subcodes, including a code for Administrators and subcodes covering student choice, school experience, and the HBKU/Education City relationship. Sub-codes were identified as themes emerged from the information shared by each participant. The overall design of the codes and sub-codes was originally created as part of the pilot study conducted on the same topic. Given the sample size and scope of my study, the software package QDA Miner was used to assist in data analysis.

Data collected during participant observation was integrated with interview data as applicable for each question. The integration began to occur even before data analysis commenced. For example, certain themes that emerged from interviews (such as the role of family) became an area of focus to note during participant observation. A hypothetical example was a question asked during an interview about group interaction and the comfort level of communicating with members of the opposite sex. Participant interview data collected onsite and compared with observation data of classroom activity suggested some awkwardness in student communication. This data could then be compared across participants as well as locations at each branch campus, if appropriate, to see if any correlation exists between schools, gender groups, or working environments.

I also planned to compare the data collected in this study with other data collected from a previous pilot study conducted at the Education City campus in January, 2011. The purpose of that pilot study mirrored the purpose articulated in this research; the study sought to investigate what influences native students from a Middle Eastern country such as Qatar to attend a Western University that has essentially been transplanted into their

country, and what motivates them to stay attending. While it was difficult at the time to generalize the findings because the pilot study had a low participant sample size (six students) and only represented two of the institutions that are part of HBKU, the intention was to use the findings from the pilot study as a point of comparison in the data analysis of this study. So far I have not needed to use the data collected from the previous study, and still may make use of it at a later time. I was able to use a similar coding pattern for the purposes of this research study.

As it relates to the previous pilot study, this study was designed to build on the initial research from the pilot study and offer a more expansive look at how student participation may be impacted across each of the schools that make up HBKU at the Education City campus. The hope was that trends would emerge from the data that could be compared between the data sets from both studies and offer a glimpse into what leads native students to attend these universities, what factors are considered by students as they attend, and what motivates them to stay attending and finish their program of study. Based on the richness of the data collected, I chose not to use the data from the pilot study at this time. Future research may incorporate both data sets in an attempt to answer other questions that emerge from the data collected in this study.

Limitations and Significance of the Study

As foreign countries look to the West to expand their educational offerings for students, these same countries are also looking for answers as to whether adding Western educational institutions has been effective. One important aspect of this evaluation is identifying how students are responding to the inclusion of Western universities in the higher education options available in their country, and what actually happens when these

students attend a Western university. Future research may investigate other aspects of effectiveness, including what impact students who graduate from Western university branch campuses have on the local workforce. The perceived economic impact of branch campus development in countries that chose to add Western universities to their country's education system would be another area to consider.

There were several limitations to the study. First, despite notable success in giving students access to Western universities in Qatar (Al-Misnad, 2009), the conclusions drawn from this study may not generalize to other foreign countries with different religious and social considerations because this topic has not been studied extensively. The rate at which Western university expansion is occurring within Qatar is unique. The country has added six Western universities over the last decade, and spends nearly \$2 billion a year to bring Western universities into the country (Krieger, 2008). Taking into account Donmoyer's (1990) notion of the schema theory view of generalizability, the rate of expansion being experienced in Qatar may not generate a distinct type of data set for a single study that would create a theoretical ideal. The rapid development of the branch campuses in relation to other countries in the region is unique. Therefore, it may be necessary to consider the findings generated by this study as an initial research point, understanding the novelty of the education system in Qatar and that future continued research would enrich the researcher's understanding of the novelty of this particular case (Donmoyer, 1990). Education City has seen tremendous growth over the last decade, and continues to invite universities to take part in the campus that fit the educational and professional needs of the population. This growth is exclusive only to

Qatar, given available funding and the country's emphasis to enhance its own educational offerings to students (Qatar Foundation, 2011).

A second potential limitation of the study was that the small sample size would offer only limited generalizability for results. As one author notes, this type of research may help in the forming of more questions rather than specific answers (Donmoyer, 1990). This study was a focus on just one country, two participating schools, and one initiative to bring a Western style of education into a foreign country with a limited native student population. Therefore it will be difficult to generalize the findings of this study until the hypotheses that are generated can be tested in subsequent studies with larger sample sizes and methodologies.

Finally, the researcher's bias from having previously visited the country and past religious upbringing may also affect the way that data and analysis from the interviews were synthesized. I hoped to actively seek out subjective bias and make myself aware of its role during data collection in order to help me keep focused and remain cognizant of my own personal thoughts and feelings that could have skewed results (Peshkin, 1988). My hope is to use this process of generating increased awareness as a valuable exercise that I can use to keep the lines of subjectivity open and straight during future research.

In sum, and despite the limitations discussed above, this study hopes to improve the understanding about the relationship between the Western universities that have opened satellite campuses in Middle Eastern countries and the non-Western students enrolled in these institutions. Knowledge gained could be used by school administrators and other persons in leadership roles to better understand what is leading native students to attend the university, what new student development activities are needed to meet the

needs of those students, and how students are relating to each other in social settings while attending Western universities.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this dissertation was to begin to systematically study how students in places like the Education City campus in Doha, Qatar respond to attending what is essentially an American university on foreign soil. The purpose was addressed by investigating perceptions of existing relationships between the Western universities that have been transplanted into a country, on the one hand, and the native students who attend those universities, on the other. Attention was given to the reasons why students chose to attend the university, the resulting impact on their social lives and religious beliefs, and their motivation for persisting in their studies. This chapter presents the findings from the research. Themes that emerged from the study are presented, along with descriptive characteristics of each theme and examples of comments made by participants during interviews. A summary of the findings is included at the conclusion of the chapter.

As was described in the previous chapter, the content for this study was organized by category and filtered appropriately using codes and sub-codes that corresponded to the research questions. Major codes focused on (a) what led students to study in a Western university (examples of motivating factors; statements about internal motivations; and statements about external motivations); (b) the role that family (i.e. parents and siblings) played in the decision; (c) how interviewees described their group experiences and interactions (e.g., participants' reactions to working with the opposite gender; participants' reactions to student group activities; and examples of group interactions); (d) the adjustments they had make in their attempts to be successful students in a Western

university system, and (e) comments from administrators about factors that may be influencing student decision-making and their choice to attend one the schools in Education City. These findings are similar in nature to the results obtained from the pilot study conducted in 2011, which had a similar scope and sample size.

Research Question #1: The Choice of a Western University

The first research question of this study was: *What led students to study in a Western University?* It is helpful to understand what led students to *want* to attend a Western university in their own native country, since attending a branch of a Western university located in Qatar is just one of the many options that native students must weigh regarding where to continue their study after high school. Other options for study include the government-sponsored institution, Qatar University, as well as institutions located abroad. The four themes about motivating factors identified in this study include the role of family, the program of study offered, perceived student experience, and the influence of sponsorship/employment.

Theme 1: The Role of Family

The role that the family unit plays in the decision-making process for students continues to be an important factor when looking at what led students to attend one of the Western universities in Qatar. The participants each described the freedom they had to decide which school and academic program seemed to fit their interests, but they also noted the influence parents and other siblings had when making a final decision. In most cases parents were the direct influence, but in some cases siblings and extended family members also offered advice and counsel. Within this culture, families provide guidance and encouragement for students while also modeling an appropriate respect for social and

religious concerns. These concerns come into play when students leave home to attend a higher education institution, especially a Western one, either in the West or in Qatar.

The support structure provided by family can help motivate students and provide an impetus for focusing on completion of the degree and advancement into the workplace or continued graduate study. The data generated for this study suggest that families play an important role in influencing the decision-making process of students looking to study in higher education institutions, especially those located in Qatar.

For some students, families tend to be more conservative about religious and social issues; they direct students to make educational choices that will keep them closer to home. By staying in-country, students are able to both attend a Western university and remain in the culture and be less likely to be influenced by outside pressures that could cause them to change their thinking or beliefs. Table 1 contains quotations from the interview data that suggest how four students who were interviewed perceive the overall influence of their families on their decisions to attend an international university on their country's soil.

Table 1: Examples of interviewees' comments about overall parental influence

Examples of interviewees' comments about overall parental influence

Participant A	Most of the time [the] education here is better than outside, because you are surrounded by family. It's the same professor, same curriculum, same degree, so yeah, that's why I chose [to stay here and study].
Participant B	So my dad was like, "Okay, you can go study abroad if you really want to," but then he was like, "There is the same kind of level of education that you can get here if you go to...Education City."
Participant C	[The decision to study was] mostly my mom's influence - oh she [said they were] kind enough to give us [the] opportunity to have the universities here, so we might as well take advantage of that since everything is easier...so that's what lead me to choose [the school in Education City].

Participant D	The girls...we live with our parents until we get married...so it's kind of difficult but having this [educational] opportunity here, like, just on the doorstep, it's like really perfect. . .it opened some doors.
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The ability to study at one of the schools in Education City is described by the first student included in Table 1 as a better educational opportunity because the student assumes the international branch campus located in Qatar is the same as the university located in the home country but has the added advantage of allowing the student to still be surrounded and supported by family. Participant B articulated a similar argument about being offered the same curriculum close to home that is offered abroad, but this student attributed the argument to his father. Some parents, like the mother of Participant C, also used what might be called a gratitude argument; in other words, the development of Education City “on the doorstep” of the families was a selling point that some families used to encourage secondary education without the need to leave home. As mentioned previously, Qatar has made a considerable investment to invite prestigious institutions to be a part of Education City and offer top-tier programs to native students. Families often feel an obligation to encourage their children to consider studying at one of those schools because of the investment by the country and the opportunity secure sponsorship after graduation.

Finally, the quote from Participant D in Table 1 indicates at least one other rationale that was used by parents to influence their children’s (and, more specifically, their daughters’) decision to stay close to home: a young woman would be protected from Western influences. As the quote in Table 1 suggests, female students often agree with this rationale.

Parents are not the only family members who influence students' decision to attend an international university that has established a branch campus in Education City. Siblings that were allowed to leave the country and study abroad also influence native students on where to study. These families share a different approach concerning educational choices and seem to be more open to the possibility of students leaving home and, even, their country. Some students spoke specifically about siblings who were successful in an educational experience out of the country but noted that a perceived comparable experience at an in-country university offered peace of mind to parents who were concerned about safety and cultural influence. Table 2 provides insights, through interview quotes, about the influence of other siblings and, in one unique case, a parent who studied abroad.

Table 2: Research participants' comments about the influence of family members with educational experience abroad

Research participants' comments about the influence of family members with educational experience abroad

Participant B	My dad did a Masters and a PhD and that's the reason I lived in the states. So, for me, my dad had gone through this process of kind of deciding which university to go to.
Participant C	My brother went abroad and my sister went abroad and [my] mom [said that] none of our family members [have] experience[d] Education City and we...know that the universities are really good and [the] professors are extraordinary.
Participant A	My sister is currently studying in the UK, so I think I [could] have had that opportunity if I wanted to.

Participants who had other family members who either had studied or were studying abroad generally tended to assume they had the following options: they could study either in Qatar or at institutions outside of the country. In contrast, students who

described themselves as being an only child were often not given the same type of opportunity because parents were generally more restrictive. Several administrators echoed the struggles of these students (who, more often than not, were female), and one from the West described the situation in this way:

For many of the female students it's almost a family requirement. They do not want them to travel abroad so it [locating branches of Western universities in Qatar] has provided the opportunity for Qatari females to study at world class institutions and benefit from that. . . The notion of leaving them [family] is difficult not just for the female students but [also] for the males.

The more conservative family units often take a direct approach to students attending one of the Western institutions in Qatar. Another Western administrator shared this perspective on the process:

There is a negotiation and an agreement—I don't know if it is a negotiation but an agreement with their families that they will stay here for their undergraduate work, and I think the more that they see that the standard that we are offering [or] the level we are offering is comparable with the home [campus], [it] emphasizes...that they are okay with it.

The direct influence of family units on selecting a university to attend should not be underestimated, especially in the context of Qatar. In most cases, parents must give permission for students to attend a school that is Western-based instead of a school within the Muslim tradition. In the case of female students, permission may be especially hard to get, especially if the girl is an only child or required to stay at home. Siblings and other family members can influence this process by demonstrating that the Western institutions

offer a safe learning environment and one that is respectful of religious and social beliefs. The ability to attend a prestigious university can also influence parents to allow their children to participate. Students cited the prospect of participating in a challenging learning environment while staying at home as a reason that parents allowed them to study at a Western university.

Family advice about making an appropriate education choice also tended to be less direct and more consultative, and this was seen by students as encouragement to consider all options when making their decision to attend one of the Western universities. Table 3 contains quotations from the interview data that suggest how students perceived the consultative approach of their families on their decisions to attend a Western university within their country, which seemingly allowed them to have more freedom to make an individual choice.

Table 3: Research participants' comments about the consultative family approach

Research participants' comments about the consultative family approach

Participant E	I think in the end [the decision about where to study] was literally in my hands, but it's kind of like, yeah, we want the best for you but we also want you to stay...but I was already accepted here [at Education City] so you know...they wanted me to stay.
Participant A	I was thinking of studying abroad and the opportunities here my parents felt are of the, of the same greatness. So, my father in particular, he urged me to apply and he urged me to seek any, um, if there were any courses ACT related or SAT related or if I needed help.
Participant B	My family was very supportive, like, they never told me go for this or go for that.
Participant F	When I talked to my dad [about being in a co-educational environment] it is fine with him, [and] even my mom [had] more of [an] understanding that you are there to study. It is not a shame; something good, or...nothing bad about it. [But] all families here [are not] agreed on a mixed environment to study in.

Most of the students in Table 3 described the consultative approach of family members as supportive and understanding. There was a genuine feeling that parents wanted their children to succeed wherever they chose to study. In most cases, however, there was subtle pressure to consider attending one of the Western universities in Qatar that would allow them to stay at home.

While the participants in the study appreciated the confidence their families had in them, they still voiced concern regarding the role that their family members played in helping them make a final decision. Some students described their parents as struggling to have them stay at home in a socially and religiously safe environment, while at the same time allowing them the freedom to choose where they want to study. The quote by Participant F in Table 3 indicates this tension. The student mentioned a family concern about having children interacting with other students in a mixed-sex environment. As Participant F's quote in Table 3 suggests, families that tend to influence their children's university choice through a consultative approach can have the same concerns as other conservative families about sending their child to a co-educational environment for study. Despite these concerns, most students tend to believe that there is nothing wrong with being in a mixed environment because everyone has the same goal: to study.

Overall, students seemed to appreciate having the choice to study at one of the prestigious Western Universities that have been invited into their country, and administrators noted that parents seemed to recognize the investment in education by their government as a positive influence, though not always immediately. In the case of Qatar, one administrator from abroad shared, "We had imagined that perhaps it was because they [the parents] were uncomfortable with the university setting, didn't know

what to make of it, [and] therefore left us alone or left their, you know, ah, son or daughter alone.” As more students are allowed to attend the Western universities, these feelings are changing and more Qatari students are gaining access with full support from their families. Another administrator native to the region described it this way:

[In] the western style education parents may have been reluctant to send their kids here, maybe. But things have changed, especially when Education City gained sort of, I would say, recognition, and the trust of the surrounding community. It is true we are a high end western style education, but [we’re] also...protecting, you know, the cultural, the Qatari identity.

The notion of identity described above is an important part of Qatari culture as it relates to education. Qatar’s Vision 2030 plan outlines four areas of focus, including Human Development, and this has affected the role that families play in helping students make their educational choice. As students make decisions about their education, they are influenced by parents and other family members who want them to be successful yet still maintain their Qatari identity. Overall, the students seemed to enjoy a considerable amount of freedom when making their choice to attend a Western university. While parental advice may at times seem intrusive, students readily acknowledged the importance of having their families involved in the decision-making process. The patriarchal nature of families, influenced by the teachings of Islam, may continue to influence this process well into the future, despite progressive reforms already underway within Qatar.

Theme 2: Program of Study

Qatari students seeking to attend a Western university are also motivated by the degree they are seeking and the academic programs that are offered. As mentioned earlier, students are increasingly researching opportunities to study abroad, especially when other family members have had academic experience in another foreign country. Due to Qatar's investment in education and the Qatar Foundation's work in bringing the Western universities to Education City, students are being encouraged to look at those schools first before considering alternative educational opportunities abroad. Students also voiced concern about attending their in-country university, Qatar University, because they perceived Qatar University as having inferior programs of study. This critical view of Qatar University often makes the opportunity to attend one of the Western universities in Education City even more desirable for students as well as parents.

Students voiced a notable sense of pride about their chosen school after deciding to attend Education City. Table 4 highlights the thoughts of a number of students, through interview quotes, on their choice of program.

Table 4: Research participants' comments about choosing their program of study

Research participants' comments about choosing their program of study

Participant F	I don't have to go travel abroad. I have the university [here] which has...a great history...they are all having a great system. They know what they do...and what they want from the staff or students. [The chosen branch campus in Qatar] specifically plays a huge role because the four majors are related to the importance of gas and petroleum here in Doha, because...petroleum [engineering], basically, it takes the place where there is petrol and mechanical designs with the electrical [engineering]. And chemical [engineering], like, follows the process.
Participant M	I was wondering, what do the Arabs have to do here? And that's how I got to know about Education City [and its programs].
Participant A	I thought it was a bit of [a] hassle, and not to say that their [Qatar University's] education is not as good, but I've I felt that, here, I would

	be exposed and introduced to more opportunities.
Participant C	Normally our countries start [their own schools], but what if they want to start an American style education system?...Here it's like, okay...let's have a business school, let's have a medical school, [and] let's all try to [do it] all at once. That was kind of interesting, cause not all other countries would do that. That takes a lot of commitment. That's commitment.

The ability to be a part of a Western system of education at home seemed to be a theme shared by each student. Participant F considered an option to go abroad but instead chose to attend one of the Western universities in Education City due to the engineering programs being offered. The student noted that the programs highlight the significance of Qatar's natural resources and the need for qualified individuals to work in these selective engineering fields. The importance of these types of programs is echoed by Participant M in Table 4. Identifying programs that fit each student is an important part of the educational discovery process.

Some students also voiced a concern about choosing to attend their in-country university, Qatar University. As referenced by Participant A, the education being offered by Qatar University was not the problem per se, but instead its lack of opportunities and limited exposure to better learning environments, compared to the schools and programs being offered at Education City. The desire for a consistent learning experience seemed to help students stay focused and on-track to complete their degrees. In comparing Qatar University to Education City, another student noted that "my friends in QU are a bit lost, like, they don't have an idea when they are graduating . . . because they don't plan things, but for us [at Education City] the plan is here we know what we are taking." The consistency of education was noted by many students as an important motivation to want to attend one of the Western universities in Education City.

Along with programmatic consistency, Participant C mentioned the notion of commitment as a motivational factor to want to attend a school at Education City instead of Qatar University. The commitment by the universities to offer a unique, Western-style atmosphere in a dedicated branch campus building seems to be desirable to students. Another participant offered the following comparison to the programming offered by Qatar University, noting:

QU [Qatar University] is like a school. It's not college life. You go there, you study, and then you go home and that's it. But here at [one of the branch campuses], there are, like, events. I don't know, it is a different life from what we had.

The overall educational environment and program of study is an important consideration for native Qatari students choosing to attend a Western university branch campus. As mentioned previously, these students look to be a part of a program that will lend weight to their career after graduation in preparation for joining the workforce, expose them to inclusive opportunities and activities, and give them an authentic, Western university cultural experience similar to the home campus. Qatar has shown a commitment to these ideas by facilitating the invitations of the Western universities to develop the branch campuses at Education City. Those schools, in turn, offer students elite-level programs of study that can prepare the students for joining the country's small workforce. The students value the importance of choosing these programs without the need to study abroad and leave their homes.

Theme 3: Perceived Student Experience

The perceived student experience is another important factor when looking at what led students to attend one of the Western universities in Qatar. The participants shared perspectives on how the student experience offered by each school influenced their decision to attend, and offered examples of how they coped with these experiences. The quotations from the interview data in Table 5 suggest how students perceive the influence of student experience on their decisions to attend a Western university in their home country.

Table 5: Examples of interviewees' comments about perceived student experience

Examples of interviewees' comments about perceived student experience

Participant F	As a student I want a place where I am comfortable in where there is a system...where I feel like all my rights are kept. If I went and [told] them, "I don't like this or the professor was not fair with me", they will listen to me; it is more about [the] perfect educational system that will provide me the real academic experience that I deserve as human being.
Participant M	I feel much [more] secure here [with my rights], and my major [was] the primary reason [I was] interested here...I think I made the right decision.
Participant A	You have to pay attention to class and there [is] no room to daydream . . . and another thing is that you have to engage in the conversation, and you are able to engage in the conversation.
Participant B	I like the atmosphere that we have and [I] like that we are close to other universities; I had a mixed gender education [with] the kind of people that I interacted with, so I felt like here it would kind of...like, fit more.

The first student in Table 5 describes the importance of the student experience and how being comfortable in a dedicated educational system is important for the learning process. A general feeling of satisfaction was also shared about how students' social and religious rights are respected among the staff and faculty, and this was reinforced by Participant M. Concerns relating to the educational environment are a struggle for some families who want to give students the freedom to choose where they

want to study, but want them to stay in a familiar environment respectful of the culture. In this case, the ability to communicate effectively and share concerns with professors is noted as a positive student experience, and one that highlights how the education system provides a real and authentic academic experience within the culture.

Another student commented on the experience, or atmosphere, of the Western university, and was positive about the closeness of the other Western universities in Education City. Participant B defined the atmosphere as a positive mixed-gender environment that matched her past experiences in a similar type of setting. Familiarity with interactions in a mixed-gender environment and other social norms prepared the student for the type of educational environment found at Education City, and this was noted by the student as being a fit.

A mixed-gender experience was not the norm among students from more conservative families. However, some families seem open to the possibility of allowing their children to attend one of the schools at Education City, given the investment by the Qatar Foundation and the priority of educational reform championed by His Heiness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al-Thani and Her Heiness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned.

Participant A described the mixed environment and student experience in a different way: learning through classroom engagement. Paying attention and interacting with the instructor, as well as other classmates, is seen as positive by her and not always experienced at other schools in Qatar. Given that most Qatari schools are segregated and the interaction between students kept to a minimum, choosing to attend one of the Western universities offers a unique learning environment, one where students must

communicate and interact in order to complete certain assignments and group work. This type of interaction is not always embraced by all Qatari students, given varied family backgrounds and feelings concerning the mixed environment. Nevertheless, students are encouraged within the academic program to work together on projects, while maintaining a respect for each other's religious and social boundaries, and students see this feature of a Western education as positive. The overall positive feeling of the mixed-environment was shared by both male and female participants.

The notion of perceived student experience is an important consideration for understanding what led students to attend one of the schools at Education City, as religious and social norms fluctuate throughout the Middle East. As noted in Chapter 2, reforms undertaken by numerous Middle Eastern countries have begun to change the rights of women and other minorities, and have given these groups access to new opportunities that were otherwise reserved exclusively for men. These reforms are being enacted with respect to the cultural and social guidelines set forth in Islam, and this has opened the door for students to gain access to educational opportunities that may not have been previously attainable. The Western universities invited to be a part of Education City show respect for these cultural and social norms, offering a respectful and safe learning environment for native students to engage with each other in various learning scenarios. The positive experiences noted by students are shared with peers and others interested in attending these universities, and have given Education City a respectable reputation for quality education throughout the region.

Theme 4: Influence of Sponsorship/Employment

The influence of sponsorship for employment is the final factor to consider when looking at what led students to consider attending one of the Western universities in Qatar. As a matter of practice, Qatari companies often sponsor the entire educational financial obligation of native students, which often includes a guarantee of employment after graduation. This motivates the student to choose a program of study that fits the sponsoring company's area of focus, and gives them an additional incentive to finish their program. Students are often introduced to possible job scenarios by means of specialized internships with the sponsoring company, and these typically lead to similar positions upon graduation. The interview quotes in Table 6 describe how participants view the role of sponsorship when making their choice to study at one of the Western universities.

Table 6: Examples of interviewees' comments about sponsorship and employment

Examples of interviewees' comments about sponsorship and employment

Participant E	So there is [a] better chance of getting promoted and such, and gaining experience and opportunities there [at my school], which I do have [now]. My experience here has led me to think over a lot of things.
Participant F	I will get [a] good sponsorship; I will get great job afterwards, and [a] great salary.
Participant B	I look at my friends that are graduating from [another school in Education City], the kind of work opportunities that they are doing; the kind of jobs that they are doing is not what I thought I would be doing; Yeah, I have a sponsor.

The possibility of securing a promotion or a better position is described by Participant E as a reason for wanting to attend one of the schools at Education City, because the student assumes that the opportunities and experience being gained are uniquely tied to the programs being offered at the Western universities. This in turn has led the student to weigh various decisions that could impact other job prospects after he

graduates. Participant F shared a similar statement about her decision to attend and graduate, realizing that a good sponsorship could be attained, followed by a good job and salary. For those students who did not receive a sponsorship immediately prior to attending the university, some felt there was a better chance to receive one after graduation from one of the Western universities, given the strength of the academic program and other experiences offered.

Along with the hope of promotion and high salaries, students also described a certain amount of pride in their program and the resulting access to work opportunities. Participant B compared herself to peers attending a different Western university at Education City, and expressed genuine surprise about having the same access to jobs. The feeling shared by the student seemed to indicate an increase in self-esteem that may not have been present before, which then caused the student to consider options that may not have been previously possible. Several administrators also offered similar views concerning student access to jobs, and the role that the Qatari government has played in the process. This was described by one Western administrator in the following way:

His Highness and Her Highness had enough insight to understand that when you have a small work force you have to be able to capitalize on every Qatari, so men and women are going to have to work to help develop this country.

With more native Qatari students joining the workforce, having a system in place that is ready to accept them and their abilities will help them be successful in their transition from school to work. Another Western administrator relates this process in the following way:

I think that the job market, the industry, and business[es] out there need to also understand [the type of student] being produced here [...], the capability of the student that is graduating from these schools, and how [to] also work with us to help them be placed in relevant positions.

Building on existing partnerships between businesses and the Western universities in Education City may help increase opportunities and sponsorships for students, as well as better prepare them for jobs they might attain after graduation. As mentioned previously, growing economic capacity is an important consideration for Qatar, given its small population and workforce. As it relates to its Education plan, Qatar's Vision 2030 focuses on the country's workforce, describing it as "capable and motivated":

Increased and diversified participation of Qataris in the workforce through:

- Broad investments in certification and training programs by public and private institutions
 - Incentives for Qataris to enter professional and management roles in business, health and educational sectors
 - High quality training opportunities for all citizens, corresponding to their ambitions and abilities
 - Increased opportunities and vocational support for Qatari women
- Targeted Participation of Expatriate Labor
- Recruitment of the right mix of expatriate labor, protecting their rights, securing their safety, and retaining those who are outstanding among them.

(General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2013)

The changing social and religious climates in Qatar suggest that opportunities are increasing for native students to become successful members of the workforce. This is particularly true for women and other minorities who in the past have not had the same access enjoyed by men. Education City has given students a valuable option for study and sponsorship possibilities. As the Qatari government continues reforms and encourages the implementation of the Vision 2030 plan, workforce capacity-building in areas of need will include native Qatari students, focused on engineering, health, and other professional services.

Summary of Findings for Research Question #1

This section described the findings related to the analysis of themes from participant responses related to the following research question: *What led students to study in a Western University?* Participants discussed factors that influenced them to choose to attend a Western university in Education City, and quotations from the interview data centered on themes related to the role of family, program of study, perceived student experience, and factors concerning employment and job sponsorship. Some participants described how families encouraged them to make their own decisions about their education, while several remained concerned about outside influences potentially affecting their culture and beliefs. When choosing a program of study, participants tended to choose an academic major that would lend weight to their careers after graduation, without requiring them to leave home. Students sought out a university experience that would be sensitive to cultural and social norms, and offer a respectful and safe learning environment to engage with other students. And increased student engagement, along with the prestige of the Western universities, was an important

consideration for students looking to join the workforce upon graduation and contribute immediately to the national economy. The next section will present findings from research question two, which examined how students describe their educational experience attending a Western University.

Research Question #2: Group Interactions and the Educational Experience

The second research question of this study was: *How do students describe their educational experience in Qatari schools compared to their Western education experience in the American universities that have been transplanted in their countries in the form of branch campuses?* It is helpful to understand what types of interpersonal experiences the native students are having at their chosen schools, and how this could influence their decision to attend. The factors that they describe could offer insight into various cultural and religious considerations that may have altered their learning experiences and caused them to make changes in learning style. The four main motivating factors or themes identified in this study through the analysis of the interview data include changes in academic projects, concerns about culture, changes in learning systems, and participation in extra-curricular activities.

Theme 1: Changes Associated with Academic Projects

The changes that students had to make in order to complete academic projects is an important factor when looking at how students perceived their experience in attending one of the Western universities in Qatar. The participants described changes that occurred when working in small groups on school-assigned projects. Some of their comments are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Examples of interviewees' comments about academic projects

Examples of interviewees' comments about academic projects

Participant C	Last semester for a chemistry lab we had to change partners every week so you didn't work with the same person, so you just needed guys switching with the guys and the girls switching with the girls [and] that was just awkward.
Participant A	You need to listen to other people's ideas, not just because your idea is not necessarily the best or any of the best. So what we had trouble with in our freshman year [was] understanding each other's [ideas] and it wasn't just me...it was everyone all together.
Participant D	I am a shy person, so I don't think it is going be easy...but if I want to be successful I must overcome [a fear of working with others]. So you kind of have to do things that you have to do and get it over it.
Participant G	I got to know the students more, and the students here are really competitive if you don't know what to expect from them, and this is one of the reasons for the drama that has happened and which made me, like, back off [from certain interactions]. Even my parents weren't concerned about [interacting with others because] I am here to study [and] I don't think it matters...who I study with.
Participant H	If there is a distance between you and me, or you and my friend, or me and my friend or whatever; its fine, everything is fine.

The first student in Table 7 described feelings experienced in a constantly changing group-work scenario encountered in class, because the student assumes that partners would stay the same for all class projects. The cause of the student's awkwardness, though, is related to partnering in mixed gender groups, a scenario that the student was unprepared for prior to arriving at the university. Participant A also shared an awareness concerning student communication, articulating a need to listen to others ideas while in a mixed environment. This student, though, acknowledged a need to be cognizant of personal shortcomings and show a willingness to consider the ideas of other group members. Given the patriarchal nature of Qatari culture, as mentioned previously, showing a willingness to allow others to assume leadership roles in small group settings does not come easily for students, especially males. As more progressive reforms are enacted in Qatar around the Nation Vision 2030, students may be engaged in new

working groups with evolving leadership opportunities that could frequently put them in mixed groups.

For some students, it may be difficult to operate within a mixed learning environment after many years within the Qatari culture. Participant D in Table 7 articulates this concern, yet acknowledges that in order to be successful the notion of being hesitant when working with other students must be overcome. Another student echoed this idea, and offered encouragement to get to know the other ideas of students, despite possible parental concern about being in mixed groups. Most students agreed that engaging with other students in small group work was challenging, but recognized that the ability to work together would be a valuable asset after degree completion in any sponsored work environment.

One final quote in Table 7 by Participant H indicates that cultural respect was still common among students, regardless of projects that were assigned. As the quote suggests, established boundaries are still common between students, and these are accepted out of respect for social and religious expectations in Qatar.

Attending a Western university brings about many changes, especially when Qatari students are asked to work together in mixed-gender groups to complete academic projects. Students who come from a segregated learning environment with limited exposure to mixed-gender groups may find operating within small groups difficult. Students who were willing to listen to other group members, share ideas, and actively engage in projects were positive about their experiences and aware of strategies to be successful. As enrollment at the Western universities increases, students will continue to

work together on academic projects and gain exposure to new ideas within mixed-gender groups.

Theme 2: Cultural Concerns

Student concern about changes in culture is another important factor when looking at how students perceived their experience in attending one of the Western universities in Education City. Participants described cultural concerns in the context of religion, social scenarios experienced, and the overall environment within the universities. Some of their comments are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Examples of interviewees' comments about cultural concerns

Examples of interviewees' comments about cultural concerns

Participant F	They [families] are wrong...wrong that society won't really develop without both roles [of] female and male regardless where they study because we all...mostly, we are all Muslims, so we have the same...morals, traditions, what we believe in. [. . .] We know what is right and what is wrong, so why do we be afraid of this? Like in Islam, Prophet Mohammed said that long time ago: "It is okay if it is an education; it is okay like to have females and males in the same place; it is okay...they are educating themselves." And our religion actually tells us you should be educated...educated from being a child until you pass away.
Participant B	I think this idea of people not interacting with others, especially for the girls and guys, some of them haven't because of family; the girl for example, her parents wouldn't like it if she was talking to guys, and I think that's not something the university can change.
Participant D	We know what we should we do, and the males know what they should do. We [have] our lives and they have their lives, so everybody looks at their own life.
Participant E	They [students] are kind of examining themselves and their own beliefs and such in the process.
Participant F	I really appreciate my culture but on the other hand...it is not really giving much, like some of the families [don't] really give much importance [to] education.
Participant A	There are more girls than guys, especially Qatari girls [at Education City]. I think you, or we, will see this impact in the upcoming years when we graduate and when we take [our] place in the work force, so I think it

	is a part of the positive change [in culture].
Participant C	I think...it just feels like they [administrators of the branch campuses] want to change it, to make it more like a [Qatari] environment with all the things going on. I mean, they have [events] that were last semester and a lot of things that just try to influence the Qatari culture [into] the American one, but there [are] a lot of bombardments.

Participant F describes how society and familial beliefs are an influence on the overall culture students experience while attending the university. The student challenged traditional thinking of how families interpret the roles of men and women in education based on Islamic teachings, and shared a unified belief in working together without fear of betraying those teachings. The attributed reference to the Prophet Mohammed was a direct statement about how some students feel their role in higher education is evolving as cultural changes are taking place within Qatar. The notion of a type of ‘universal’ education meant for all students stems from Mohammed’s teachings and, as the quote suggests, is a strong belief of some students. Participant B articulated a similar argument about the culture experienced at the university, and attributed a concern about the culture instilled by parents as being difficult for the university to change. Other quotes in Table 8 acknowledged that some students are beginning to assess their own lives and beliefs concerning their culture as it pertains to attending a Western university, and that throughout this process students seem to respect the choices made by others.

One quote by Participant F shared in Table 8 indicates another perspective on culture, one where respect is shared but downplayed by certain families. As the quote suggests, culture is acknowledged as a driving force for decision-making in family units, yet when education and decisions about learning environments are considered, students often experience difficulty in bringing about change in conventional beliefs.

Finally, several quotes in Table 8 describe views of the overall environment at Education City, and how some students see cultural changes taking place. Participant A acknowledged a change in overall attendance and culture, noting that more girls than guys are choosing to attend the Western universities. The student suggested this might be a positive change for women in the coming years, after many of these students have graduated and joined the workforce. And finally Participant C described the environment for Qatari students as it pertains to planned events sponsored by the universities. While seeming to share a positive perspective on the respect given to the Qatari culture, the student offered concern about possible over-influence of the American culture on Qatari culture. For some students, this could be felt as overbearing and a domineering posture when implemented without concern for the native culture.

Cultural considerations for Qatari students attending a Western university continue to evolve. While most changes are seen as positive, some concern remains about the extent to which the universities are implementing change and encouraging native students to interact in a relatively new social environment. Societal changes, religious beliefs, and familial concerns all weigh into the Qatari culture, and influence student choice. As the country continues to implement new changes around the Nation Vision 2030, students have begun to recognize changes concerning their role and expectations within society. This is a new process of self-discovery for some, attempting to balance traditional beliefs with progressive Western culture. As students negotiate these changes, the effects may be felt nationally as students graduate and join the Qatari workforce. It is unclear what immediate impact this may have on culture in Qatar, but students

acknowledged a desire to embrace these changes while still being respectful of Islam and traditional religious beliefs.

Theme 3: Changes in Learning Environment

Qatari students also described their educational experience attending a Western university in terms of changes within their learning environment. Participants discussed communications with professors and changing assignment expectations as an influence on their overall experience in several ways, as illustrated by the quotations presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Examples from interviewees' about changes in learning environment

Examples from interviewees' about changes in learning environment

Participant F	The challenging part was actually the English terms, so I had to translate some English terms that I did not know. The teaching style, or the learning style, is different because here I have to pay attention, go home, [and] study again.
Participant E	You have to learn this stuff, but at the same time you have [to] learn the professor...if you want to get an A you have to know the professor that will give it to you.
Participant A	He [the professor] was very open to our new ideas, and we loved to [go] to his office and talk about brainstorming ideas, and [talk] about all the different opportunities there are in the business. I think my experience here not just contributed to my knowledge, but it also shifted the way I think now, meaning that I'm not only exposed to my major [but also other ideas].
Participant B	I am an extrovert, and I love talking to people and I ask questions and I discuss [things] in class. But I know a lot of other people that are very, very much introverts and they don't talk in class, and the professors still try to get discussions out of them.

The students shared a variety of perspectives on their learning experiences, both personally as well as when interacting with others. Participant F talked about the challenge of language, and its effect on how concepts were learned. When coupled with a learning system change, the student noted a new realization of what was being expected

in order to succeed. In this particular case, the realization was a greater need for concentration and consistency in study habits. Participant E took the idea of learning changes a step further, and linked the changes with knowledge of professors and their particular instructional style. This student surmised that it is not enough just to know the content, but equally important to learn about the professor, the style of instruction, and what strategies could be effective in order to receive a positive grade. The ability to reach out and interact with professors was noted by other students as a positive influence of attending the Western universities. Participant A described this interaction as being “open” with a willingness to consider new ideas related to the student’s particular field of interest. Students also cited a need to successfully negotiate a change in interpersonal communication with a professor in order to be successful in their academic program. This process is not easy for students who may have come from a different learning background or segregated school system, but is seen as necessary for successful completion of their degree program.

Finally, several students offered unique perspectives on how they see themselves and other students negotiating changes within the learning environment. Participant A shared how the learning experience has contributed to overall knowledge gained, and shifted the way that she thought about the concepts learned and how they are applied to the chosen field of study. Some students see the ability to process new ideas beyond what is required for successful degree completion as a desirable trait and a positive influence upon entering the job market. But not all students find this process to be easy. Differences between students who are extroverted verses those who are more reserved in their interactions were mentioned by Participant B. She noted that the extroverts seem to

have little difficulty interacting in class, but the introverted students have to be drawn into discussions by professors. Because these students seem to be negotiating their own individual learning systems changes, they haven't had the opportunity to consider how to apply those new changes to their degree program and prospective job environment. Professors are noted as having an important influence on how students negotiate these changes, and the entire process varies per student depending on past experience and prior learning environments. The ability to overcome these changes, however unfamiliar, may be the key to successful degree completion and negotiation of new learning systems for these Qatari students.

The ability to successfully negotiate changes in the learning environment will continue to be an important influence on Qatari students as they complete their degree programs at one of the Western universities in Education City. From differences in terminology and language to the interaction between professors, students are being challenged to cope with concepts that may be unfamiliar and new to their culture. Understanding professors is seen as a way to increase awareness of teaching styles that, in some cases, may increase the chance for a better grade. And while every student experiences changes in their learning system differently, some view the change as a way to shift thinking and consider new ideas. Even though some students are introverted and struggle to interact with others, the ability to overcome the learning system changes could define how well these students succeed beyond their degree program. This could serve as an important model for other Qatari students looking to attend one of the Western universities who are unsure about the learning experience.

Theme 4: Extra-Curricular Activities

When considering their educational experience attending one of the Western universities in Education City, Qatari students also mentioned how participation in extra-curricular activities may have affected their learning and interaction with others. For the purposes of this study, *extra-curricular* is defined as activities and events, either academic or athletic, which occur outside of instructional times. Students shared differing perspectives on extra-curricular participation, as demonstrated in Table 10.

Table 10: Examples from interviewees' about experiencing extra-curricular activities

Examples from interviewees' about experiencing extra-curricular activities

Participant E	They [Qatari students] are not freely embracing that side [Western-style events]. It is very rare to see them even attend events.
Participant F	If I was in [an] activity, it is fine with me, but I don't [like] activities to include live music or things not appropriate.
Participant B	I wouldn't talk to people, not because I think there is something wrong with them, but because we don't get the opportunity. We don't see each other after classes, for example, but if we have an event, then yeah, okay, we get together [and] talk.

Judgments about participating in extra-curricular activities vary among students, and in some cases may be influenced by family, cultural concerns, or gender. According to Participant E in Table 10, Qatari students do not want to participate in events that are offered, and in many cases choose not to attend. The lack of student participation is viewed as not embracing the Western culture, even though the activities are taking place in an environment that is cognizant of Islamic beliefs and culture. Participant F also expressed willingness to be a part of events, but voiced concern about the cultural appropriateness of certain activities. For this student, the activity should exclude live music or other things that could be seen as inappropriate. Students overall seemed willing

to consider participation in events that interested them, but desired events that were culturally appropriate and sensitive to their religious beliefs.

Another student shared an interesting perspective about culture and student interaction related to activities. Participant B noted that students do not often talk to one another outside of classes, unless it is for a particular project or other hosted activity. Extra-curricular events are one way that students are able to connect with each other; they give students a chance to talk outside of a formal learning environment. The student expresses the belief that there is not an unwillingness to talk to others, but rather a lack of events that draw students together for social interaction. This notion was affirmed by other students, who saw the events that were offered as important for social interaction and for rounding out their educational experience.

Based on participant feedback, extra-curricular events seem to play an important role in the education experience associated with attending one of the Western universities. These activities could be seen as a way for Qatari students to get together and talk outside of the formal classroom environment, thereby encouraging participation in what some classify as Western-leaning activities. In many cases, students who attended a segregated primary school are unfamiliar with interacting with students of the opposite gender, and these types of activities offer a more casual environment for students to interact with each other. Sensitivity to certain styles of events that could include music or dancing is still prevalent within the culture, and students choose whether or not to participate based on the type of activities offered. Extra-curricular events, generally, however, seem to be an important part of the school experience for Qatari students based on the data analyzed from this study, and increased participation may help encourage

further group interaction and foster new ways for students to communicate with each other.

Summary of Findings for Research Question #2

This section discussed findings related to the analysis of themes from participant responses related to the following research question: *How do they describe their educational experience in Qatari schools compared to their Western education experience in the American universities that have been transplanted in their countries in the form of branch campuses?* Participants offered a variety of perspectives related to their interpersonal experiences attending one of the Western universities in Education City. Interview data focused on how students perceived changes related to academic projects, concerns about academic culture, changes in learning systems, and their perception of extra-curricular activities. Most students had to consider the changes related to working within a mixed-gender environment, while at the same time exhibiting an openness to consider new ideas and work together on projects. Working within the Western academic culture meant that students had to negotiate changes in societal and familial beliefs, where the traditional roles of men and women continue to evolve based on current national reforms. Students are also being challenged to cope with concepts that may be unfamiliar and new to their culture, and this has caused some to dramatically adjust their learning processes. And finally, student participation in extra-curricular activities is challenging traditional views on mixed-gender interaction. Students see these extra-curricular activities as a valuable part of the Western university learning experience, but not all students are comfortable participating unless they feel their culture and religion is being respected. The next section will present findings from research

question three, which investigated the adjustments students had to make in their attempts to be a successful in a Western university system.

Research Question #3: Adjustments Promoting Student Success

The third research question of this study was: *What adjustment problems (family, religion, etc.), if any, have the students had to confront and how have they managed these problems?* As students make decisions on where to study, it can be helpful to consider what adjustments they make in order to become a successful student in the Western university system. Determining the adjustments that native Qatari students have shared together while attending a Western university may help to increase an understanding of their overall educational experience and show how management of these issues could relate to academic success within each program. Data analysis from this study identified several themes related to adjustments and influences on students, and these include adjustments to culture, co-educational concerns, and changes in personal learning processes.

Theme 1: Personal Cultural Adjustments

Earlier in this study, Qatari students described culture in terms of religion, experienced social scenarios, and the overall environment within the Western universities in Education City. Culture was analyzed within the scope of group interactions, and the data suggested that students were concerned about what influence society and familial beliefs have on the overall culture they experience while attending the university. The data analysis also suggests that students have a more narrow view of culture, specifically relating to how they individually cope with personal cultural changes while attending the Western universities. Table 11 contains quotations from the interview data that suggest

how students are coping with personal cultural adjustments while attending one of the Western universities at Education City.

Table 11: Examples from interviewees' of personal cultural adjustments

Examples from interviewees' of personal cultural adjustments

Participant C	When I came here [to Education City] I was very Western. Everyone was [saying], "He is so [Western]. Why is he so American? He's Qatari. He should be dressed appropriately, he should do this, he should do that." ...But my social group, the people I hang out with, my friends, they're like me. They're pretty much Western, but we still have that connection with [the] culture. But I don't bring it to school because it's an American school...because it's who I am [with] my friends.
Participant F	Some of them [other Arab students] do not really know how our culture [is] here [at Education City]. Like for me, I don't believe in [certain] traditions or cultures. I believe in my religion and many of our cultural things,...cultural perspectives, are not really correct [and do not] follow the Islamic rules.
Participant E	I saw some of my friends who have become very religious [and] some become not so religious, but it seems there are shifts going on.

Participants seemed to consider a variety of adjustments when choosing to attend one of the Western universities in Education City. In the case of Participant C, the adjustment concerned appropriate dress related to nationality. He felt that, because he was Qatari, he needed to be dressed in specific attire respectful of the culture. But because of prior experience in a Western school setting, the student chose to wear Western attire while attending Education City, and other students questioned this choice. The student went on to explain how he interacts within his own social group, and how he copes with adjustments made. Even though he's chosen to study at a Western University and adopt similar customs while attending, the student understood the differences between his native culture and the chosen culture of the school. Maintaining cultural

identity while choosing to attend a Western university can be an important consideration for Qatari students, and one that may also produce family and societal concerns.

Participant F described having to adjust to varying cultural perspectives among other students. As mentioned earlier, the tenants of Islam permeate daily life for families in Arab countries and can influence government, family life, and expectations within social groups. Students are taught to be respectful of other cultures, while at the same time maintaining their own religious beliefs. In the case of this student, there was recognition of a lack of cultural understanding from students of other nationalities. Yet despite this lack of understanding, the student offered a unique personal belief statement, and shared that certain cultural norms may not be appropriate while attending Education City. Despite not personally believing in certain traditions and cultures, the student chose to let religion be a focus and did not let other outside influences change how culture was viewed. Instead of taking an all-in approach to Western culture, some students adjust to a new cultural setting by taking a more conservative view of their own beliefs. They are respectful of their surroundings in the Western university, but remain cognizant of the limits of their own beliefs.

Finally, Participant E indicated that other students may be facing choices concerning their religious beliefs. The quote suggests that students may be shifting belief patterns about how religious to be in society and that these types of shifts may be occurring more than previously thought. The progressive nature of Qatar's reforms concerning women and Western culture may be directly influencing students throughout their educational experience, and the long-term effects of these changes remain unclear.

Students are experiencing a variety of changes while attending a Western university, and personal cultural adjustments are an important consideration for students when making their educational choice. Beyond attire and other visible changes, cultural and religious concerns seem to influence the overall student experience for both male and female students. Qatar's progressive reforms are opening many doors of opportunity for students, but the data suggests that students continue to be sensitive about things that could impact their religious beliefs. Along with this increased awareness, students described a healthy respect for classmates from other cultures, and are willing to make personal cultural adjustments as necessary to be academically successful.

Theme 2: Co-Educational Adjustments

Another important area of adjustment for Qatari students concerns co-education activities and interactions beyond those experienced directly in the classroom. For some students, the choice to attend one of the Western universities in Education City may be the first opportunity for them to interact with the opposite gender having only had prior experience within segregated school systems. For other students, parental restrictions on peer interactions may have prevented interaction with the opposite gender prior to attending. The quotations from the interview data in Table 12 describe how students have had to adjust to a variety of co-educational interactions and activities.

Table 12: Examples from interviewees' of co-educational adjustments

Examples from interviewees' of co-educational adjustments

Participant C	You see people who come from segregated schools to mixed ones [and] they still have that mentality of joining to their cliques.
Participant F	What I see from [the] Islamic point of view, it is okay for me to talk with a guy if it is about, uh...[a] study group or [to] discuss [or do] homework, but from [the] traditional point of view, no, they [my parents] won't let me talk [to boys] because [they will ask] 'how come you talked to a guy

	that you really don't know?', even though we are just doing the homework.
Participant B	I think this idea of people not interacting with others, especially for the girls and guys, some of them haven't because of family. The girl, for example, her parents wouldn't like it if she was talking to guys, and I think that's not something the university can change.
Participant F	They [other Qataris] are wrong...wrong that society won't really develop without both roles like female and male regardless [of] where they [studied] because we all...mostly we are all Muslims so we have the same...morals, traditions of what we believe in.

Interactions between groups were one area of concern for some students. The first student in Table 12 commented on differences between students from segregated schools versus those from mixed schools. The assumption was that students tend to join cliques of students from similar learning environments, and that interpersonal relationships are more difficult as a result of those groups. The concern is that students may want to stay in more comfortable environments instead of branching out to interact with new people.

The other students in Table 12 shared ideas about direct personal interactions between male and female students. Participant F shared the perspective from the Islamic point of view that it is permissible to talk to the opposite gender while studying or in a learning setting, but that the traditional view of interaction between males and females does not occur outside of the home. The concern for parents, as shared by the student, is that interacting with the opposite gender may lead to unwarranted situations of temptation between students. Likewise, Participant B echoed this idea, sharing the familial concern related to interactions between males and females, but cautioning that the university can do little to change this perception. As these quotes suggest, students are making adjustments in the way they interact between each other as influenced by parents and

other family members, both inside and outside of the cultural environment of the Western universities.

Some students, though, voiced concern about the strictness of the culture. Participant F seemed to challenge the role of religion and culture in Qatar, suggesting that society may not properly develop without the participation of both men and women. The inherent assumption is that adjustments can be made between genders that are still respectful of the traditions of Islam that will not adversely affect others within society. This would seem to be a more progressive view of the role of Islam within Qatar, compared with traditional cultural views concerning the roles of men and women.

Other participants offered suggestions about how to approach a change in interaction among male and female students who are not accustomed to communicating together. The quotes presented in Table 13 highlight these ideas.

Table 13: Examples from interviewees' about changing interactions

Examples from interviewees' about changing interactions

Participant A	You are eager, you want to give your idea, [and] you want to pitch your story; but the thing is, you need to take a step back and give other people the chance to even explain what they have. Because only then you can come up with a better version of your own story or [share] your own decisions.
Participant D	We know what [we all should] do and the males know what they should do. We [have] our lives, and they have their lives, so everybody looks at their own life.

These students suggest being respectful of different ideas might be a prudent first step when interacting with others. Due to shifting gender roles within Islamic culture, the traditional views of males and females may be changing to give students new ways of working together and sharing new ideas. By being patient and allowing others to have a

voice, this may increase communication among students and allow for more meaningful decision-making. But this may not be easy for every student to grasp. Participant D cautioned that even though everyone knows what to do and how to approach situations, the more prudent choice might be to let everyone make personal decisions about how far to go in each interaction. This may allow for a more gradual approach to interpersonal adjustments between students, and not make situations awkward for those who may not be as comfortable interacting with the opposite sex.

For some students, attending the Western university may be their first experience interacting with members of the opposite sex, especially in situations informally outside of the classroom. While there is no hard and fast rule to dictate how this interaction should occur, students may make adjustments to their own views of culture and religion as a result of these new interactions. Familial and religious influences are still present as students make these decisions, and could affect how successful students are in negotiating these new learning situations. Students who take a step back and allow others to have a voice in certain situations may find a much easier time balancing co-educational opportunities with traditional cultural viewpoints.

Theme 3: Adjustments in Personal Learning Processes

The final area of adjustment that students had to consider when choosing to attend one of the Western universities involves changes in personal learning processes. As Qatari students transition from segregated and mixed primary school settings to Western learning systems, there are a variety of changes taking place with respect to learning environment, study habits, and overall academic participation. The following quotations in Table 14 offer insights into the kinds of adjustments being made by students choosing

to attend the Western universities at Education City, and what strategies have been considered to foster student success.

Table 14: Examples from interviewees' of changes to personal learning processes

Examples from interviewees' of changes to personal learning processes

Participant H	Managing my time was very different for me. [In] high school I didn't use to spend that much time studying or doing whatever.
Participant A	I think my biggest problem was time management. With that being said, in freshman year we had a lot of time management workshops [to help us].
Participant E	How I got through high school wasn't through paying attention to lectures, so to speak, because...I've been privately tutored all my life. One of the things I suffered from when I got here is that you end up not having the habits you need and the skills to get through [the] university.
Participant M	If you just give yourself over to understanding that you are going to have to be analytical and think about what you are doing good, it's a good time [to] do it [to be successful].

Participants cited time management as one of the most important adjustments that students consider while attending one of the Western universities. For Participant H, the notion of time management was very different in a university setting compared to high school. Several participants noted the rigor between primary schools varied depending on the sponsoring country or organizational oversight. Those students who encountered difficulty upon first arriving at the university are able to make use of Education City's Academic Bridge Program (ABP) to assist with concerns about time management, language, and writing. For some students this is a mandatory program to resolve identified deficits; for others, it can help in the transition between programs. Participants saw the program as a valuable tool in helping them be successful students attending the Western branch campuses. In conjunction with the ABP, time management workshops offered by the institutions were also seen as valuable contributors to student academic

success. These workshops offer an extension beyond the initial ABP program to students who may need additional assistance navigating the academic program during their first year. In addition to the workshops, institutions also offer academic advising or resource offices operated by upper level students, both male and female, in the same academic program that can assist new students. Participants appreciated the ability to interact with peers who have, in some cases, already taken the courses in which they may be struggling.

Aside from time management concerns, the struggle to succeed in the academic program was mentioned by Participant A as being partially caused by a lack of overall knowledge about proper study habits. For students from affluent families like Participant E, private tutors are sometimes arranged to help students make it through primary school. But when those same students reach the university, the tutors are no longer able to assist them in the specialized programs that they have chosen. The assumption is that because the tutors assumed most of the work previously in the primary school setting, the students struggle at the university having to learn on their own outside of class. For these students, the academic resource centers become a valuable part of their educational experience and a place where the students can come to familiarize themselves with how to study.

Finally, one quote in Table 14 indicates one additional notion that students may consider when working through adjustments in their personal learning processes. Participant M suggests that students who shift their thinking into being more analytical and constructive about the work they need to accomplish may be more successful negotiating changes in their learning processes. Instead of fighting the changes, adapting

to new learning methods may bring about more demonstrable changes in study habits and academic projects.

Students choosing to attend of the Western universities in Education City are making adjustments to their personal learning processes in a variety of ways. Most participants cited time management as their main concern, and the ability to attend workshops or the Academic Bridge Program was seen as a positive way to familiarize students with proper study habits in order to be successful in their chosen academic program. Some students attribute the unfamiliarity with good study habits to private tutors, and access to academic resource areas within each university helps bridge the learning gap for students who may be struggling to make learning adjustments. Students who are willing to adjust their work processes and consider new learning approaches may encounter greater success within their chosen major.

Summary of Findings for Research Question #3

This section investigated what adjustments Qatari students have considered in order to become a successful student at a Western university branch campus. The data suggests that participants have a narrow view of culture, relating to how they individually cope with personal cultural changes within an academic setting. For some students, attending a Western university means exposure to a co-education environment and further adjustments to interpersonal communication and group relationships. And finally, attending the Western universities means students have considered adjustments to other personal learning processes, including study habits and time management.

Administrative Perspectives

The qualitative data analysis also considered Administrative perspectives on factors that may be influencing student decision-making and choices to attend one the schools in Education City. Administrators have a unique viewpoint on factors that may influence students, as they observe students outside of the normal classroom setting. The quotations from the interview data presented in Table 15 suggest a number of factors that may be influencing the student decision-making process.

Table 15: Examples from interviewees' concerning factors of influence

Examples from interviewees' concerning factors of influence

Administrator I	We need to do more things together with people from other universities and very strongly, very strongly [this is] said by the students. They write it out, they say it; they say we need to do more things together. I hear strong voices from students saying we need to do more things like this, we need to direct more because it is important to get to know people.
Administrator J	[The students] talk about issues of the day and raise issues, and if there are any, they bring them to me or to the dean or whoever. So we are doing everything we can to encourage student voices to be heard.
Administrator L	I believe there have been people to promote [student communication] now, from what I hear from our students, because sometimes they are not really used to [that].
Administrator K	Yes, they [the students] are involved in decision making about what programs [they want]. They are able to set up and establish their own clubs so it goes through a vetting process.

Administrators seem to acknowledge a strong student desire for collaboration across campuses in Education City based on feedback they have received. Students are communicating this desire in a variety of ways, and, in the case of Administrator I in Table 15, the need for cross-campus collaboration is affirmed as an important part of the student experience while attending the university. The quote suggests that students see a benefit in cross-campus collaboration as a way to further their learning experiences and

interpersonal communication. This is especially unique, given the Qatari student population may not be as familiar with working in typical Western interpersonal groups, with many having only experienced a segregated learning environment.

The campuses in Education City have developed programs and activities for student collaboration and feedback. Administrator J shared an example of this type of activity, one focused on a meeting group with a direct feedback link to school administration. In this particular setting, students meet informally and have a conduit to share feedback on current issues and ideas directly with institutional leaders. The administrators want to hear the student voice, and they see these types of meetings as a valuable way to solicit feedback without using standard feedback tools such as surveys. Administrator L offered a similar view, suggesting that, as extra-curricular activities have begun to promote student communication, they may also be a relatively new experience for Qatari students who have limited prior experience with these types of interactions. Continued participation in these activities may help ease student concern and foster an open environment for communication back to Administrators.

Finally, Administrator K felt that students already have direct influence on certain decision-making processes as a result of communication and feedback. As the quote suggests, students are involved in the vetting and establishment of student groups at one campus, and work with administrators to develop and refine the policy and processes related to formally recognizing students groups.

Another area of administrative influence concerns the relationship between the branch campuses in Education City and the newly formed Hamid Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) structure, which is sponsored and funded through the Qatar Foundation. As

discussed earlier, HBKU was formed to offer a variety of supplemental programs and learning opportunities for students, particular those looking for graduate level programs of study. HBKU describes itself as an “emerging research university building upon unique collaborations with local and international partners...[which] seeks to provide unparalleled opportunities for scholarship, teaching, discovery, and learning for all of its students by an array of interdisciplinary programs” (Hamad Bin Khalifa University, 2013). The exact nature of how HBKU relates to and interacts with the other schools in Education City continues to evolve. At present, HBKU’s support arm includes a variety of student support services as well as the HBKU Student Center. Administrators shared a number of concerns related to the HBKU structure and its effect on students choosing to attend the Western universities in Education City. One Western administrator shared the following thought about the future relationship between HBKU and the branch campuses: “I think 5 years from now, I think we will have more academic programs at HBKU only, and there is going to be...we are going to have just students who are just HBKU.” The assumption is that the relationship between the branch campuses and HBKU will change and become more unified in the degree programs offered. But this may not be a simple process. Without good communication and relationship building between administrators, faculty, and students, a new educational model may not be successful.

One stumbling block to a unified university structure may be the current arrangement between the branch campuses and the Qatar Foundation. Another administrator shared the concern that “HBKU [purports] to be a university. [But] our agreement is with the Qatar Foundation to offer a branch campus; there is no legal agreement with HBKU at the moment.” Each university is invited to establish an

independent branch campus that models the home university in degree program and culture. A shift to a unified university structure could drastically alter the way programs are offered to students and affect the overall cultures that have been developed. The shared feeling among the participating administrators is that there is still a long way to go to work out what the exact campus experience may be in Education City, and this was specifically echoed by Administrator I. But that should not deter the Qatar Foundation from exploring new ways to offer students degree programs that fit the overall mission and goals of Qatar Foundation and the State of Qatar.

Finally, the overall student experience is an important influence on administrators as they work to develop campus programs tailored to each student population. One administrator stated the following perspective:

You will have more students speaking a language that their parents do not understand, and I mean English, and you know, getting used to certain standards that probably parents are not comfortable with, with the gender interaction with all the stuff that is happening. ... That would require actually probably at least in the future to see how parents are responding to the change in life of their students, actually, of their children.

Fostering an environment that is acceptable for students, as well as their parents and family members, may be an important consideration for branch campuses developing programs to promote student success. The schools that successfully offer a unique Western-style learning environment while immersing students in each respective campus culture could serve as model for other schools looking to develop their own branch campus in a foreign country. The ability to operate independently and share traditions and

cultures is strongly desired by the branch campuses in Qatar, along with an arrangement for collaboration to bring each branch together to further the mission of Qatar Foundation and Education City. This collaborative culture is what makes the Education City model stand out within the Middle East, and makes it unique among other countries around the world.

Summary of Results

This chapter presented the findings from the research questions for this study. Qualitative analysis related to research question one resulted in four themes, all of which focused on motivating factors that led students to choose study at one of the Western universities in Doha, Qatar. Participants described how family influenced their decisions about where to study, and expressed concern about outside influences potentially affecting their culture and beliefs. When considering a program of study, students actively sought out a university experience that would be sensitive to cultural and social norms, provide a comfortable and safe learning environment, and actively prepare them to join the local workforce.

Research question two examined how students describe their educational experience, and the resulting four themes focused on factors of influence that contributed to student success. Students considered the effects of a mixed-gender environment, and what strategies were needed to be successful when completing projects. Negotiating changes in societal and familial beliefs was a consistent theme, focused on how the traditional roles of men and women continue to evolve in Qatari society. And along with adjustments in personal learning processes, participation in extra-curricular activities is

changing how students perceive the Western university experience and interact with each other.

And the final research question considered student adjustments related to their educational experience. Participants seemed share a narrow view of their culture, especially with how they cope with personal cultural changes within an academic setting. The exposure to a co-educational environment changes student perception about their university experience and causes further adjustments to interpersonal communication and group relationships. And attending the Western universities means students must consider adjustments to study habits and time management in order to be successful within their chosen academic program. Quotations from the interview data were used to support the findings for each research question. The next chapter will discuss these findings and implications for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In this qualitative study, I examined the relationship that exists between the Western universities that have been transplanted into the country of Qatar and the native students who chose to attend those universities. This chapter summarizes the findings of this study and discusses the implications of this research for Qatar and other countries interested in developing branch campuses from higher education institutions in other countries for their native populations. The significance of the study will also be reviewed and areas of future research will be suggested based on the findings.

Summary of Findings

This study focused on student engagement and the reasons why native students chose to attend a Western university that was invited to join the Education City complex in Doha, Qatar. Findings from my qualitative interviews with students and administrators at Education City in Doha, Qatar, suggest that internal and external motivations, peer group interactions, and personal adjustments are influencing student choice of attending a Western university in their home country. The following sections will summarize the findings and discuss related implications.

Motivations for Student Educational Choice

Previous research suggested that the development of branch campuses in foreign countries could inspire the populace within the host country toward a new commitment around learning and increased dedication to advance new educational processes and programs for native students. In this study, the native Qatari students affirmed the positive impact of the Western university branch campuses at Education City, and voiced

a sense of pride concerning their choice of institution as well as academic program. Despite opportunities to study abroad, students recognized the investment that Qatar was making to the educational system and were encouraged about their employment prospects after graduation as a result of attending one of the Western universities that have been transplanted to Education City. For some students, this latter point included a focus on achieving academic success in pursuit of sponsorship and employment in companies located within Qatar that directly pertained to their academic program of choice. Identifying programs that fit academic interest and national need was noted as an important part of the discovery process for students.

Having the freedom to choose an academic program was of high importance to students, and is suggestive of the progressive cultural changes that are taking place in many Middle Eastern countries, including Qatar. Learning through engagement was noted as a key influence on institutional choice, despite occasional family concerns regarding the mixed gender environment of the Western Universities.

My research also showed that parents and other family members play an important role in motivating students and influencing their choice of academic program. Students described in detail how parents were involved in their decision-making processes about where to study, with conservative families stressing a desire for students to make school choices that would keep them closer to home. While it was important to have the choice of where to study, participants understood parental views about the need for their children to be in a religiously and socially safe learning environment that was respectful of culture and the teachings of Islam. For female students this was especially true. As noted in previous research, Western influence is having a meaningful impact on

educational access for women, and in Qatar, female students shared excitement about their opportunity to learn, graduate, and gain access to the workplace.

Peer Interactions Related to Student Choice

In an effort to better understand the relationship between native students and the transplanted Western Universities in Qatar, I also researched student interactions and how students relate to one another in active learning environments. Areas of influence included work within school-assigned group projects, changes to culture and the classroom environment, and participation in extra-curricular activities. My research found that native Qatari students saw the Western Universities as offering a positive and unique learning environment that was rigorous and challenged them academically and socially. In some cases, though, students with little exposure to Western learning systems encountered difficulties in negotiating changes in interpersonal communication and peer learning groups. They struggled to make adjustments that would make them feel comfortable, and the resulting frustration affected their grades and ability to communicate within formal and informal mixed-group settings.

Students who became aware of changes taking place in their learning environment seemed to find ways to successfully negotiate changes within their peer groups. Not all students expressed comfort in mixed group settings, yet most understood that their ability to work together would lead to success in the workplace when confronted with similar mixed environments. The ability to consider changes within the classroom environment was seen as necessary and a desirable trait that could be adapted when entering the job market. Finally, students seemed willing to consider participation in academic and non-academic extra-curricular activities, but expressed concern that most events were

interpreted as being culturally inappropriate and insensitive to religious beliefs. The events that did not take gender roles related to student interactions into account seemed to undermine the efforts of the Western Universities to encourage group and social interaction.

The Impact of Personal Adjustments on Student Choice

This study investigated personal adjustments students had to confront and make in order to be successful within the academic program at the Western Universities, and my findings indicated that students considered changes within the context of culture, mixed group interactions beyond the formal classroom environment, and in personal learning processes. Students not only actively confronted changes within their cultural spheres, but also weighed those changes against the context of societal and familial pressures that were not always visible. The coping mechanisms that students used to confront these changes varied based on the support structures in place at home and available at each campus. A lack of prior experience in the Western learning culture seemed to limit some students from finding success both interpersonally and within the formal classroom setting.

As students coped with the changes they encountered, the findings suggested that they may be adjusting their study habits and belief patterns in order to reconcile the cultural changes taking place as part of the Western university experience. Although the ABP assisted students in the initial transition between their elementary school environment and the Western Universities, students noted limited engagement with student support services beyond initial attendance in the first year at their chosen Western university and indicated they had to look elsewhere for assistance. The findings indicated

that while the branch campuses offered services to assist with the elementary school transition and adjustments being faced, students who wanted the Western learning experience had to negotiate changes to their study habits and learning systems while still trying to be respectful of the traditions of Islam and expectations within the Islamic culture. Most administrators acknowledged that the successful blending of Western-style learning environments with the tenants of Islamic culture and religion could help students make the adjustments necessary to be successful within the university culture and the academic work offered by the Western branch campuses.

Implications

The following implications can be drawn from this study. First, Qatar's effort to invest in education undoubtedly will continue to have a profound impact on student educational choice. Past studies have focused on international branch campus development and its effects on a host country, but Qatar remains a unique and previously unstudied environment in which the branch campus model has evolved. The development of Education City has fostered tremendous growth in educational offerings for native students within Qatar, and students continue to express excitement about being able to attend the Western university branch campuses. At least the small number of students in this study all acknowledged the investment that Qatar has made in the national educational system by inviting the branch campuses to Education City, and saw the inclusion of the Western branch campuses as valuable. One student highlighted the commitment made by Qatar as a primary reason for attending, noting that in other countries students don't have the same opportunities to attend a Western school. The sense of pride voiced by participants concerning the choice of institution and its related

academic atmosphere could help provide a rationale for and be a catalyst for future branch campus and academic expansion.

Students also viewed the learning environment within the Western universities as positive and unique, with academic programs that were rigorous and challenging both academically and socially. One student shared that the rigors of the academic program do not allow for daydreaming in class, but instead encourage engagement with other students.

A caveat – and a second implication – should be noted here, however: for students with little exposure to Western learning systems, communication and interaction within mixed-gender learning groups and activities were at times difficult to negotiate. For example, a student talked about being shy and having to overcome a fear of working with others in order to be successful. Other students described challenges when participating in extra-curricular activities sponsored by the universities where students were asked to interact together. The resulting inexperience communicating in mixed-gender groups has changed the way some students communicate in academic and social activities, and caused some students to adjust their approach to working in small groups. Future students may also encounter similar difficulties if they do not have a proper understanding of how the Western learning systems work and what is expected of them in order to succeed. More attention to orientating students to a new way of learning could be considered in the future.

Third, students described their experiences in the Western Universities in the context of religion and other social influences. One participant noted that students are examining themselves and their own beliefs as a result of attending the Western

university. Progressive social reforms currently underway within Qatar – including the importation of Western education - are challenging traditional views of gender roles and social interaction, and Qatari families appear to react differently to these changes. One student, for example, shared that not all families are agreed on a mixed environment as found in the transplanted Western universities, despite the parents' obvious support for focus education and studying for a degree. Native students seem willing to embrace changes related to shifting gender roles in order to be a part of the Western university experience, but societal changes, religious beliefs, and familial concerns could continue to weigh on students and influence their choice of where to study. In the case of another student who saw these changes taking place, the only way to understand the changes was to acknowledge that everyone knows what should be done and encourage other students to look at their own lives to determine a proper course of action. Overall, the long-term impact of social reforms on culture in Qatar remains unclear and should be more closely examined

Fourth, the notion of identity discussed previously in Chapter Four is an important cultural variable related to educational choice and its relationship to family cannot be understated. When making decisions about their choice of academic program, students described being influenced by parents and other family members who encouraged academic success along with maintaining their Qatari identity. In the case of one student, family members allowed a choice of where to study but told the student that staying at home and studying in Education City could attain the same level of education offered by an institution somewhere else. Students overall seemed to appreciate the freedom to make their own educational choices and establish their own professional identity. Yet they rely

on the educational experiences of siblings or other family members to give them guidance on making the best choices to succeed at home and in the workplace. For more conservative families, this process can appear to be restrictive, especially for females.

The patriarchal nature of families in Qatar, swayed by culture and the teachings of Islam, will continue to impact the educational choices of native students and cause them to consider changes to how they view their choices to be a part of the Western university experience. One participant viewed this process of choosing a school as difficult, especially for girls, but noted that having the opportunity to study in country has opened doors to other educational possibilities for students. Even though parental advice seemed to be intrusive at times for some students, the ability to have family members involved in the decision-making process will be an important consideration for students choosing to attend one of the Western universities in Education City, and may affect their overall success in their chosen academic program. Inviting families to be included much earlier in the application and orientation process for students may help increase student success in the future. This may be especially true in families with only female students that tend to be more conservative about allowing the student to be exposed to a Western, mixed learning environment.

Fifth, it seemed clear from the perspectives of the administrators interviewed for this study, at least, that native students want improved partnerships between the institutions for increased educational offerings. One administrator, for example, indicated that students have shared with him and his administrative colleagues a desire for Western universities to do more activities together, and this could include both academic and extra-curricular offerings. But the existing long-term contracts under which

the branch campuses operate may prohibit the campuses from forging a more unified university structure with HBKU and the Qatar Foundation in order to more closely integrate activities between the schools. Further development of the HBKU structure, as discussed previously, could include a process for more closely integrating activities between the branch campuses and find a way to streamline core course offerings to students that leverages the current academic offerings between the campuses already existing in Education City.

As curricular offerings are streamlined, the resulting partnerships may allow the Qatar Foundation to invite new Universities to participate in Education City and HBKU and expand program offerings to students. This could increase the educational capacity within Qatar, prepare native students to join the workplace in disciplines not currently offered within the current structure, and offer additional motivation for students to consider attending one of the Western university branch campuses.

Lastly, balancing traditional beliefs with progressive Western culture could be the key to the continued academic success for native students and a driver for continued expansion of the Western branch campus model in other countries. But as mentioned in Chapter Three, the findings from this study cannot be directly applied to other countries, as they are unique to the university model established by the Qatar Foundation in Education City. The lessons learned from the implementation of this particular educational hub, though, may be helpful for other countries looking to increase educational capacity and offer their own students progressive learning opportunities through the academic programs promoted by Western Universities. As it relates to culture

and religion, these strategies may be more easily applied to Islamic countries looking to integrate Western culture with existing social and religious institutions.

For other countries looking to expand their educational programs, one takeaway is the continued development and implementation of culturally appropriate activities could be a catalyst for greater native student participation in social activities. While students noted an appreciation for the unique learning environment offered by the Western universities, some expressed concern about how to negotiate changes between the Western learning environment and their own cultural and religious beliefs, especially when presented with opportunities to interact in learning groups or extra-curricular activities. One participant in particular noted that students are assessing their own lives, actions, and beliefs in the process of interacting with other students in class and with outside activities. Most students shared a desire to take part of these activities, but some were afraid that their actions could be interpreted as being disrespectful of their religion. Universities who sponsor culturally and religiously appropriate academic and non-academic extra-curricular activities within the host country may find increased student motivation to attend these types of activities and interact with their peers.

A second takeaway for other countries looking to expand their educational offerings is to consider establishing a type of learning commons that becomes a chief support mechanism for native students transitioning from in-country primary school systems to a Western university academic system and culture. While Qatar has created the Academic Bridge Program (ABP) to assist students in the transition and bring up baseline student proficiencies in a variety of academic subjects, students report continued difficulties in personal learning processes beyond the transition years. One student shared

that due to being privately tutored in the past, there was a gap in the learning habits and skills needed to be successful in the university that had to be overcome.

After an initial program like ABP, students rely on the support offerings of the individual campuses, whose programs vary in size and scope. Students in this study consistently voiced concern related to successfully negotiating changes in learning and study habits, and found that differences in terminology and language are a challenge to successful degree completion. In the case of one student, the most challenging aspect of the teaching environment was how to translate and understand English terms and what they meant in the learning context. Successfully providing support services that meet the needs of all students could positively affect the overall academic success of native students taking part in the Western academic setting at Education City. Creation of a formal, unified, learning commons where there are consistent offerings in academic student support could help to bridge the learning gap that students are experiencing. Branch campus support services would then be able to come together and determine programs and learning strategies that would be respectful of the culture and religious considerations of the native students, and learn directly from the students what types of support are needed for successful degree completion. Not only does this directly engage with students, but it brings the campuses and sponsoring country together in support of the greater academic mission and motivates the students to want to stay within their chosen academic program.

Countries that are willing to consider these takeaways may find a path forward for successfully integrating systematic educational change involving the development of a Western university branch campus. In Qatar, the Education City structure has been an

important model for other countries looking to establish their own educational hub through participating Western university branch campuses. The desire of the State of Qatar to build educational capacity, the sponsorship of the Qatar Foundation, and the community of invited branch campuses offer other countries a unique perspective on how to build a successful educational hub that meets the immediate needs of a native student population. The lessons learned from Qatar's development of Education City may help other countries avoid similar issues when considering how best to build educational capacity, offer academic programs to enhance the learning potential of the native student population, and motivate the student population to want to stay in their chosen academic program.

Areas of Future Research

This study attempted to address a gap in the available literature concerning student engagement related to attending a Western university, and the results have opened up several possibilities for further research to continue to investigate how students respond to attending a Western university transplanted in their country, the types of adjustments they have to make to be successful, and what motivates them to stay. The hope is that this research may also be a springboard to continue to investigate the efficacy of branch campus development in foreign countries, and its usefulness in preparing students to complete their studies on time and join the local workforce. While onsite I only saw a small glimpse of the relationship that native students have with the Western universities, and my interviews only captured the views of a small portion of the population. Future research opportunities would explore these relationships further, and could include the views and experiences of parents and other family members and since

they are directly involved with the educational choices of the students. I also think the administrative viewpoint could be expanded to include other members of the Supreme Education Council, leadership groups within the Qatar Foundation, and perspectives from teaching faculty onsite. The views from these groups would certainly expand the findings of this research and offer a window into the decision-making process that administrators at the highest levels consider when developing an educational hub and branch campus structure like Education City that seeks to engage with a native student population. Changes continue to occur at a rapid pace, and the impact of the HBKU environment on both the student experience and the relationship between Qatar Foundation and the branch campuses are other areas of consideration for future research.

Given my limited time onsite in Qatar with access to only two of the Western Universities and their students, I would be interested in expanding the scope of this study to include the other Western Universities in Education City and their native student populations. In particular, it would be interesting to compare the experiences of those students to the participants in this study to see if they describe their experiences as similar or different, based on their chosen academic program. An expanded longitudinal look at changes in the student experience would also be of value, and future research could include a look how a small focus group describes their experiences over time from freshman year to senior year. This type of research would take into account how students make adjustments and view their choice to attend the Western university over time, and whether or not their views have shifted as they've gained more experience in the Western culture and academic environment. Future studies could also consider how students grow

accustomed to the Western culture and learning environment, and whether this has caused changes in how they interpret their own cultural and religious beliefs.

I also feel that the cultural and religious impact of these educational changes in Qatar is another area for future exploration. Students described a variety of adjustments they had to make in their personal lives concerning mixed gender interactions and work within small groups, and many of those changes caused them to consider changes in how they see themselves in society and applying the teachings of Islam. Engaging with students post-graduation about how those adjustments have affected their ability to gain success in the workplace may offer additional insight into how they describe their educational experience attending a Western university and the role it played in applying their program of study professionally after graduation.

Finally, I would be interested in exploring whether the experiences shared by the students attending the Western university branch campuses in Education City, Qatar, are similar to that of students in other developing countries who desire or have already established Western branch campuses as part of their national educational system. While the results from this study cannot be directly generalized to other countries given the uniqueness of Qatar's model, I would be interested in discovering how other countries integrate Western education and culture with their own student populations, and whether or not students experience similar influences and adjustments when making their educational choices. It would also be interesting to see whether students grapple with changing views of religion and culture in other countries, or whether this phenomenon is unique to Qatar.

Conclusion

This study considered how native students responded to attending what is essentially an American university on foreign soil at Education City in Doha, Qatar. My research investigated perceptions of existing relationships between the Western universities that have been transplanted into the country and the native students who choose attend those universities. In particular, the study considered what is motivating students to choose to attend a Western university, how they describe their experiences while attending, and what is motivating them to want to continue to study within the Western academic system. Students shared their own personal perspectives on how they view their experience attending a Western university and the types of changes they have to negotiate in order to be successful. These changes included how family influences their overall educational choice, how they view changes within their personal learning environment, and what types of personal adjustments they had to consider that would remain consistent with their religious and social beliefs. Most students emphasized the value of the learning environment within the Western universities, and thought that the overall experience contributed to their academic success.

Understanding what motivates native students to want to attend a Western university branch campus invited into their home country is valuable information for administrators and leaders as they seek answers about whether the goals and values of the institution are meeting the needs of the student population. In addition, understanding student motivation to attend one of the branch campuses provides these institutions with valuable feedback on other support programs, including academic services, student affairs, and sponsored extra-curricular activities. This research suggests that

administrators and leaders should further investigate the changes that students have to consider when deciding to study within a Western style learning environment, and what additional strategies may be effective to motivate students to stay attending while negotiating their own personal beliefs about the academic environment. The research may also inform understanding about the continued development of the Western branch campus model, and whether or not these types of programs are sustainable in developing countries outside the sphere of direct Western influence. It is also important to note that it will be difficult to generalize the results of this study to other countries that do not share similar access to monetary resources capable of initiating and maintaining an expansive branch campus operation similar to the one in Education City.

Overall, this research contributes to the understanding about student engagement and leadership development for administrators and institutions looking to engage with a native student population. This study, along with other current and future research on branch campus development, may also provide insight into strategies that may inform administrators how to better meet student needs and further their academic success.

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Appendix A
Interview Guide

Some questions that may be asked of the participants during the interview include:

1. What led you to choose to study at one of the Western universities?
2. What process did you go through to determine your major or area of emphasis?
3. How would you describe the role that your family played in your education decision-making process?
4. Can you talk about how you transitioned from your first schooling in the country to the university?
5. Do you think attending a Western university has been valuable? Why or why not?
6. What adjustment problems, if any, have you had to confront in attending the university?
7. How do you feel about how you've managed the adjustments you've had to make? Did the university help in making adjustments?
8. Being at a university also involves interacting with other students. Can you describe what kind of an experience this has been for you?
9. Do you think your attendance at the university has affected your learning? Why or why not?