

E-Learning Course Design from a Cross Cultural Perspective

A Study of the Factors Affecting Egyptian and Vietnamese Students' Acceptance and Usage of the E-learning Component of a Blended Learning MBA Program Designed in Northern Europe

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E-LEARNING COURSE DESIGN FROM A CROSS CULTURAL PERSEPECTIVE

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VIETNAMESE STUDENTS' ACCEPTANCE AND USAGE OF THE
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PROGRAM DESIGNED IN NORTHERN EUROPE

BY
SANDRA SAFWAT YOUSSEF FAHMY

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2015



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

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EUROPE**

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CV

Dr. Sandra is a medical doctor with a Master degree in business administration and years of teaching experience to post graduate students who study MBA programs. Sandra worked in International Business School of Scandinavia (the host company for the current research program) since 2009 as a lecturer and as an education and training director. Sandra developed an interest in the research field of e-learning course design and cultural factors affecting students' acceptance to through her experience in teaching students from different countries. Her interest in studying this field and starting this research project was triggered by her own difficulties in convincing students from some countries as Egypt and Vietnam to participate in her online sessions and engage in the discussions and activities as much as they engage in them in her f2f classes. These challenges triggered Sandra's interest in researching this problem area more using Grounded Theory methodology in the two countries that showed the highest resistance level to using e learning. Sandra's research interests are not limited to the cross-cultural impact on e-learning course design but also extends to many other aspects in the field of human centered informatics and information communication technology for development (ICT4D). Sandra is affiliated with and an active participant in a number of research networks as e-learning lab (ELL) of Aalborg University and ICT4D and International Council of Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP). Sandra is an active research scholar who publishes in journals and conferences in the field of e-learning as well as part takes in book chapter writing with other peer scholars. Sandra aspires to continue researching the field of cross cultural effects on export of e-learning programs from the world's North to its South and how to improve students' learning experiences in developing countries.

ENGLISH SUMMARY

This industrial PhD research is a study that is co-funded by the Danish Agency For Science Technology and Innovation and International Business School of Scandinavia. The main problem area addressed in this study is the challenges faced in the export of blended learning educational programs across national, cultural and linguistic borders. The study attempts to shed a light on the differences in the learning practices of students in different countries, by using a mix between ethnography and grounded theory methodologies, to explore the different educational systems and learning practices in the three countries under study in this research. The results of this study aim at helping exporting educational institutions to understand how these differences in learning practices affect students' approach to learning and consequently their acceptance of new tools used for learning as e-learning.

The study was triggered by the challenges that the Danish educational institute that is co-funding and hosting the research faced in exporting its programs to developing countries. These challenges go beyond the obvious language barriers to more complicated cross cultural barriers. In this study I approach the problem through examining the contexts in which higher education in three countries, Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam, take place and what factors affect students' concepts of learning. By observing the natural settings in which learning takes place and making descriptive analyses of selective learning situations in the three countries, I attempt to develop a better understanding of the different relations between the key players of learning in these countries, the students, teachers and teaching materials. Coupling the non-participant observations with other methods of qualitative research such as in-depth interviews and focus groups lead to better insight into the reality of how the key players in the learning process understand and feel about learning, and how this can differ greatly from one culture to another thus affecting their reaction to e-learning tools. This led to identifying the incongruence between e-learning course designs and the actual sequence of events happening in the learning process in these countries and offer suggestions about how e-learning courses should be modified to better suit students' needs in developing countries.

To better evaluate and understand the differences in learning practices in the three countries, I designed the learning situation model (which is explained in details in chapter 4 of this thesis). The model was inspired by Adele Clarke's book "Situational Analysis" and it examines the relationship between human and non-human actors involved in any learning situation. The objective of using the model was to provide a focal point for analysis in a highly diversified field as export of education and cultural differences. By using this model, the learning situations from empirical data were examined in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam, coded, analysed

and theoretical categories were formed to reach a theory at the end of the analysis process. The results of the study show a great difference in the interactions between the major actors of the learning situation, teacher, student and materials. In Denmark, the interaction is predominantly constructive where there is a balance between the student-student interface, the teacher-student interface, and the student-material interface. (Fahmy, Bygholm et al., 2013) These findings were different from the findings from Vietnam, where the interactions observed in the learning situations appeared to be predominantly teacher dominated and the student-teacher interface was the centre of the learning process. In Vietnam, the teacher is viewed as a 'Guru' and thus his/her advice and knowledge is appreciated and respected by students not only where their education is concerned but also on the personal level. (Fahmy, 2014) In Egypt, the analysis of the learning situation observed there was predominantly student-materials centred. The star of learning in Egypt is transcribed lectures, which is an old habit taken from old religious schools in the 18th century that focused on rote learning of Quran (the Kuttub). In modern higher education institutes in Egypt, the transcribed lectures replace the textbooks and the teacher plays the role of a channel that transmits the text to be learnt by heart to the students.

The study offers suggestions to Western educational organizations that engage in export of education to developing countries as Egypt and Vietnam about how to modify their programs according to students' culture instead of using standardized courses for all students, which is sometimes referred to as McDonaldization of education (Hayes and Wynyrd, 2006). Future research in other countries, using the learning situation model, is needed to offer a wide range of understanding about students' differing needs in these countries.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my students in Egypt and Vietnam, who taught me the value of pursuing knowledge to the end of the earth

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I would like to thank my PhD supervisor, Prof Ann Bygholm, who has helped me a lot all through the project duration not only on the professional level but also on the personal level. I would also like to thank my assistant PhD supervisor who has played the very important role of being the critical eye all through this project's duration. I extend my gratitude to all my colleagues and fellow doctoral students, who opened my eyes to new dimensions of knowledge every time we talked or discussed a new topic.

I would also like to thank IBSS, the host company and cofunder of this research project for giving me the chance to do this project and use it as the case study triggering and motivating this study. Also, my gratitude is extended to my students from IBSS in Vietnam who have helped me a lot with the logistics and translation of the collection of data in Vietnam especially Miss Uyen Nguyen who has been my student, friend and helper in many ways all through this project.

I will always be grateful to my family and friends who have supported me all through this journey and especially my mom and dad who have been an inspiration to me all through my life, teaching me the beautiful habit of reading every single day of my life and encouraging me to ask questions, especially difficult questions.

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CHAPTER 1: FRAMING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

“What academics need to do is see the benefits of ICT through the eyes of students using a cultural lens”.

(Munro-Smith 2002)

Introduction

This research was triggered by the challenges that a Danish educational institute faced in exporting its programs to developing countries and attempts to provide possible solutions for overcoming them. These challenges go beyond the obvious language barriers and infra-structural problems to more complicated cross cultural barriers. The fact that these educational programs are developed in one country and therefore rooted in its cultural values and belief systems and furthermore affected by the social and political system of the society in which it is produced, may in itself pose a challenge in getting students from other cultural backgrounds to adopt and engage in these programs. Students may feel alienated from the program, as it does not conform to their own traditions, values and beliefs.

The core problem addressed in this research is the cultural challenges faced in the export of blended learning educational programs, specifically the Danish Business School that is co-funding the research. The study of cross cultural barriers in the context of export of education is a complex and multi-faceted field so in order to fully understand and assess the difficulty of exporting educational programs across national, cultural and linguistic borders, a thorough understanding of the learning practices of the target group of prospective students must be obtained. In this research, the term “learning practices” refers to planned activities and relations involved in creating some form of cognitive learning. The current study contributes to the field of export of education using blended learning by studying the differences in the learning practices of students in different countries through exploring and comparing the different educational systems in the three countries under study in this research. The results of this study aim at helping exporting educational institutions to understand how these differences in learning practices

affect students' approach to learning and consequently their acceptance of new tools used for learning as e-learning tools.

This study approaches the problem through examining the contexts in which higher education in these three countries, Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam, take place and what factors affect students' concepts of learning. By observing the natural settings in which learning takes place and making descriptive analyses of selective learning situations in the three countries, I attempt to develop a better understanding of the different relations between the key players of learning in these countries, namely students, teachers and teaching materials. Coupling the non-participant observations with other methods of qualitative research such as in-depth interviews and focus groups lead to better insight into the reality of how students and teachers (the key players in the learning process) understand and feel about learning, and how this can differ greatly from one culture to another thus affecting their reaction to e-learning tools. This will result in identifying the incongruence between e-learning tools and design and the actual sequence of events happening in the learning process in these countries.

Since the field of study of cross-cultural barriers affecting export of education is a wide and complex discipline to be covered in one research project, I chose to focus on a focal point for my research, which is the "Learning Situation" (LS) model (explained in full details both in chapter 4: Research Methodology and in 3 of my published papers). The model is inspired by Adele Clarke's writings on "Situational Analysis" and it represents the unit of analysis in focus in this research. Each "Learning Situation" is a formal teaching-learning episode that takes place within an institution and is intended to result in some form of learning. In this research, students' accounts of "Learning Situations" and their feedback and feelings expressed towards the learning situations were coded and analysed as representations of learning in addition to the observations by the researcher.

It is worth mentioning here that this project does not address the issues related to inter-cultural communications between local and international students but rather focuses on the cultural roots of the challenges that students from developing countries face when they enrol in an exported educational program from a developed country. Consequently, the focus on the opinion of students and teachers from developing countries was the core interest of the researcher in this project. Danish students were interviewed for the purpose of having a comparative sample that is expected to think differently and relate to learning, teachers and their learning environment in a different way.

Research Problem Background

The host company that co-funds this PhD research project is a Danish private business school "International Business School of Scandinavia" (IBSS) with an

experience in exporting a blended learning MBA program designed in Denmark to countries in the Middle East and Asia. IBSS started in the year 2000 with the belief that training and education is optimized by the use of new technologies and has ever since worked on using blended learning as the platform for learning. Consequently, IBSS developed a blended learning MBA (Master of Business Administration) program aimed at developing applied skills of students within the business field. Modules are delivered as blended learning courses that include classroom teaching and instruction, home and self-study, and e-learning tutorials with text and streaming videos supported by online group activities that are either synchronous as online classes and webinars or asynchronous as online group forums.

For years, IBSS used Blended Learning in presenting different training programs for professionals in Denmark and it was widely accepted by all attendees. But when "International Business School of Scandinavia" started exporting its MBA program to other regions like Asia and the Middle East, students from these countries did not adopt the use of the e-learning component of the program and viewed it as a less quality education tool than the conventional face-to-face teaching method. Furthermore, when International Business School of Scandinavia (IBSS) applied for the EFMD-CEL accreditation (EFMD is a global organization devoted to the continuous improvement of management development www.efmd.org) after they interviewed MBA students from Vietnam, their feedback was that students enjoy face-to-face contact with teachers and each other but they do not engage in the online activities, partly because of the language barrier and partly because they feel more comfortable organizing joint study sessions among themselves instead of participating in online group forums as they enjoy the personal interaction in meeting face-to-face more.

IBSS also uses CSCL (Computer-supported collaborative learning) which has been associated with distance and technology enhanced learning (TEL) as the method that supports peer collaboration, constructivist learning (Brown and Palincsar 1989); (Salomon 1997) and intentional learning (Scardamalia and Bereiter 1994). In CSCL environments, learners co-create meanings and knowledge of objects that they study together (Newman, Griffin et al. 1989) while the teacher's role is transformed to the role of a facilitator rather than a "Guru" who has all the knowledge. This was not appreciated nor adopted by students in Egypt and Vietnam. For example, in Vietnam, when a student asked the teacher a question and the teacher, instead of giving them a ready-made answer, asked them to look the answer up in the internet, students were frustrated and complained that the teacher was not knowledgeable enough of the subject. This teaching pedagogy was very strange to the students, to the extent that they reported it to some local newspapers that "ridiculed" the Danish business school educational pedagogy and the use of "games" in class for postgraduate students and they even considered it an insult.

In Egypt, also, students did not adopt the e-learning component of IBSS MBA program, and although all students are computer literate and use email and social networks like "Facebook" almost daily in their personal as well as professional dealings, yet it was difficult for them to see that this can apply to education. While they expressed their appreciation of the face-to-face component of the program, they were reluctant to use the online component of the program (synchronous and asynchronous equally). Some of the students expressed their dissatisfaction with having any online components in the program and that if the graduation certificate contains any notion that the program had any online teaching, this would decrease the value of the MBA certificate in the eyes of their employers. This indicates that online education is perceived in some countries to be non-equivalent to face-to-face in quality of education.

All these incidents drew the attention of the management in "International Business School of Scandinavia" to the fact that students in some countries like Egypt and Vietnam prefer the human-human interface to the human-computer interface. In addition to students' preferences in the method of education, there are many other cultural differences in teaching students from different countries that raise a lot of questions that the school must attempt to find answers to through this PHD project research. Gender issues rose in some conservative cultures like: can men teach women and vice versa? Can men and women attend same classes? Can men and women co-exist in the same virtual class? Will men accept being taught online by a woman teacher? Is the use of webcam in online class culturally accepted for both men and women?

Language issues were also encountered in some countries, specifically in Vietnam where students speak very little English and even though some of them can read and write English well yet it was almost impossible for them to understand or be understood by a native English speaking teacher. This problem was overcome by translating all the teaching materials to Vietnamese language and by using an interpreter during classes, but this raised some more language related cultural issues as: should the curriculum and content be translated to the language of the students in all countries? Or should the international educational programs admit only English speaking students? And if either option was chosen by IBSS, what effect will this have on profits incurred by the school? Can the new online translation tools (like Google translate) be used to solve the language barrier issues and be successful in translating contents of curriculum from English that is a rather simple language to more complicated languages like Arabic or Vietnamese or Chinese?

Other issues encountered by "International Business School of Scandinavia" were the different technological infrastructure in different countries (See Figure 1), for example in Denmark 90% of the population are internet users while in Egypt only 35.6% of the population and in Vietnam 33.9% of the population are internet users (*Source*: Internet World Stats: an International website that features up to date world Internet

Usage, Population Statistics and Internet Market Research Data, for over 233 individual countries and world regions). This may result in limitation of the people who can benefit from the exported "Blended Learning" programs. Also, the speed of internet is different from one country to the other which makes synchronous e-learning difficult where the transfer of data from the computer of either the teacher or the student in one country can be much slower or much faster than that of another user in another country which may have a negative effect on the learner's experience with e-learning altogether. The different time zones between different countries may also make it difficult to schedule a time for synchronous online activities, like online classes, which will be suitable for all students and the teacher, which again makes the learner's experience unpleasant.



Figure 1 : Picture taken in Vietnam showing electrical and telecommunications infrastructure

These challenges have intrigued research by the Danish business school under study to further study the effect of culture and cross cultural communication on internationalization of education and how this can be overcome in a manner that would benefit the students and the school at the same time.

Problem Area

This research started by exploring the issues encountered by students enrolled in the MBA program of International Business School of Scandinavia (IBSS) from Egypt and Vietnam and why they prefer face-to-face interaction to e-learning. As the researcher progressed in addressing this widely diverse issue, it became clear that this problem could not be addressed without an in-depth understanding of the learning culture and learning practices of the involved countries.

The core problem addressed in this research evolved from a focus on students' likes and dislikes and infrastructure barriers to exported educational programs, to a deeper focus on the countries' higher education teaching and learning practices and how they affect students' approach to learning in general and to e-learning in particular. The research focus shifted from studying opinions about e-learning to fill a larger gap in research about learning practices in Egypt and Vietnam, two of the least studied countries in the field of export of education, and how this may affect attempts of exporting educational programs from the west to these 2 countries. Thus the research design and implementation were made to fill in this gap and thus answer the initial interest in Egyptian and Vietnamese learners' lack of acceptance to e-learning.

The choice of constructive grounded theory as a methodology for this research served the speculative nature of the project as the researcher had to make the connection between the empirical findings and conclusions that would answer the initial research question about students' acceptance of e-learning

Problem Statement

There are many challenges encountered within the context of export of education and a lot of literature addressed the issue on the macro level by examining the political and economical impacts of export of education. However, little attention has been given to the study of what happens on the micro level of the interactions and cultural influences affecting the learning process of students from developing countries studying international programs.

The cultural impact on learning practices in different countries and how it affects the way that students from developing countries view and interact with exported educational programs is one of the under studied fields in course design, especially in the 2 countries under study in this research, Egypt and Vietnam. By understanding these differences and their cultural roots, exporting educational institutes are likely to reduce the challenges they face in teaching their programs in developing countries and ensure better learning results, as opposed to merely teaching their programs for these students.

Research Questions

This research attempts to answer 2 questions:

1. (a) What are the cultural roots that influence the way students and teachers in Egypt and Vietnam view learning and (b) how this view affects their acceptance and usage of e-learning in the context of exported blended learning programs from Denmark and other developed countries?
2. (a) How do the educational systems and learning practices in Egypt and Vietnam contrast to those in developed countries as Denmark and (b) how these differences affect students' acceptance to teaching practices of exported educational programs from the west?

These 2 research questions, each has 2 parts where the later part (the 'b' part) is a speculative conclusion based on the more concrete results of the answers to the 'a' part of the question. The answers to the first part of each of the two questions (after the analysis of the empirical data) would help the researcher to draw conclusions that would answer the second part of the question from a more interpretive perspective.

Research Design

This study is a constructive grounded theory study of teaching and learning practices within the higher education systems in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam with ethnographic tools used for collection of data. The focal point for my research, as explained in details later, is learning situations. Inspired by Adele Clarke's writings on Situational Analysis, I developed a model that combines the main actors in any learning event and can help as a magnifying lense to look at the data and analyse it with a focus on what matters to learning. This model (which is explained in full details in Chapter 4- The methodology and section 4.2) is the "Learning Situation" model.

A "Learning Situation" in this study refers to an institutionally arranged situation in which the actors fulfil well-defined roles (as teachers and students) in order to accomplish student learning. The non-human actors which have significant value in the "Learning Situation" are materials (books, lecture notes, presentations-etc.), technological infrastructure of the country, cultural values and gender roles. Adele Clarke explains the importance of focusing on situations as "the conditions of the action are inside the situation and therefore we should study the situation itself as the focus of analysis". She also explains how focusing on the situation would eventually help us to understand the larger, more complex picture "a situation is always greater than the sum of its parts" (Clarke 2005). In this study, collection and

analysis of data were all focused on situations to provide a deeper insight into learning practices happening in each of the 3 countries and thus explain the cultural roots of students' resistance to e-learning.

In this study, theoretical sampling was used, as is customary with grounded theory research, which means that no sample size is decided early in the research process but the researcher goes back to the field after categories start to emerge to collect more data about the categories. This process can be repeated many times until "theoretical saturation" happens. Collection of data was done by different qualitative tools as non-participant observation, note taking, diary keeping, audio recordings and data reports. Observation was coupled with focus group activities conducted in each of the three countries Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam, using a semi-structured questions guide. All focus groups were either video or audio recorded. Unstructured in-depth interviews were also conducted in all three countries with either students only or students and teachers and all interviews were audio recorded. Documentary evidence from some of the materials used for teaching and studying in the three countries was obtained for comparison.

Literature review was done in stages guided by Kathy Charmaz recommendations in doing literature review in grounded theory (Charmaz 2006, P. 163-168). An initial literature review before the start of the research project before applying for the research grant, followed by another deeper literature review in a broad sense before the collection of data. The initial reviews focused on learning theories (explained in details in Chapter 3), and on blended learning and the general issues related to internationalization of education. In the initial literature review, I focused on 4 main levels: (1) Internationalization of education, (2) Issues in Export of education using blended learning, (3) Regional Issues in blended learning, (4) Issues in Egypt and Vietnam. The results of this initial review is presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis and in the published conference paper *"Issues in Internalization of Education: The case of a Danish Business School exporting a blended learning MBA program to developing countries"*. After the analysis of data, a comparative literature review was done to validate and compare my results with the existing body of literature and this is presented with the results in the papers *"The Good, the Bad, and the Lazy teacher. A grounded theory approach to higher education learning situations in Vietnam"*, and *"Modern day 'Kuttab' – a grounded theory study of higher education learning situations in Egypt and implications for e-learning course design"*.

Due to the scarce literature available about specific studies conducted in Egypt and Vietnam, literature about countries in the same region with similar cultural structure was studied. For example, in studying the literature about cultural issues in using the Internet in education in Egypt, all studies done in Arab countries were considered as they share the same language and religious beliefs of Egyptians. In studying the same issues in Vietnam, literature discussing studies done in

Confucian Heritage Culture countries (CHC) were included in the comparative literature review.

For the analysis of empirical data, grounded theory tools were used following Kathy Charmaz viewpoint of constructive grounded theory where the researcher interacts with the data and interprets the results rather than be neutral and unbiased as per the more positivist trends in grounded theory. These tools include line-by-line coding, memo writing and forming categories. This process is explained in details in chapter 4 of this thesis and in section 4.5.

Constant comparison is an essential tool used in grounded theory to form and validate theoretical categories. I constantly compared the data from one country to data from the same or different countries, data from one participant to data from another participant, results from my data to results from other scholars. I found Atlas.ti to be very helpful for facilitating the constant comparison process all through the analysis. By using the “Link Views” option in Atlas.ti, I was able to compare codes, categories, quotes, super codes and even links to links. This constant comparison led to the formation of the final theoretical categories of the study.

Research Limitations:

The main research limitations of this study are:

(1) The language barrier, since neither of the 3 countries’ first language is English, nor the researcher’s, most interviews were carried out in the participants’ and researchers’ second language (English). The limited vocabulary and heavy accent of Vietnamese participants posed a considerable challenge to the research. In Denmark, participants’ English was much better, yet expressing opinions openly in a second language may have been a limitation as well. In Egypt, data was collected in Arabic language, transcribed in Arabic, then translated to English, which was an extra burden to the research process, and also the meaning may have been altered in the process.

(2) Obtaining legal approvals for conducting the research. In Vietnam that was a challenge especially in public universities which limited the data collected to private universities and colleges. Similarly, in Egypt teachers refused to participate in the research for fear of retaliation from the universities where they work if they revealed any unfavourable information.

(3) The high cost of traveling between the 3 countries located in 3 continents more than once to collect new empirical data after the full analysis of the first round of data collection. Thus, fulfilling a major requirement of doing grounded theory research, which is theoretical sampling, was limited.

Chapters Outline

This thesis is a collection of articles with a focus on publications and methodology. The literature review (as is customary in grounded theory) is not well defined and meta-analytical, but rather done in stages which correspond to the different stages of the project.

The current *first chapter* explains the research background and the case of the Danish business school that led to the initiation of this study and the research objectives. It frames the research by explaining the field of study and the research problem and questions. A brief description of the research methodology and its limitations is provided in this chapter as well as an outline for each chapter in the thesis.

The *second chapter* “Theoretical Discussion” provides a focused review of existing literature addressing the challenges of internationalization of education, with a highlight on exporting western educational programs to less developed countries using blended learning and the issues encountered during the process. The discussion in this chapter then narrows down to the issues encountered in the 2 regions under study, the Arab world and Confucian heritage countries. The main objective of this chapter is to explain the framework of the study within the existing body of knowledge.

The *third chapter* presents a detailed description of learning theories which are relevant to the current study, with a focus on three approaches to learning; behaviorist, cognitivist and constructivist. In this chapter I also explain how each of these 3 approaches was used in the current study as a foundation for one of the three learning situation models used in the collection and analysis of data.

The *fourth chapter* explains the methodology employed in the study including the rationale for choosing the grounded theory methodology. The chapter discusses the different schools of grounded theory research and which school I followed in this research as well as the debates that are commonly taking place between scholars following either school. It describes in detail the steps of data collection, the software used in transcription and data analysis (as F4 and Atlas.ti) and shows examples to illustrate the process. The chapter also discusses the grounded theory methodology common issues as the position of literature review and validity and reliability. I close the chapter by asking a question “Am I doing Grounded Theory?” and following a list of questions suggested by Kathy Charmaz for validation of the research process and answering each of these questions to reach a conclusion at the end of the chapter that I followed all rules of doing grounded theory research.

The fifth chapter presents a discussion about the research findings (which are presented in details in 3 publications in chapter 7: “*Exporting a Scandinavian Learning Model to Egypt and Vietnam: Challenges and Implications*”; “*The Good, the Bad, and the Lazy teacher. A grounded theory approach to higher education learning situations in Vietnam*” and “*Modern day ‘Kuttab’ – a grounded theory study of higher education learning situations in Egypt and implications for e-learning course design*”. In this chapter I attempt to tie together, integrate and synthesize the various issues raised in the first chapter, while reflecting on the results in relation to the research objectives. I present recommendations in this chapter to exporters of education from western countries and how to best design them to suit learners from developing countries, specifically from Egypt and Vietnam. I close the chapter by providing suggested areas for future research in the same field which are inspired both by the limitations of the current study and by questions raised during the analysis of the current research findings.

The sixth chapter enlists the references of published work cited in this thesis in an alphabetical order.

The seventh chapter presents the 4 papers published along the course of this research project with a summary description preceding each paper

Chapter Summary

In the first chapter of this thesis, I attempt to frame the current research project and explain the background of the problem with a special focus on the problems faced by the host company for this research “International Business School of Scandinavia”. I explain in this chapter what is and what is not the focus of this research, the theoretical framework of the research, the methodology, problem statement and the limitations of the study. The chapter closes by an outline about how this thesis is structured and explaining the objective of each chapter in it. In chapter 2, I move to the detailed combined compilation of the literature review and theoretical framework of this thesis, as per the grounded theory research methodology recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the literature and theoretical framework related to internationalization of education and some of the issues encountered in the process that were reported in literature. The objective of writing this chapter is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the main theories of internationalization of education as well as to study the challenges which have been encountered in exporting Western education to the two main regions under study in this research, which are Arab countries and Confucius-heritage countries. It is worth mentioning here that the literature found about studies done on this problem area in the two countries under study in these regions, Egypt and Vietnam, are scarce and this was overcome by reviewing literature of the two regions, rather than the two countries.

The chapter opens by discussing internationalization of education on the macro level (Zawacki-Richter and Anderson, 2013) discussing local policies in this regard and allegations about the drawbacks and doubtful intentions of exporting institutes, as seen by the most cited authors in this field like Altbach, Knight and Yang. Then I move to a focus on the role of blended learning in possibly reducing migration of western educated students from their home developing countries to OECD countries, which is the main reason behind brain drain and the uneven distribution of the world's wealth of knowledge. The third section of this chapter discusses issues on the micro level of students and teachers' interactions in online classes (Zawacki-Richter and Anderson, 2013) with a special focus on cultural issues reported in studies done in the two regions studied in this research.

2.1 Internationalization of education: a bliss or a curse for developing countries

Philip G. Altbach, one of the most cited authors in the field of internationalization of education, suggests that the spread of the trend of recruiting international students in western universities is the 'new neo-colonialism' and defines this term as "Efforts of the major powers to dominate the 'hearts and minds' of the world's peoples". (Altbach, 2004) These efforts were favoured by the wide spread of English as the preferred educational and scientific language, a fact that UK and USA benefited a lot from. It is estimated that international students from developing countries spend \$13 billion annually on US degrees, which is, ironically, more than the incoming foreign aid to their countries. These students gain knowledge as well as foreign cultures and values that they bring back home with them after they return. The spread of American invention degrees as M.B.A.

programs led to Americanization of business management curriculums worldwide. (Altbach, 2004)

A similar idea was presented by Yang in a critical review about the effects of globalization of education that may cause “the loss of indigenous cultures and the relentless imposition of Western values” and thus would be seen by the recipient countries as “the new colonizer”. The article goes as far as accusing western education providers of being insensitive in spreading their cultural beliefs to developing nations while being under the wrong belief that they are helping them. (Yang, 2003)

The concept of internationalizing higher education as a form of colonialism is based on data showing that educational programs from Europe and Northern America and Australia have been introduced to developing countries in Africa, Asia, Middle East and Latin America purely for the financial gains associated with it. In Asia, most countries import much more programs from USA and Europe than they export programs to these countries, which is a pattern that was common during the colonial era and continued ever since. At one hand, Asian countries welcome these programs as a means for keeping up with international academic standards, on the other hand no effort was done by Asian governments to establish universally recognized centres of excellence to improve their own institutes’ level of teaching quality. (Yang, 2003)

Many citizens in developing countries leave their home countries in order to enrol in higher education programs in Western countries as indicated by the OECD report. The numbers of international students enrolled in higher education outside their home countries has reached over 3 million in 2007 (OECD, 2009). Although governments of developing countries welcome this trade of Higher Education programs from developed countries, yet this trade benefit the growth of economy in developed countries while all costs are borne by the poor developing countries (Adnett, 2010). Another drawback of international migration of students from developing to developed countries is that around 15-20% of these students continue to live and work in the countries where they study. This out-migration of internationally educated citizens may cause brain drain in developing countries if there was no corresponding in-flow of equally competent citizens of developed countries (Parey and Waldinger, 2008; Lowell, Findlay et al., 2004). An example of “brain drain” is seen in Arab countries where in 2002 one million highly qualified professionals and scientists of Arab origin reside and work in OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries and these numbers have been increasing since these statistics have been published (Dutta and Coury, 2002).

A counter argument to the “brain drain” was presented in a report by the “Centre for global development” (<http://www.cgdev.org/>), with the title: “Give Us Your Best and Brightest: The Global Hunt for Talent and Its Impact on the Developing

World” where the authors (a political scientist and an economist) discuss the positive impacts of skilled labour migration on the sending countries. They argue that the remittances sent by these workers back to their home countries help support the economy of developing countries (Kapur, McHale et al., 2005).

Global education providers have different motivations for internationalizing, commercial profits being the most obvious for private for-profit providers, while for non-profit education providers, cross cultural experience and research were the main motivations (Altbach and Knight, 2007). The economic gains that international education providers achieve from hosting international students has created an environment of competition rather than cooperation between these providers. These gains also opened the door for new forms of education providers as corporate universities and virtual universities which operate purely on commercial basis (Van Vught, Van der Wende et al., 2002).

Recently, another motivation for non-profit education providers has become of major importance, which is university ranking. The leaders of higher education institutes believe that a favourable ranking increases their institute’s chances of funding and status and also students’ choice of universities where they study depends on university’s ranking. One of the factors which ranking organizations take into consideration is internationalization, which has recently been a great motivator for higher educational institutes to participate in internationalization activities (Hazelkorn, 2013).

With the increased number of international students’ enrolment in western higher education institutes, governments of developing countries cannot keep up with the increasing demand for financing. Thus, private financing by students and their parents has become more prevalent accounting for 37% of expenditures on higher education in 53 countries (Bollag, 2007). In Asia, although the governments of many countries welcome global education entry yet the economic, cultural and educational exchanges are unequal as they only go in one direction, from Western education providers to Asian recipients. (Yang, 2003).

Also, concerns about the quality of exported education were challenged in the Middle East and the Arab Peninsular Gulf region where a lot of branches of American Universities were opened offering undergraduate and postgraduate education. After a few years of opening, the governments in countries like Qatar found that these universities are more concerned with their profits than with the quality of education that they provide to these students (Bollag, 2006).

To conclude, as much as there are gains for developing countries in educating their citizens in universities of western countries, there are many concerns about the uneven distribution of the world’s knowledge on the expense of developing countries as well as the danger that governments may fail to reform and improve the

higher education system because of the availability of Western alternatives. There are also the concerns about the cultural effects that this student mobility would have on the local culture of the sending countries. Since the local understandings seem to be neglected by both local politicians and external education providers, thus came the need for research projects as the current one which take an interest in identifying culturally specific concepts and practices of teaching and learning to provide suggestions about how to design more culturally sensitive exported western educational programs.

2.2 Export of education using Blended Learning – a better alternative?

This section discusses the possibility of using blended learning as an alternative to models of internationalization of education that do not take the student perspective into account, thus leading to colonization of brains. I present here a theoretical investigation of literature discussing blended learning, its definitions, uses, satisfaction level of students and implications to the current research problem.

The need for mass global education has helped in the spread of the use of online and distant education (Bach, Haynes et al., 2007) and many factors contributed to the spread of exported educational programs from developed to developing countries. Some of these factors are the spread of web-based learning and the enhancements in technology and the increased number of English speaking people in non-English speaking countries. In their book "The Impact of E-Learning Programs on the Internationalization of the University", Amirault and Visser argue that the spread of web based learning in recent years can lead to increase of internationalization of education but some issues must be taken into consideration such as the faculty and students roles in online classrooms as well as their geographical relocation (Amirault and Visser, 2010).

Caswell refers to the impact of the reduced costs of reproduction of distance learning educational programs saying:

"This marked decrease in costs has significant implications and allows distance educators to play an important role in the fulfilment of the promise of the right to universal education. At relatively little additional cost, universities can make their content available to millions. This content has the potential to substantially improve the quality of life of learners around the world" (Caswell, Henson et al., 2008).

Since international education programs are exported from their home country of origin to other countries, thus the use of TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) makes perfect sense as it makes all the knowledge of the educators from the country

of origin of the educational program, available for students in the countries where these programs are exported to, without the need for geographical relocation of either the students or the teachers. E-learning has become a very important tool for distance education, but the drawback of using only e-learning is the lack of social interaction thus resulting in a higher rate of dropouts of students (Muirhead, 2002) and so came the need for blended learning.

The definition of blended learning has varied from one author to another, where some authors define it as merely blending any two types of teaching modes/pedagogies (Driscoll, 2002), others define it as combining different delivery modes (Bersin, 2003). These overly broad definitions are not useful as "*one would be hard pressed to find any learning system that was not blended*" (Graham, 2006).

The most widely used definition is the combination of face to face learning with online learning in different proportions (Rovai and Jordan, 2004; Thorne, 2003; Delialioglu and Yildirim, 2007).

"Options for blended learning go beyond the classroom. They're formal and informal, technology and people-based, independent and convivial, and directive- and discovery-oriented." (Rossett, Douglass et al., 2003).

With this definition, the benefit of flexibility to part time students and students with families is evident as it reduces the face-to-face time without jeopardizing the quality of education (Harding, Kaczynski et al., 2012). Also, Kriger elaborated more on this definition by adding that blended learning is a combination of using electronic learning tools as email or the internet or software and Learning management systems or streaming videos and/or audios and conference calling with traditional face-to-face teaching to increase effectiveness of teaching (Kriger, 2003).

Blended learning offers a perfect teaching pedagogy for exporting western educational programs since blended learning courses use TEL as a complimentary tool to the traditional face-to-face sessions rather than being used to substitute it (Mitchell & Forer, 2010: 78) yet students' reaction (in general) to Blended Learning was not uniform in literature. In some studies, students' satisfaction level increased (Woltering, Herrler et al., 2009) and the result of using blended learning reduced dropout rates and improved students' exam marks (López-Pérez, Pérez-López et al., 2010). Other studies concluded that there was no significant difference in student satisfaction between using online courses and blended learning mode of teaching (Overbaugh and Nickel, 2010; Tsai, Shen et al., 2011). Some studies also showed that students were dissatisfied with the blended learning mode of course delivery for various reasons as time constraints, language barriers, problems related to online tools (Bonk, Olson et al., 2002), resistance to the abrupt shift from traditional to

blended learning (Boyle, Bradley et al., 2003), downtime due to technology problems and overwhelming choice of tools (Bonk, Olson et al., 2002).

To conclude, blended learning mode of delivery may offer an alternative solution for exporting western educational programs without causing an imbalance in the world's knowledge economy yet finding a teaching methodology with wide acceptance among all students is not easy.

2.3 Cultural Issues in Internationalization of Education using Blended Learning

In addition to the previously mentioned challenges in using blended learning, cultural problems represent the most challenging obstacles to exporting educational programs to developing countries. The export of higher education from developed to developing countries has been following a standardized strategy, which has been labeled by some as 'higher education McDonaldization' or the 'one size fit all' strategy (Hayes and Wynyard, 2006) which has been faced by numerous issues. Little attention has been given by researchers to the cross cultural challenges that may face the educators as well as students in implementing these standardized strategies in cultures that may not be familiar with blended learning or may even be resistant to it. Since the face-to-face component of blended learning is the form of education which most students are used to, it would not be expected to be the cumbersome component. Cultural variations in acceptance of blended learning emerge in the lack of acceptance and usage of the e-learning component.

There is no universal definition of culture which all academics agree on to date, but the agreed upon concept is that culture is communication and culture is everywhere (Helmer and Eddy, 2003). Culture is a very diverse topic to be fully explored and summarized along the course of one research project, but in this chapter, I am only interested in aspects of culture that relate to the use of online education either combined with face-to-face teaching, as is the case in blended learning, or as an isolated mode of delivery.

Challenges specifically related to cultural perceptions about e-learning were reported by researchers, for example Johari wrote "Cultural differences created by language and the various educational and social systems around the world produce learners who are educated, trained, and comfortable learning under different conditions" (Johari, Bentley et al., 2005).

Cross-cultural communication gaps have also been identified in research done on 'cyber-cultures' and indicated the need for further understanding of these gaps (Reeder, Macfadyen et al., 2004; Economides, 2008). In another study, there was a difference in local and international students' satisfaction level, where local students indicated high satisfaction levels with an online course, while international students

attending the same course indicated lower levels of satisfaction (Hannon and D'Netto 2007). These studies show that there is a relation between culture represented in nationality and the way students perceive some modes of teaching as online classes.

Another concern is the process of 'meaning forming' that may be different based on cultural associations of the same symbols as some research scholars have pointed. For example, Greetz' definition about culture highlights the cultural influence on the process of meaning forming:

"The concept of culture I espouse...is essentially a semiotic one. Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning." (Geertz, 1973, p.5)

Greetz' description stresses the importance and weight of culture in defining, or even dictating how people perceive the meaning of things. The use of 'web' as a metaphor implies the power that culture has on shaping our meaning forming process reducing our power and control over this process. Other scholars as Chen and Mashhadi stressed the power of culture in forming the conceptual frameworks through which we interpret all meanings by saying:

"the interpretation of information and the generation of knowledge will be dependent on the existing conceptual frameworks of the learner, frameworks which will be culturally mediated and will serve to stimulate or limit imagination." (Chen, Mashhadi et al., 1999).

This implies that students in the recipient countries of exported education may not be able to achieve the same learning outcomes that the course designers have intended and based the curriculums on achieving them as the meanings that they will deduce from these courses will be different from one country to another. While recipients of international educational programs are aware of the cultural issues, the program providers are usually unwilling to evaluate their teaching philosophies or their cultural perspective of the courses that they teach and their suitability to the cultural backgrounds of the students whom they teach. In many cases, Westerners take the superiority of their teaching practices for granted, thus remaining arrogant and undoubting of their ability to teach across cultures (Moore, 1994).

Another cultural issue in e-learning course design, is the different way that students view the teacher's role, some view the teacher as the highest unquestionable authority and others view him/her as a facilitator (Shen, Woolley et al., 2006).

The previously mentioned studies and their results highlight the cross-cultural barriers that may be present in international online programs, such as language barriers and the different processes of meaning making by students especially when using a second language in learning and the students' perception of the teacher's role. These gaps pose a challenge to students' satisfaction levels when participating in such programs.

If exported educational programs using blended learning are to succeed, online course designers have to develop enough recognition and sensitivity to cultural differences of learners to cater to their differing needs (Gunawardena, Wilson et al., 2003). Academics need to use a cultural lens to see the benefits of ICT through students' eyes and examine if they are considering cultural diversity in designing programs' learning outcomes (Munro-Smith, 2002).

2.3.1 ISSUES IN ARAB COUNTRIES

The use of Internet in general is relatively new in Arab countries and there is a lot of controversial views about its use in education. Some researchers suggest that students in Arab countries as Lebanon have high acceptance to the use of e-learning while policy makers and local education providers are the ones who are sceptical about the shift to e-learning for political as well as financial reasons (Abouchedid and Eid, 2004; Nasser and Abouchedid, 2000). Other researchers imply the opposite, for example in Saudi Arabia, a study concluded that the majority of respondents do not prefer to study online courses as they do not consider them to be equivalent in quality to traditional courses and are not accredited in the country. The minority of respondents who said that they prefer to study online courses justified this by their interest in online interactions in general, or because they live in remote areas (Ali, Sait et al., 2003). In the following part, I present the most commonly observed cultural barriers in the Arab world to acceptance of online education that are presented in literature

2.3.1.1 Arabic Language – A crucial component of Arabs identity

Akinyemi and Ahmed Nabil both highlight the most crucial cultural issue in using e-learning in Arab countries, which is language. For Arab countries, language is not merely one of the components of their culture, language and religion are the main identifiers of their identity fabric as Muslim Arabs, an identity that crosses the geographical boundaries of countries (Suleiman, 2003). The reaction of most students in Arab countries indicate similar responses. Language barrier and the lack of Arabic online content (Loch, Straub et al., 2003) were the main issues that students in countries as United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Vrazalic, MacGregor et al., 2009), Qatar (Weber, 2010), Saudi Arabia (Alebaikan and Troudi, 2010), Egypt (Ahmed, Nabeel et al., 2008), Syria (Albirini, 2006) and Oman (Behl, Fitzgerald et

al., 2007) complained of. The lack of Arabic language content reduces the ability of the majority of 300 million inhabitants of the Arab world from engaging in ICT. Although Arabic language is the sixth spoken language in the world, yet Arabic language websites are minimal, nor there are website programming languages in Arabic (Dutta and Coury, 2002).

In the Arabic world, fear of western cultural invasion associated with the constant use of English language rather than Arabic language is a major issue. In a culture that is deeply rooted in Islamic religious beliefs, this poses a major challenge for introducing western blended learning programs in English language. A famous controversial radical Muslim preacher, Yusuf Al Qaradawi, has recently publicly instructed the Qatari nationals to avoid sending their children to schools that use English as the official teaching language as this may lead to producing a generation that is not deeply rooted in Islamic beliefs and in Arabic language, a generation that is more affected by Western culture than Arabic culture (Weber, 2010). Although Al Qaradawi's preaching is not the standard Islamic teachings which are followed in all Arab countries, yet it shows the variation in acceptance level of the western influence through education between the more fundamental Muslim followers and the moderate Muslims who embrace Western education readily and see it as their passport to better careers and a better quality of education.

Akinyemi also stresses the importance of understanding the cultural and religious beliefs of Arabs and the necessity of having an "Arabized E-Learning System" and the need for further researching the effect that this system may have on the universal quality of international education in this context. The same author highlights the lack of control of cross-gender interactions in online settings and how this may violate the important Arabic cultural value of gender segregation. Also, the lack of religious 'protection' (which is usually effected by the teacher in the face-to-face class) can pose a serious threat to citizens of Arab countries when considering use of e-learning (Akinyemi, 2003). Although fundamental views of researchers like Akinyemi are on the radical end of the Islamic convictions continuum, yet they represent the views of a majority of older generation researchers and thinkers in the Arab world.

Arabs take pride in the richness and complexity of the Arabic language and consider fluency, correctness and poetic expression of Arabic language to be a sign of sophistication and artistic talents. In the online learning environment, these elements are lost, even if the teaching language is Arabic; the artistic nature of the language is lost in the translation. N. Sultan and his co-authors explain what is, in their view, the reason behind the superiority of traditional teaching and online teaching by saying that "the regular keyboard of a computer cannot support the depth and ambiguity of the Arabic writing and artistic expression" (Sultan, 2012).

The need for Arabized e-learning courses is expressed in this section by many authors from different Arabic countries with a stress on its value not only for facilitating students' understanding, but also for satisfying the national pride and identity of Arab students.

2.3.1.2 Fear of Western culture invasion to replace Arabic culture

In Arab countries, where conservative views of life and gender prevail, many students as well as teachers express reservations in using ICT in education for fear of introducing 'morally and culturally inappropriate' content to youth in these countries. Parents and teachers in these countries think that students should not be allowed to use the Internet without supervision. Many researchers in Arab countries tackled the same concern voiced by respondents which mostly revolves around fear of 'cultural invasion' (Albirini, 2006).

Patai, a controversial writer whose writings were attacked by many scholars, yet after living in Arab countries almost all my life, I personally agree with most of what he expresses in his book "The Arab Mind", explains the struggle that exists inside the Arab mind between modernization and holding to the Arabic culture and values. He explains that the Westernized Arabs have dual feelings about their state, on one hand they are proud of their heritage and culture and on the other hand they regret the obvious retarded present state of their nations. This duality of thinking creates two contradicting value systems, a western modernized value system and a Bedouin nomadic value system (Patai and DeAtkine, 1973). This duality creates a generation of youth that is thirsty for modernization and wish to fully embrace it yet is drawn away from it by cultural ties which create an "ambivalent personality" (Wardi and Baali, 2008) of Arabs, leaving them in a state of love-hate attitude towards western technology. Abdennur, another scholar, explains that "The Arab Mind" constantly defends its culture and relies on the abstract concepts of culture and the Arab cultural heritage more than its reliance on rational obvious realities, which undermine Arab values and culture. This strategy helps the Arab mind to stand in the face of "the onslaught of global culture" (Abdennur, 2008, p. 66).

Growing up myself among Arabs all my life, yet raised with different cultural beliefs, I personally advocate Patai's description of the westernization love-hate swing in the Arab's mind as I have encountered it over and over again in my daily life in Arab countries and also among my students. An Arab can be condemning the ignorance of his people and in the same sentence glorifying Arabs as the best nation in the world, without realizing the controversy in his/her sayings. Also, in the research findings in Egypt this was clear when respondent students expressed how much they enjoyed the courses they studied in a western teaching organization yet when I asked them if they would like to participate in an online course by a western university they said that they wouldn't want that, without giving rational explanation for their opinion.

Researchers as Alebaikan conclude in their studies that instructors in the Middle East are against new technological methods as “Conservative elements of the society see the Internet as a danger to societal norms because of its unethical content” (Alebaikan and Troudi, 2010). In another study testing the acceptance of e-learning among women from Saudi Arabia, the study concluded that the main barriers to the use of e-learning in higher education are social and religious barriers as male authority, family honour, mixing gender, early marriage and mobility (Al Alhareth, McBride et al., 2013). In Oman, another Arab country, a study shows that socio-cultural norms (gender segregation and family role of women) is one of the main issues that faces Omani females’ access and training in ICT (Elnaggar, 2008). Other studies in Arab countries also stressed this fear of culture invasion as respondents expressed it in terms as “some cultures affect our customs in a negative way” and that “internet can affect social life and face-to-face communication”. Respondents also express the fear of ‘spread of immorality’, which is usually linked in Arabs minds with sexual freedom and pornography (Loch, Straub et al., 2003). Nabil added another concern about conflicts originating from diverse political ideologies and how this may affect online interaction, he used the example of dealings between Israel and some Arab countries (Ahmed, Nabeel et al., 2008).

These studies stress the fear of Arab students, educators and policy makers of the western invasion of their conservative Arab culture and hold this fear in higher level than the expected gain from the western educational programs. Preserving the slowly decaying Arabic cultural values seems to be a mission of higher value, mostly to educators and policy makers, than the advancement of learning and higher level education of their people.

2.3.1.3 Need for constant validation and lack of self discipline

Other less commonly faced challenges in the use of the online component of blended learning is “the need for constant validation that some students require about their work” (Lanham and Zhou, 2003). In a study of undergraduate Saudi female students participating in a pilot blended learning course, respondents did not expect their level of performance to be better in a blended learning course, they explained that their expectations of constant feedback from the teacher in the online discussion forum were not met (Alebaikan and Troudi, 2010).

The same study also concluded a different kind of challenge in the use of e-learning by students in Saudi Arabia which is that it requires a higher level of students’ self-discipline and responsiveness where students should assume responsibility for their own learning, which is not what Saudi students are accustomed to. This is also in line with the results of analysis of the empirical data collected in Egypt where students did not assume responsibility for their own learning, but considered the responsibility to fall on the teachers and the books that they recommend and on how easy or hard the exams are.

2.3.2 ISSUES IN ASIAN CONFUCIAN HERITAGE CULTURES (CHC)

This section of the literature review focuses on cultural issues encountered in Asian Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHC) as China, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Viet Nam when using online learning either isolated or as part of a blended learning program. It is noteworthy to mention here that very few literature (in English) was found addressing these issues, either for lack of researchers' interest in the problem or for preference of publishing in Asian languages.

These countries have common cultural traits which are rooted in Confucius teachings and have some common characteristics as unequal relationships between students and teachers, placing a high value on relationships and group identity and placing higher value on ascription (who one is) than on achievement (what one does) (Nguyen, Terlouw et al., 2006).

In Hong Kong, the learners are highly influenced by the Confucius tradition in education which is teacher-centred, relying on passive receiving of content from teacher and memorization, a study was done in an open learning institution that used blended learning mode of delivery. Students prefer the "direct teaching method" to the active learning method which is adopted by the course under study in this paper, and they also prefer face-to-face teaching to online teaching. (Aylward, 2004)

Language is also a problem for Asians as it is for Arabs, in a study done in Malaysia, many Chinese distance learners mentioned in interviews that language barriers were the reason they experienced difficulties in their academic studies. In the same study, Malay learners complained of not having enough time to learn the new technologies associated with online learning. (Dzaldria and Walker, 2003).

In CHC, education is characterized by being teacher-centred, in this context the teacher is expected to transfer content to students who are not expected to voice their opinions or ask questions unless asked by the teacher to do so. The teacher is highly looked upon and viewed as a reservoir of wisdom, the older the teacher is the wiser he/she is perceived. This makes it difficult for Asian e-learners to participate in online activities except as passive receivers, which may be applied in face-to-face classes, but in an online class it makes the session become a one directional speech with the teacher speaking to the computer. Students prefer to work in groups and they expect the teacher to provide regular feedback on the group performance, individual feedback should not be provided publicly whether positive or negative, as positive feedback would draw attention to individual students not to the group, which is not appreciated in Asian cultures, while negative feedback would make

student “lose face”. Students prefer structured classes with structured specific assignments and clear expectations from the teacher. . (Strother, 2003)

Students expect to be provided with specific learning resources (as textbooks, articles. ...etc.) and these resources need to be available online asynchronously for their retrieval. Since Asian students need to revisit information many times to understand and memorize the content (as they are used to), if resources for learning are not specified by teacher in the e-learning environment, students feel uncomfortable. (Lanham and Zhou, 2003).

In a study comparing Singaporean and Australian students, findings show that Singaporean students prefer face-to-face interaction to online interaction. Students regularly meet with their peers and review their assignments working together for hours while Australian students prefer short group encounters. (Munro-Smith, 2002).

Chapter Summary:

Although students and governments of developing countries welcomed exported western education, issues as “brain drain” and uneven distribution of the world’s intellectual wealth have to be addressed by policy makers. The export of standardized courses provides a cheap and easy method for export of education, yet, they are faced with many challenges due to the diverse cultural nature of the recipients of these courses in different countries. Cultural issues pose a considerable barrier to the success of these programs, especially those that use new technological tools as e-learning in the context of blended learning programs. Particularly in the 2 regions under study in this research, the Arab countries and Confucious Heritage Countries, specific cultural issues as language, fear of western invasion and individualism versus collectivism issues need to be further researched and addressed to ensure the acceptance and effectiveness of these exported programs.

CHAPTER 3: THE EVOLUTION OF LEARNING THEORIES

Learning theories are numerous and it is not my objective to cover all of them in this chapter, but to discuss the theories that are relevant to this research project. In this chapter, I present a summary of 3 approaches to learning theories, the behaviorist, cognitivist and constructivist, with the aim of providing a theoretical background about different approaches to learning that may explain the theoretical basis for the variation in learning and teaching practices in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam (the three countries under study in this research project). This chapter was written with the objective of studying the theoretical background of different teaching pedagogies and how they apply to learning/teaching practices in the countries under study.

For each learning approach, I start by presenting a historical brief of the evolution of the theory and the main authors who contributed to the theory in a chronological order and how it is applied in education and course design. At the end of each section, I explain how I used the approach as the theoretical foundation for the learning situation model, which is the main focus of research in this project (the learning situation model is explained in details in chapter 6).

3.1 The behaviorist approach to learning

Behaviorism stems from the field of psychology and refers to the scientific study of human behaviour and learning in the context of behaviourism. It is explained as a change in behaviour as a response to external stimuli and thus learning is viewed as an observable phenomenon. The behavioural approach to learning suggests that teaching activities should aim at arranging the environment so that students can respond properly to stimuli. By using positive and negative reinforcements learners will be motivated to use new learned behaviours. This approach implies that learners are passive and in need of either external motivation or reinforcement or both (Skinner, 1953) and the role of educators is to develop well-structured curriculums and invent ways to motivate and evaluate the learners. Assessment of learners is based on their ability to demonstrate observable outcomes and behaviour along the curriculum range and then progress in a linear quantitative manner.

In 1904, **IVAN PETROVICH PAVLOV (1849-1936)** was awarded a Nobel Prize in medicine for his research about the role of various gastric juices in digestion where he accidentally came across the discovery of classical conditioning. Pavlov

noticed, during his experiments, that some dogs that had been in the laboratory longer than others started salivating before they were fed (Smith, 1995). In Pavlov's experiments, food was considered an unconditioned stimulus that results in salivation, which is considered an unconditioned response, and this stimulus-response unit is called a reflex that is unlearned. Pavlov proved that if an unconditioned stimulus was associated with another stimulus numerous times, for example the buzzer associated with the food, the other stimulus will result in the same response that is associated with the unconditioned stimulus (for example salivation on hearing the buzzer). This is the theory behind the conditioned response (Cuny, 1965; Windholz, 1997) or learning through stimulus substitution and is also referred to as 'signal learning'.

Conditioning theory explains how learning happens through contiguity (the simultaneous occurrence of events) and through reinforcement (the effect of a stimulus). Although the conditioning theory is theoretically interesting and may explain some behavioral responses to certain stimuli but higher-order conditioning in humans is a very complex process and not easily comprehended (Rescorla 1972). Nevertheless, Pavlov's contribution to the study of human responses and learning is very remarkable, as Guy R. Lefrancois wrote in his book "Theories of human learning: what the old man said":

"It's absolutely remarkable that the work done by this Russian physiologist, exemplified in the single classical study of a dog learning to salivate in response to a tone, should, more than a century later, still form an essential part of every beginning psychology student's course."
(Lefrancois, 2000, p. 39)

JOHN B. WATSON (1878-1958), a controversial developmental psychology scholar, built his work on Pavlov's classical conditioning theory. Watson focused in his research on the role of conditioning in emotional responses in humans. Watson believed that the environment is a powerful determinant of human behaviour as well as a person's experiences in life. In his book "Behaviorism", Watson expresses his views by saying:

"Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations and race of his ancestors." (Watson, 1970, p. 104)

In his article “Psychology as the Behaviorist Views it”, which is now referred to as the manifesto of behaviorism, Watson wrote that consciousness is not a determinant factor for human behaviour and that the basis for studying human behaviour is a focus on observed actual behaviours:

“This suggested elimination of states of consciousness as proper objects of investigation in themselves will remove the barrier from psychology which exists between it and the other sciences.” (Watson, 1913)

Learning then, according to Watson’s environmentalist behaviouristic beliefs, is a number of sequenced responses that result from conditioning stimuli that are repeated and the complexity of the stimuli correlate to the complexity of the learned behaviour. The repetitiveness of these ‘stimuli-responses units’ result in habits. The controversies associated with Watson’s theories stemmed from the implication of these concepts that all humans are equal and similar, which contradicts the more recent rules of genetic hereditary factors affecting human behaviour. Watson’s contribution to human behaviour studies is highly debatable and hard to assess. In a survey of a number of developmental psychologists about Watson’s influence on this field of study, there was no consensus about how positive or negative his contribution was. The paper where the survey was published concludes with:

“One does not know, of course, how and to what degree Watson's ideas would have changed had he lived the rest of his life as an active empirical psychologist (...as Watson went into the advertising business in 1930, after he was forced to leave John Hopkins University) or, consequently, what impact he might have had on the field of developmental psychology. It is something of a paradox that in the 1950s Bergmann and Skinner placed Watson in the same league as Darwin and Freud, whereas some psychologists today regard Watson as an embarrassment and as having done harm to the field. Some today make the quite harsh judgment that Watson cost psychology in general, and developmental psychology in particular, 50 years of floundering, using a wrong and unproductive paradigm.” (Horowitz, 1992) – *Text in italics added by me to explain the quote.*

EDWARD L. THORNDIKE (1874-1949) explained learning as the formation of connections between neural events consistent with stimuli and responses. He was a renowned American psychologist whose theory of connectionism contributed greatly to the field of educational research. Thorndike’s three-series “Educational Psychology” details his theory of learning occurring as a result of connections (associations) between stimuli or events and neural responses in the form of behaviours. (Schunk, 2000, p. 73)

Thorndike's most important ideas about learning revolved around the law of multiple errors, that learning occurs through trial and error, and the law of exercise and effect. The law of effect highlights the importance of consequences of behaviour that are learned, these consequences may be satisfying or annoying in nature (rewards and punishments). Furthermore, he stresses that satisfiers (rewards) are more effective in stamping individual's responses than annoyers (punishments). He advocated the law of exercise, which referred to the importance of repetition, but later on rejected it when he discovered that repetition of a situation does not necessarily stamp in responses. (Thorndike, 1932)

BURRHUS FREDERIC SKINNER (1904–1990) explains human behaviour as lawful and his views were labelled as 'radical behaviorism' because he objected to the modern cognitive theories about learning and he insisted that the study of external factors was more important than internal factors. He argued that internal responses could be studied by observing people's words and behaviours. (Skinner, 1987) Skinner's studies examined the rules that control interactions between people and their environments and he identified two types of learning: classical (pavlovian) and operant conditioning. Operant conditioning means the likelihood of a response related to events that immediately follow it, these responses are referred to as response contingencies, a concept that is very much related to "learning by doing". (Lesgold, 2001)

Events that increase the likelihood of responses are reinforcers which can be positive (for example a reward) and they can be negative (for example withholding a reward). Primary reinforcers satisfy a basic need while secondary reinforcers are factors associated with a primary reinforce and general reinforcers are stimuli that are associated with a number of reinforcers. (Skinner, 1938) Skinner distinguishes between negative reinforcement and punishment as their results are different, negative reinforcement will reduce the occurrence of an undesired behaviour while punishment may lead to the opposite as for example children who are punished for wetting their bed will not stop. (Sears, Maccoby et al., 1976)

The most important contribution that Skinner made to the field of study of learning is the concept of 'Fading' that involves generalization and discrimination. Generalization refers to the usage of previously learned behaviours in new similar situations while discrimination is the organism's ability to differentiate between differing situations and selecting the suitable behaviour for each different situation.

Discrimination can be applied in the choice of socially appropriate behaviour and varying this behaviour in different social situations. This later became known as "cognitive behaviour modification" where a learner may reason with himself and then select the behaviour most appropriate for the situation. (Meichenbaum, 1977)

One of the problems with Skinner's theory is that reinforcement may vary from one person to another as Kimble and Premack suggest. Kimble disagrees with the usage of reinforcer as a term and definition and suggests going back to Thorndike's terms "satisfier" and "annoyer" with their simple definitions of something that a person either seeks or avoids. In Kimble's opinion, the definition of negative reinforcer can easily be confused with punishment and that the distinction between the two concepts is not clear. (Kimble, 1993) Premack adds that reinforcers don't have to be stimuli, but they can be activities or reinforcers too. (Premack, 1965)

IMPLICATIONS TO CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECT

The behaviorist approach to learning has long been used in traditional teaching methods to promote desirable behaviour and eliminate undesired behaviour by students in classroom settings. The traditional educational systems in many developing countries rely on applying behaviorist theories through using repetition, rote learning, memorization and recall of memorized information. Reinforcement is achieved by preparing very difficult examination processes and reward desirable behaviour (in this case desirable behaviour is memorizing and recalling information) by passing the exams and by this reinforcing the behaviour. Behaviour modification is achieved by negative reinforcement while in this case the negative reinforcer is failing to pass the exams. Learning objectives in curriculums that are based on behaviorist approach to learning focus on lower level mental skills as knowledge of facts rather than on higher level and more complex mental skills as reflection and critical thinking.

This approach is the theoretical foundation of the learning situation model (a) (See Figure 2), where most teaching practices are teacher-centred and thus the teacher holds the power to positive or negative reinforcement. Behavioral modification in these learning situations are done by conditioning students to memorize subjects and the stimulus is the exams and the repetitive stimuli of continuous examinations create a habit of memorizing subjects' contents. Teacher is the main source of either positive or negative reinforcement and student is the subject of the conditioning process. This model was identified by the analysis of empirical data collected from Vietnam, where the teacher is a "Guru" rather than a facilitator to the learning process. Students see the teacher as the source of all knowledge and thus reject the concept of studying online which would deprive them of "feeling the spirit of the teacher". Students accept verbal punishment from the teacher when they do not do exactly as the teacher instructs them to do.

(NB: this is illustrated in details in paper 2 "Exporting a Scandinavian Learning Model to Egypt and Vietnam: Challenges and Implications" and in paper 3 "The

Good, the Bad and the Lazy teacher. A grounded theory approach to higher education learning situations in Vietnam”)

Teacher-centered Learning situation model (based on behaviorist approach to learning)

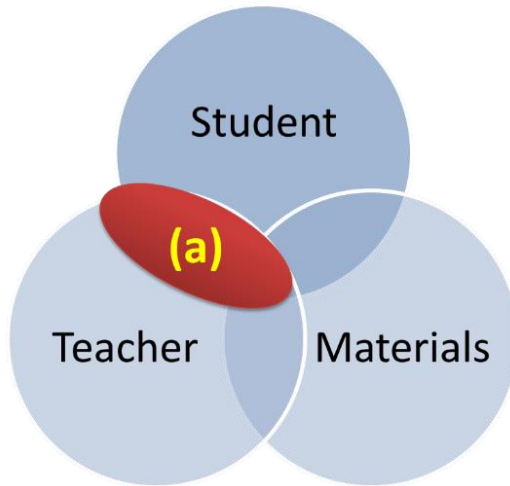


Figure 2: Learning situation model (a) Teacher centered learning

3.2 The cognitivist approach to learning

Cognitivist psychology refers to the study of higher mental functions as processing of information, decision-making, perception and problem solving. Wertheimer, Kohler, and Koftka refer to 'gestalt' psychology as the foundation of cognitive psychology that was founded. Gestalists believe that there is a clear discrepancy between realities as they are and a person's perception of what is real and that to understand behaviour, both realities must be deliberated. Kohler, who studied apes in Tenerife island for 4 years before writing his book "The Mentality of Apes" (1925), disagreed with Thorndike about the theory of learning by trial and error. He observed how apes react differently to problems that they need to solve and through his observations he drew the conclusion that *insight* is the process by which animals and humans learn.

“Insight is the cornerstone of Gestalt psychology. Essentially, it means the perception of relationships among elements of a problem situation. More simply, it is the solution of a problem as a result of perceiving relationships among all the elements of the situation.” (Lefrancois 2000, p.177)

In cognitive theories, the brain is compared to a computer in terms of information processing (IP):

“Information processing (IP) refers to how the information is modified so that it eventually has its observed influence” (Massaro and Cowan, 1993, p. 384)

While behaviorists focus on what can be observed from the outside that is the behaviour, cognitivists speculate on what goes on “inside” the brain that may or not lead to changed behaviour.

JEROME BRUNER (BORN IN 1915) sees a resemblance between the development of children and the history of human inventions. He suggests that in the earliest stages of child development, things are enactive (strictly motoric) or as Bruner phrases it everything is “represented in the muscles” which corresponds to the stages in human evolution where the focus was on motor functions and capabilities. The following stage of development is the iconic representation (mental images) and this stage corresponds to the time when human inventions were directed to intensifying sensual capabilities in human evolution. The highest stage of development in a child’s life is symbolic representation that corresponds to the development of inventions that intensify the intellectual capabilities.

“Although enactive, iconic, and symbolic representation develop sequentially, they don't replace one another. Adults continue to represent both enactively and iconically as well as symbolically” (Lefrancois, 2000, p. 197)

Bruner’s theory revolves around categorizations where he believes that all human cognitive functions and interactions with their environment happen in terms of categories (systems for classification) where they group similar objects in the same category. When a person receives new information, it is immediately classified and stored in previously determined categories or a new category is formed to accommodate it. Decision making, according to Bruner, is also a process of information processing which involves categorization. Related categories are then arranged in a hierarchy to form what Bruner called a coding system. Bruner believed that forming coding systems would improve the learner’s ability to retain new information as well as improve his/her ability for problem solving and thus Bruner advocated a ‘discovery oriented’ teaching approach. He believed that students, by using a process of discovery towards learning, could find relationship

between new facts they discover and the abstract categories they already have which would motivate them and increase their learning retention ability.

Bruner suggests the use of a spiral curriculum where the child is taught the same subject many times at different grades in different depths and levels of difficulty:

“If one respects the ways of thought of the growing child, if one is courteous enough to translate material into his logical forms and challenging enough to tempt him to advance, then it is possible to introduce him at an early age to the ideas and styles that in later life make an educated man” (Bruner, 2006, p. 55)

JEAN PIAGET (1896-1980)

Piaget contributed a lot to the field of developmental cognitive neuroscience. Piaget’s work addressed a lot of topics related to learning and development of the child, which he stressed were two different problems:

“The development of knowledge is a spontaneous process, tied to the whole process of embryogenesis” *while* “Learning presents the opposite case..learning is provoked by situations..as opposed to spontaneous”.
(Piaget, 1972)

Piaget’s most acknowledged contribution to cognitive learning is his theory about the stages of cognitive development in children: the sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. Many scholars criticized Piaget’s developmental theory, for example Byrnes argued that children’s cognitive development does not take place simultaneously along all domains. (Byrnes, 1996) Piaget’s theory of equilibration states that cognitive development is the result of cognitive conflict which means that a child acquires new knowledge when faced with an event that does not match with his/her existing beliefs. (Duncan, 1995) This theory can be applied in curriculum development through creating incongruity by introducing challenging information in teaching materials that do not match with learners’ cognitive structures (material with optimal difficulty). Piaget stresses the importance of teachers’ understanding of the development level of students whom they teach and how children think and form their realities in order to be able to appreciate the limitations and possibilities of children’s thought processes.

Piaget believed in the value of active learning rather than passive learning and his work formed foundational grounds for the development of constructivist learning theories later on. Perhaps the most famous quote for Piaget that reflects his deepest beliefs about the role of education and has become a motivational statement for many educators is:

“The principle goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done; men and women who are creative, inventive and discoverers, who can be critical and verify, and not accept, everything they are offered.” (Piaget, 1988)

IMPLICATIONS TO CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECT

Cognitive learning theories have many implications in curriculum designs by using discovery-oriented approaches as problem solving instruction. Especially in Science and Mathematics subjects, curriculums are based on well-structured problems with the needed information to solve them. Categorization of information by using a coding system is best applicable to single subject books and references, where students are encouraged to “discover” new information (as Bruner suggested). Piaget’s concept of equilibration and cognitive conflict can be best implemented by using textbooks with materials of optimal difficulty.

This approach was used as the theoretical foundation to the learning situation model (b) (See Figure 3), where teaching and learning are materials centred. The information processing (IP) concept in cognitive learning theories diminishes the role of the teacher as the centre of the learning process and replaces it by the resources and books (referred to as materials in the learning situation model), which contain the information for processing. The teacher’s role in this model is preparing the materials and providing problems for students to solve, with the needed information for solving them, and encouraging students to interact frequently with the materials. This model was identified in the analysis of empirical data collected from Egypt, where students’ main focus in the learning process is placed on the materials and the transcribed lectures.

(NB: This is elaborated in full details in paper 2 “Exporting a Scandinavian Learning Model to Egypt and Vietnam: Challenges and Implications” and in paper 4 “Modern day ‘Kuttab’- A grounded theory study of higher education learning situations in Egypt and implications for e-learning course design”)

Materials-centered Learning situation model (based on cognitivist approach to learning)

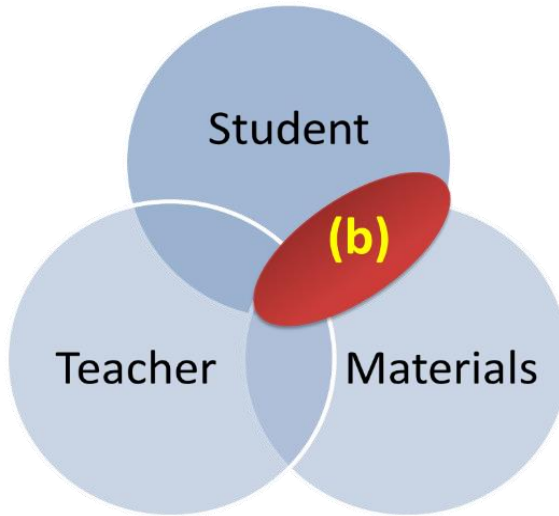


Figure 3: Learning situation model (b) Materials centered learning

3.3 The constructivist approach to learning

Constructivism is an epistemology rather than a theory of learning which assumes the existence of multiple realities as opposed to the positivist epistemology that assumes that there is only one reality that people try to realize. Based on this assumption, learning is described as an interpretive process of constructing meanings of abstract objects by the active learner interacting with his/her surroundings. (Geary, 1995) Thus learning is situated in context (situated cognition) and the learning process is a reflective non-linear process which is dependent on circumstances, social worlds and different meanings construed by each individual learner (Anderson, Reder et al., 1996). Constructivism was criticized by some scholars who found that constructivism is an extension of extreme relativism and disagree with the idea that all learning is relevant to the individual's views and experiences and they find this "too impractical" (Schwen, T. et al., 1993)

LEV VYGOTSKY (1896 – 1934), the renowned Russian researcher, is considered one of the founders of constructive learning theory. Vygotsky stresses the importance of social systems as a medium for enhancing learning and development of the child. The social system of an individual affects his/her learning through tools as culture, language and symbols. Vygotsky contends that all higher mental functions result from social interactions:

“An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people..., and then inside the child. This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher [mental] functions originate as actual relations between human individuals” (Vygotsky, 1980, p. 57)

Vygotsky also stresses the importance of cultural and historical context in shaping the learner’s development. He explains that the learner’s cognitive functions are affected by his/her social environment tools and institutions:

“The nature of the development itself changes, from biological to sociohistorical. Verbal thought is not an innate, natural form of behaviour, but is determined by a historical-cultural process and has specific properties and laws that cannot be found in the natural forms of thought and speech” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 94)

Vygotsky’s most appreciated contribution to the field of constructivist learning theories is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky defines ZPD as:

“It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1980, p. 86)

Thus learning takes place in the ZPD where the learner is faced with tasks which are neither too easy nor too difficult and receives the help needed from the teacher (scaffolding) and internalizes the new concepts learned which finally results in change of cognition. This can be applied in the classroom when teachers use ‘instructional scaffolding’ by offering students tasks which are beyond their existing cognitive level and help students in achieving the level of expertise needed to perform this task. Vygotsky’s theories can also be applied in the classroom in group activities and ‘peer collaboration’, where social interaction in-group activities act as an enhancing element for learning. (Bruner, 1984)

Implications of constructivism in learning and education include concepts as encouraging learners to raise questions, create hypotheses and discuss them among

their peers. Reflection should be encouraged as a tool for meaning making along with the use of symbols. Learners are viewed as active participants in their own learning process by constructing meanings from abstract information. Constructive learning classrooms depend upon peer interaction, learner-centred activities and reflective teaching.

HOWARD S. BARROWS (1928 – 2011):

One of the teaching pedagogies that stem from constructivist learning theories is **problem-based learning (PBL)**, a model that was first introduced for teaching medical students in the early seventies. Barrows, one of the pioneers of introducing PBL in teaching medical students, explains the need for a new pedagogy for engaging medical students in their own education process by making learning less boring and thus increasing their level of satisfaction.

“Studies of the clinical reasoning of students and resident physicians in neurology suggested that the conventional methods of teaching probably inhibit, if not destroy, any clinical reasoning ability.” (Barrows, 1996)

Barrows stressed the important characteristics of problem-based learning as: (1) Student-centred learning; (2) Student group learning; (3) Teacher’s role as a facilitator; (4) Problems as the stimulus for learning and developing problem-solving skills; (5) Self-directed cognition (Barrows, 1996). The assessment in PBL is done through student self-assessment together with peer-assessments rather than the conventional formal examinations testing cognitive levels of students.

Concerns about the use of PBL in education include the high cost of developing curriculums using PBL as pedagogy, and doubts about students’ ability to develop the acknowledged cognitive levels for professional studies as medicine and engineering through the use of PBL. (Albanese and Mitchell, 1993) Whether PBL provides superior results to conventional teaching methods or not has been long debated and results of studies were quite contradictory. Some meta-analytical studies show that the cognitive testing results of learners studying with the conventional instructional method were similar to those who studied using the problem-based learning approach but exhibited better retention level on the long run (Dochy, Segers et al., 2003). Other studies show that students who studied using PBL exhibited better problem solving capabilities and in some studies they expressed higher satisfaction levels with PBL than with conventional teaching methods (Denton, Adams et al., 2000). Another meta-analysis concludes that:

“... it is unlikely that students will suffer detrimental consequences from exposure to PBL programs. Our analysis suggest some educational benefits from PBL in comparison with more traditional approaches” (Vernon and Blake, 1993).

Implications to current research project

Curriculums based on the constructivist approach to learning place the responsibility of learning in the hands of the learner. Many educational policies in developed countries now adopt the constructivist approach by using project-based or problem-based learning pedagogies. In this research, the case of Aalborg University (the university under study in Denmark) has long been using PBL as its teaching pedagogy. Although this research does not attempt to study the outcome of education in any of the 3 countries under study, yet students' as well as teachers' attitudes were studied. It was clear from the analysis of the results that students who studied using PBL had more independence towards their own learning and less dependence on the teacher.

This was used as the theoretical foundation of the learning situation model (c) where learning is student-centred and the teacher's role is a facilitator to the process of student's learning while materials represent a tool for learning but not the central element in it (See Figure 4). In this model, Vygotsky's theory of zone of proximal development (ZPD) is applied by encouraging students to ask questions, solve problems, and build hypothesis and test them while the teacher and materials are catalysts to the process, rather than being the main factor in the process.

(NB: This is elaborated in full details in paper 2 "Exporting a Scandinavian Learning Model to Egypt and Vietnam: Challenges and Implications")

Student-centered Learning situation model (based on constructivist approach to learning)

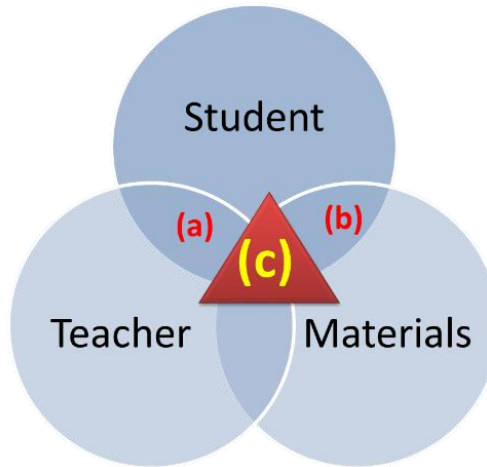


Figure 4: Learning situation model (c) Student centered learning

Chapter Summary

The detailed 3 approaches to learning; the behaviorist, cognitivist and constructivist can be viewed as 3 steps in the evolution of learning theories where the realization of one step led to the next. The chapter paints a picture about the 3 concepts, their implications to teaching pedagogies in general as well as their implications to the development of the learning situation model used in this research project. Understanding these 3 approaches paved the way for the author to better interpret and analyse the empirical data from the 3 countries.

This chapter serves another purpose, which is to help the reader to better appreciate the theoretical foundation of the teaching pedagogies used in each of the 3 countries, Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam. Thus the reader can better relate to the roots of the convictions of policy makers in these countries.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Methodological approach

Before I detail the research methodology used in this project, I would like to explain first my epistemological and ontological stand. Epistemology refers to the acquiring of knowledge and ‘the criteria that allow distinctions between ‘knowledge’ and ‘non-knowledge’ (Scott and Usher, 1996, p. 11), while Ontology is concerned with reality and whether there is an existing reality that researchers set out to explore or as a relative experience which is affected by the researcher’s own experiences and interpretations of what is real and what is not. The researcher’s epistemological and ontological stand determines how he/she will approach the data collected and thus explains how the researcher attempts to reach conclusions and make assumptions, based on objective facts or on subjective interpretations of data. I will give a brief about the two approaches, which are most relevant to educational research fields, the positivist/objectivist approach, and the interpretive/constructive approach. The main difference in these two approaches stem from the general view on social worlds and what comprises reality. Louis Cohen explains these differences by posing a set of questions to which answers would determine which direction the researcher will heed. These questions are:

“Is social reality external to individuals—imposing itself on their consciousness from without—or is it the product of individual consciousness? Is reality of an objective nature, or the result of individual cognition? Is it a given ‘out there’ in the world, or is it created by one’s own mind?” (Cohen, Manion et al., 2000, p. 5)

There are 2 popular approaches to research, the objectivist approach and the interpretive approach. In the coming section I will briefly outline the main concepts which underly each of the 2 approaches, followed by my own approach in this research project.

4.1.1 THE POSITIVIST/OBJECTIVIST APPROACH

Robin Usher explains that the positivist approach which assumes that there is an “objective” world that exists independent of knowers and is governed by a set of rules and events that we can attempt to reveal by following a systematic method of gathering information in an objective manner and coming to abstract conclusions about it. This approach also assumes that the social world, just like the natural

world, is governed by rules of cause and effect and thus the goal of research is to reach a fixed set of rules that would render the control of the social world possible. Based on these assumptions, validity and reliability of any research in the field of social sciences would be based on the use of objective observations in a systematic and measured manner.

“Different observers exposed to the same data (the underlying assumption here is that data are always the ‘same’) should be able to come to the same conclusions. This is intersubjective validation. Full agreement is therefore always in principle possible and it is this test of intersubjective replicability which is the most significant indicator of procedural objectivity.” (Scott and Usher 1996, p. 12)

Many scholars critiqued this approach as Kuhn who contends that the rules of both the natural and social sciences cannot be understood independent of the communities and paradigms which shape the values and beliefs of the researcher that interprets the data. Thus, research is not a mechanical logical process resulting in definite universal sets of laws but rather it is a dynamic and active process that is shaped by the laws of the community and era where it is done (Kuhn, 2012).

Louis Cohen contends that particularly in the study of education, the positivist approach has very limited value as the complexity of the human nature and the determinants of human behaviour is far from being similar to the uniform order of the natural world:

“This point is nowhere more apparent than in the contexts of classroom and school where the problems of teaching, learning and human interaction present the positivistic researcher with a mammoth challenge.” (Cohen, Manion et al., 2000, p. 10)

This approach is the root of Glaser’s school of Grounded Theory approach which advocates the objectivity of the researcher and assumes that grounded theory research should result in the formation of abstract theories about social behaviour (*this is explained in full details in section 4.2.1.1 of this thesis*)

4.1.2 THE INTERPRETIVE/CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

This approach assumes that all human actions should be analyzed and examined within the context of their social world and thus the focus of research should be on social practices. In this epistemological approach the researcher is an active participant in the process of meaning making by interpreting social behavior. The grounds for this approach is the belief that there isn’t only one interpretation of an event but there is multiple perspectives and interpretations based on the interpreter’s understanding and meaning forming methods. Based on this

assumption, reality is complex and has many layers and cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional interpretation.

While positivist researchers set out with a theory and hypotheses to prove or disprove, the interpretive researcher collects the data and analyses them and the theory follows:

“From an interpretive perspective, the hope of a universal theory which characterizes the normative outlook gives way to multifaceted images of human behaviour as varied as the situations and contexts supporting them.” (Cohen, Manion et al., 2000, p.23)

In grounded theory research, this is the epistemology adopted by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), Kathy Charmaz (Charmaz, 2006) and Adele Clarke (Clarke, 2005). The researcher is not expected to be a passive observer of social interactions but rather an active participant in the research:

“Positioning the researcher as the participants’ partner in the research process, rather than as an objective analyst of subjects’ experiences, is vital to developing a constructivist grounded theory design.” (Mills, Bonner et al., 2006).

Some of the criticisms of interpretive research is that there may be validity and reliability concerns about the research results and that these results can not be generalized to other similar situations. Positivist researchers question the value of interpretive research altogether claiming that if it can not be validated and the results can not be reused then it has no value at all. They also argue that there is research bias in the results which, as Glaser wrote, may “contaminate” the data.

To respond to these critiques, I argue that assumption that the researcher can be objective and neutral about the data at any point in time is a logic that has proved not to be true in many cases. The researcher always interacts with the data, with the participants, and with his/her own set of beliefs and feelings while doing the research which makes it almost impossible to be machine-like neutral to the research results. Particularly in grounded theory research, the issues of validity and reliability have been addressed by many authors and a list of guidelines to validate the data has been suggested, together with the constant comparison method which all provide good grounds for validity and reliability.

4.1.3 MY RESEARCH APPROACH

This research adopts the interpretive approach which is consistent with the research field and problem areas. I follow the constructive grounded theory approach adapted from Kathy Charmaz and Adele Clarke’s schools of grounded theory

research (more details on the different schools of grounded theory are presented in section 4.6.1 of this thesis titled: History and schools of grounded theory: which way to go?).

Adopting a constructivist/interpretive approach came as a natural result of my deep involvement in the research problem area as the research questions emerged from the issues, which I personally faced in teaching my students from Egypt and Vietnam. Separating myself from the data and being objective in analyzing them were almost impossible for me. Taking the interpretive approach made it essential for me to interact with the participants and with the empirical data without the kind of guilt that the positivist approach lays on the researcher if he/she allow their pre-concieved ideas and feelings to “contaminate” the data (as Glaser calls it). In reaching the theoretical categories, I did not expect theories to “emerge” from the data on their own (as per the positivist approach to grounded theory) but I used my ‘theoretical sensitivity’ and my previous notions and experiences to guide the process of interpretation. Also, adopting the constructivist approach meant to me that if I go back after a few years and collect more data from the same or from different participants, it is possible that I will reach totally different theories and interpretations because the social world would be different then and I will be different too. In other words, I accept and contend that the results of my research are correct at this point in time and according to my interpretation, but these results can in no way be taken as generalizations and abstract concepts that should be accepted as true for all students from Egypt and Vietnam. These results are my interpretation of what is real now and under these circumstances, but this does not mean that it is the only reality that can be seen and interpreted in the same or similar situations. My reality is created based on my subjective view of the social world(s) under study in this project and thus it can not and should not be seen as objective analysis because no other scholar can see the same social world exactly as I do. That is why using constructivist grounded theory approach as it is a method of enquiry that accepts and even encourages the researcher to continuously interact with the data in a subjective rather than an objective manner. Identifying my view of reality (ontology) and my meaning ascribing approach (epistemology) were very helpful in the selection of the research methodology and approach that I used in this study.

4.2 Research design

This study is an ethnographic study of teaching and learning practices within the higher education systems in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam coupled with a constructivist grounded theory approach for analysis of data. The “grounded theory ethnography” research methodology has become popular in studying interactions on a deep level of analysis and building a theory based on the analysis:

“Grounded theory methods move ethnographic research toward theoretical development by raising description to abstract categories and theoretical interpretation.” (Charmaz, 2006, p.23)

I chose an ethnographic approach in collection of data because of the long tradition of using it in studies about human interactions and education. J. D. Brewer (Brewer, 2000) defines ethnography as

"the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally". (Brewer, 2000, p. 10).

I chose grounded theory method for data analysis and generation of theory as it has an explanatory power “This power illuminates common issues for people in a way that allows them to identify with theory and use it in their own lives.” (Mills, Bonner et al., 2006). The use of grounded theory for analysing the empirical data collected helped explain the different interactions taking place in learning practices in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam on the micro level where teachers, students and teaching materials play the major roles in these interactions.

4.3 Focal point of study: The Learning Situation Model:

The focal point of research in this study is the “Learning Situation” which is inspired by Adele Clarke’s book on Situational Analysis (SA). Adele explains the importance of focusing on situations since “the conditions of the action are inside the situation and therefore we should study the situation itself as the focus of analysis”. When focus on a particular situation, the focus is on situated actions of the actors/actants of a specific social world where an array of discourses occur. She also explains how focusing on the situation would eventually help us to understand the larger, more complex picture as “a situation is always greater than the sum of its parts” (Clarke, 2005). According to Adele Clarke, the most important focus of negotiations and discourses is the ‘*situatedness*’ of action and interaction, accordingly, the conditions of the situation are in the situation, where everything in the situation both constitutes, affects and conditions everything else in the situation.

In this research I focus on the “Learning Situation” (LS) (See Figure 5) as the main core constituent of higher education and where different issues are fought, manipulated, negotiated and agreed upon inside the boundaries of education setups.

Basic unit of Analysis = Learning situation

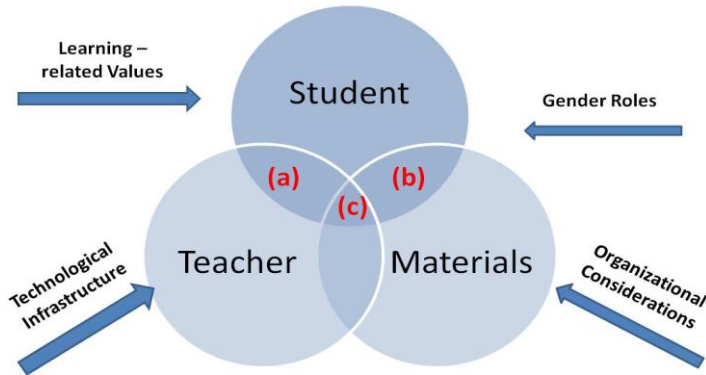


Figure 5: Learning Situation Model

My definition of a “Learning Situation” is an institutionally arranged situation in which the actors fulfil well-defined roles (as teachers and students) in order to accomplish student learning. The non-human actants that have significant value in the “Learning Situation” are teaching materials (books, lecture notes, presentations-etc.). External factors to the situation also play a role as the technological infrastructure of the country and cultural values.

In this model, each “Learning Situation” is a formal teaching-learning episode that takes place within an institution and is normally scheduled in advance between students and teachers in the presence (or non-presence) of materials. This episode is intended to result in some form of cognitive learning by the students. In this research, students’ accounts of “Learning Situations” and their feedback and feelings expressed towards the learning situations were coded and analysed as representations of learning situations in addition to the observations of the situations. The learning situation model represents the unit of analysis in focus in this research, where the main human actors represented are the teacher and student and the non-human actants are the materials and technology.

The model also takes into consideration other factors outside the learning situation itself that may influence the situation as (i) Gender roles: how the gender of the student and/or the teacher may or may not affect the learning situation and how the societal views about gender roles may affect the interactions between students from both genders and between students and teachers of similar or opposite genders. (ii) Learning related values: is learning perceived as a high value in the society or is the value placed only on obtaining a certificate? Do families place a high value on educating children or education is perceived as an optional advantage that may or

may not be pursued? (iii) Organizational considerations: this aspect refers to the logistical factors as size of classrooms, temperature modifying facilities on campus, availability of teaching tools, libraries and safe and clean environment. (iv) Technological infrastructure: this factor refers to the availability and ease of access to internet in different countries and how this may affect students' learning experience and thus influence the learning situation all together. Although these factors are considered to be on the periphery of this research and not as central points of focus yet they were taken into consideration and attention has been paid to them during the collection of data as well as during the analysis.

The analysis of each "Learning Situation" (LS) categorizes it as (a) predominantly student-teacher interaction, (b) predominantly student-materials interaction or (c) a mixed balance between student-teacher-material interactions (Figure 3). If the main classroom activity takes place as interaction between students and teacher (a), it indicates that the learning situation may be controlled and dominated by the teacher. If the major part of the activities is organized as interaction between the individual student (or groups of students) and course material, this indicates that the class is organized as independent or self-managed learning (b) in which the teacher's role is a transmitter of information and in this case the learning is content-centred. Finally, if the class is organized as a combination of teacher-student interaction and student-material interaction, this indicates that the teacher is seeking to strike a balance between teacher-managed and self-managed learning (c)

4.4 Theoretical sampling

In grounded theory research the sampling strategy recommended is theoretical sampling, which means that no sample size is decided early in the research process, but the researcher goes back to the field after categories start to emerge to collect more data about the categories. This process can be repeated many times until "theoretical saturation" happens, which means that no new data can be collected (Charmaz, 2006, p. 97). In this sense, sampling becomes theoretical (emerging from the theory) rather than purposive. (Glaser, Strauss et al., 1968; Corbin and Strauss, 2008)

In this study, theoretical sampling was used on a narrow scale since the study was conducted in 3 countries located in 3 different continents and multiple travels between them was not an affordable option within the available resources for this research project. Selective sampling was used initially and the criteria for the sample were decided to include higher education students and institutes in public universities in the three countries: Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam. General areas of attention for non-participant observations were identified and these included 5 areas: (1) Context of learning, (2) Interaction and communication, (3) Teaching and Learning, (4) Use of technology, (5) Cultural aspects. An initial question guide for focus groups and interviews was drafted.

Non-participant observation of one lecture in Aalborg University followed by a focus group with students from the same class was initially conducted as a pilot study. Data collected was transcribed and open coded and the resulting codes were used to refine the sample group criteria and further refine, formalize and adjust the observations' areas of attention and the interview questions guide. Also, theoretical sampling was used as a result of the initial coding process and it was decided to add private educational institutes in Vietnam and Egypt (especially those that use an element of technology for enhancing education) to be able to use comparative analysis not only by comparing learning practices in the 3 countries, but also by comparing learning practices in the same country and how similar or different they are in private and public education sector.

In Vietnam, one initial non-participant observation and an interview with 3 students were conducted initially, results were open coded and accordingly modifications were done to the sample criteria as well as to interview questions guide. For example, one recurrent code that was seen in Vietnam data was "respect for teacher", while this contradicted data from the observations in Vietnam (Details of the observation study can be found in the 2nd publication titled "Exporting a Scandinavian Learning Model to Egypt and Vietnam: Challenges and Implications"). I wrote a memo where I reflected in length on this contradiction and this led to 2 modifications, *first* adding teacher participants for interviewing and *second* modifying the interview questions guide to include questions about what students consider to be a "good teacher". This new data helped in formalizing the main category in Vietnam data analysis. Sample in Vietnam included 24 students, 3 teachers, one private international college and 3 public universities.



Figure 6: A picture of industrial university of Ho Chi Minh city (HUI) campus

In Egypt, one initial non-participant observation in a public university and an in-depth interview with 2 students from the same university were conducted. Data was transcribed and open coded and a major code family was identified, which is “transcribed word-by-word lectures -King of education in Egypt”. I wrote a lengthy memo about this code family and looked for supporting literature, which was added to the memo, and this led me to an important question, is it the same in semi-private and privately owned educational institutes in Egypt? This led to 2 modifications, first, including participants from semi-private and privately owned institutes and second, adding questions (included only in Egypt interview question guide) about students’ feelings about “transcribed lecture notes”. One focus group with 12 student participants from semi-private University. These additions led to shedding a greater light on a major factor resulting from familiar learning practices for Egyptian students, which has a direct effect on their acceptance to the use of e-learning in education.



Figure 7: A picture of Cairo University campus

I also tried to recruit teacher participants in Egypt, but none of the teachers that I approached agreed as it would require an official written approval from their hiring university and to get this approval, the university that I am enrolled in as PhD student needs to correspond with officials in the university where these teachers work, explaining the project and the objective of the interviews and wait for the reply. It is a lengthy bureaucratic process that may take years and years without getting an official reply.

4.5 Tools for Gathering Data

Hammersley and Atkinson state that ethnography has no fixed definition but most ethnographic work is characterized by some characteristics as unstructured data that is gathered from a range of sources with no specific research design and where the most commonly used tools for gathering data are participant observations and relatively informal conversations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

The tools that I used included non-participant observation and note taking, diary keeping, audio recordings and data reports. Observation was coupled with focus

group activities conducted in each of the three countries, using a semi-structured questions guide. The value of focus groups at this stage was that students from the three groups could reveal aspects of experience and perspectives that would not be as accessible without group interaction. All focus groups were either video recorded or audio recorded.

Unstructured in-depth interviews were also conducted in all three countries with either students only or students and teachers to identify how teachers design and develop their courses and how students perceive the methods of teaching that are currently being adopted by teaching staff in the three countries and all interviews were audio recorded. Documentary evidence from some of the materials used for teaching and studying in the three countries was obtained for analysis and comparison.



Figure 8: Focus group of students in a private university in Vietnam



Figure 9: Focus group of students in a public university in Vietnam

4.5.1 AREAS OF ATTENTION

A detailed areas of attention guide was created, modified and refined after each stage of data collection and again after initial open coding. The final resulting guide included the following areas and question:

1. **The context of learning (organization)**
 - The size of the class
 - Number of students
 - Arrangement of chairs
 - Time of class
 - Weather regulating tools available in the classroom (A/C – fan – heating)
 - Is water, coffee or food allowed in class?
 - Activities as sports, social activities
 - Course and semester lesson plan
 - Curricular structure
2. **Interaction and communications:**
 - How much time is given to discussions and dialogue?
 - How formal or informal is the teacher-student interactions in class?
 - Do students ask questions?

- Does the teacher link the session with previous sessions?
- Do teachers get interrupted?
- Do students relate to what the teacher is saying?
- How do students communicate with each other?
- What role exists for personal opinion as opposed to group opinion?

3. Teaching and Learning:

- What kind of materials do teachers use?
- How teachers approach students?
- What are the student's concept of learning and the teacher's concept of learning?
- Assumptions on learning
- Use of examples
- How do students see their role in learning?
- How is their understanding of learning lived out?
- How do teachers act in class - as facilitators or gurus?

4. Use of technology:

- What technological tools do students have?
- Are they allowed to use them in class?
- What technological tools do teachers have in class?
- Is the classroom equipped with technological tools? What kind of tools?
- Do students have easy access to Internet? In university? At home? Elsewhere?
- Is the speed of the Internet satisfactory?
- How do students feel about using technology in education?

5. Cultural aspects:

- Are there certain role models for the students?
- *Gender roles?*
 - a. What signs and implications it has on student-student interactions and student-teacher interactions?
 - b. The way students dress?
 - c. Students' interactions among same gender and among different genders?
 - d. Is the gender of the teacher relevant to the teacher's role? How?
- *Language considerations:*
 - a. What language are classes conducted in?
 - b. What language is teaching and discussions conducted in?
 - c. What language are the teaching materials in? Is this language understandable to students?
 - d. How many of the students know English and can participate in international environments either real or virtual?
- *Religious considerations:*
 - a. Is religion mentioned in class in any way?

- b. Does it have an impact on students' understanding and acceptance to new theories they learn if they are contradictory in any way to their religious beliefs?
- c. Are religious symbols represented in any way in the context of the classroom?

4.5.2 NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

Using the areas of attention guide, observations were carried out in the 3 countries as the first step in this research project. Obtaining access to public or private university lectures was not always easy, sometimes for bureaucratic reasons and other times people in charge refused to allow me access to the classes (which happened in a public university in Vietnam). In these observations, I wrote detailed accounts of all activities, discourses and interactions taking place in each lecture (Figure 11) and these observations were later on rewritten and coded as part of the analysis process. I also collected evidential materials from universities as copies of hand written lecture notes in Egypt (Figure 10), and lecture plans and time tables in Vietnam and Denmark.

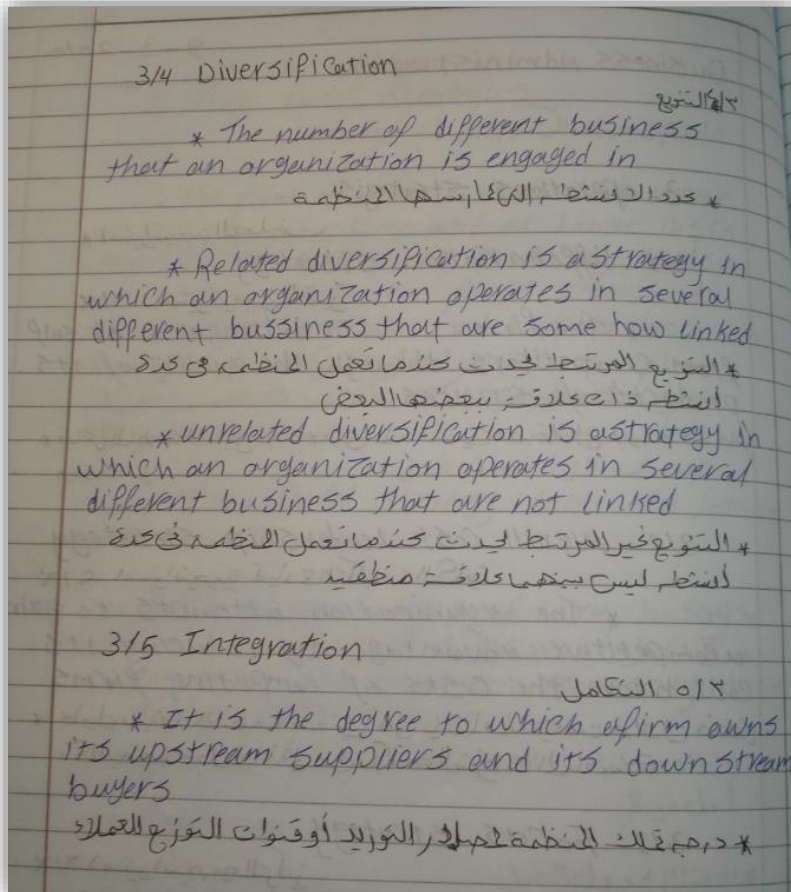


Figure 10: Example of Hand Written Lecture Notes in Cairo University

Accounting systems costs Lecture02.2012

Context: Class size: 500 students - Number of students: around 400 - Duration of lecture: 2 hours

Notes

- Before the lecture started, one of the students stood up and told the rest of the students that he wrote a summary for the previous lectures and the Arabic translation after each paragraph and that at the end of the summary he will make a questions and answers section with examples of how exam questions can be addressed.
- No computers or laptops were allowed in the lecture room. Students waited for 45 minutes for the teacher to arrive to the class. The teacher uses computer for PowerPoint presentation (a student sitting behind me makes fun of using computers in lecturing)
- Students did not know which lecture this was
- Teacher starts by reciting some verses from the holy book of Muslims – the Quran then he wishes students success at the beginning of the new semester.
- Teacher starts the lecture by saying that he does not deal with students as a teacher but as a father
- Although the teacher said that he wants students to understand not to write after him they all wrote after him anyway.
- Teacher gives examples and asks students and students answer
- Teacher encourages students to guess the answer to some questions which he did not explain before and students try to answer
- Teacher says that the exam would be multiple choice questions and students sitting behind me comment that this would make cheating easier. Teacher says that students should use the examples he gives in class and that they should not *improvise*, he keeps repeating that when they *improvise* they start making *mistakes*, he advises them to stick to the knowledge that is in his book and not to try to add other notes which are outside his book.
- Some teachers write books and force students to buy these books so they can make extra money and also to compete with private tutoring centers which are very common and widespread in Egypt
- Teachers explain the theory first giving along examples of exercises for applying the theory
- Teacher stops the lecture in the middle to preach about the importance of good deeds in the Islamic religion (for 20 minutes)
- Students go in and out of the lecture room during the 2 hours of the lecture and the teacher does not object, after some time the teacher locked the auditorium door so no one can go out of the auditorium before the end of the lecture
- At the end of the lecture, the teacher says that he made an exception this lecture by allowing female students to sit beside male students because it was the first lecture in the new term but in the upcoming lectures he wants female students to sit in one side of the auditorium and male students to sit in on other side.

Figure 11: Example of one of the observations in a lecture in Cairo University

4.6 Constructing Grounded Theory (GT) in this research

4.6.1 HISTORY AND SCHOOLS OF GROUNDED THEORY: WHICH WAY TO GO?

4.6.1.1 Traditional (Glaserian) Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss, the founding fathers of Grounded Theory (GT), wrote their first book about grounded theory in 1967, which was a revolution in qualitative research at a time when quantitative research was perceived to be the reliable method and qualitative research as a complimentary method. They define grounded theory as “the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” (Glaser, Strauss et al., 1968). In GT, unlike in traditional qualitative research, the researcher enters the field without a preconceived hypothesis or a clear theoretical framework (Cutcliffe, 2000). Grounded theory’s roots are in symbolic interactionism and pragmatism which assume that humans construct realities based on the meanings that things have to themselves and to other people they react with (Blumer, 1986). Symbolic interactionists believe that every person constructs realities from interacting with symbols and their relation to them and making meaning based on these interactions, inherent in this concept the fact that a person is part of the situation that he/she attempts to make meaning out of it (Morse and Field, 1995). Grounded theory then “combined the depth and richness of qualitative interpretive traditions with the logic, rigor and systematic analysis inherent in quantitative survey research” (Walker and Myrick, 2006).

In this first version of GT, the authors take a positivist approach to data, which in many ways resembles quantitative research with the assumption that there is a truth “out there” that the researcher sets out to explore. Inherent in this assumption, is the belief that the researcher can remain completely objective and neutral to the situation under study so that he can be “more faithful to his data” and “less theoretically biased”, this is why in GT literature review is avoided until later to prevent preconception. This positivist approach is clear in the (most debated) concept of “emergence of data”, assuming that through a systematic process of dismantling and reassembling data, the theory that is ‘hidden’ in the data will emerge (Boyчук Duchscher and Morgan, 2004). Kathy Charmaz calls this approach “objectivist” and explains the views of an objectivist grounded theorist by saying “An objectivist grounded theorist assumes that data represent objective facts about a knowable world. The data already exist in the world; the researcher finds

them and 'discovers' theory from them" (Charmaz, 2006). This approach became known later on as "Traditional Grounded Theory" or the Glaserian approach.

4.6.1.2 Evolved (Straussian) Grounded Theory

The second version of GT was introduced by Strauss and Corbin where they introduced a more evolved approach to GT, where they made room for the researcher's role in interpreting the data. In the book that they co-authored they included the step of "selective coding" where the researcher must be active in obtaining the theory from data through a process of "integrating and refining categories" (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). This concept contradicts Glaser's concept of "emergence of data" as it assumes that each researcher will come up with a different theory by analysing the same data. Glaser responded negatively to this assumption and referred to this as "forcing of data" and refused to accept calling this method as grounded theory and suggested that it is more of "Full Conceptual Description" (Boychuk Duchscher and Morgan, 2004).

4.6.1.3 Constructivist Grounded Theory

Constructivists took Grounded theory and the role of the researcher to an even more pragmatic level, where the researcher is a co-author of data not merely an interpreter of data as Strauss suggested nor a passive analyser of data as Glaser suggested or as Kathy Charmaz explains it "their role becomes more of a conduit for the research process rather than a creator of it" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 132).

Kathy Charmaz is one of the authors of Constructive Grounded Theory, she explains the role of the researcher as a constructor of the theory by saying: "Constructivist grounded theorists assume that both data and analyses are social constructions that reflect what their production entailed." (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131). Thus, constructive grounded theory accepts and honours the fact that the researcher cannot be a silent neutral observer in the research process and that the resulting theory is a product of the researcher's interpretation, which is situated in the context of time, place, culture and situations. The interaction between the researcher and the research participants is an integral as well as inevitable part of the research process when doing constructive grounded theory. In this version of grounded theory, researchers' reflexivity about their own concepts and realities is approved and accepted as expressed by Jane Mills and her co-authors, "Constructivist grounded theory is positioned at the latter end of this methodological spiral, actively repositioning the researcher as the author of a reconstruction of experience and meaning." (Mills, Bonner et al., 2006).

Adele Clarke also discussed constructive grounded theory and "grounding in the situation", in her book "Situational Analysis – Beyond the postmodern turn". She

explains the importance of analysing a situation of inquiry by saying that “the situation is always greater than the sum of its parts because it includes their relationality in a particular temporal and spatial moment” (Clarke, 2005, p. 23) . By focusing the process of data collection to situations of inquiry, the researcher can inter-play with the human and non-human factors which affect the situation at a certain place and time in a way that focusing on a larger social world would not allow. The importance of analysing the situation lies in the presence of the contextual elements of the situation represented in the situation itself, thus by analysing the situation you can also analyse all human and non-actants actors in it and their positions and relations. (Clarke, 2005, p. 29).

4.6.2 THE DISPUTE ABOUT LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of literature review when doing grounded theory research is perhaps the most disputed topic among scholars working with grounded theory. In most other research methodologies used, be it quantitative or qualitative, the literature review is usually done before the start of the research and its objective is mainly to further define the research problem as well as ensure the innovative nature of the research. The dispute is not about whether or not to do a literature review but rather about when to do the review. Glaser and Strauss (the founders of the grounded theory research methodology) advise scholars to withhold from doing literature review prior to collecting the data as this may lead to building of preconceived assumptions about the results of the research and thus may lead to “contamination of data”:

“An effective strategy is, at first, literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different Areas.” (Glaser, Strauss et al., 1968, p. 37)

Glaser’s argument is that if the researcher engages with the literature before going into the field there is a risk of being affected by this literature and thus favour a certain approach to the collection of data based on certain assumptions. Although this has been accepted as the norm in doing grounded theory research for a long time, yet many researchers find it difficult to accept going into the field with an “empty mind” as Strauss suggested. Strauss and Corbin in their book explained the concept of “theoretical sensitivity” which refers to the researcher’s own perception, experience and knowledge of the field under study and thus may offer useful insights about sampling strategies and to “satisfy human subject committees”, which refers to the acceptance of a research proposal by funding bodies (Corbin and

Strauss, 2008, p. 51) In general, it is advisable that scholars should not go through a very detailed and thorough literature review prior to the data collection, but some sort of engagement with the literature is useful to better understand the field under study and also to ensure the innovative nature of the current study.

Kathy Charmaz rejects the notion to postpone literature review totally till after data collection and analysis. She suggests approaching the existing body of literature early enough in the research process to establish your position as a researcher in the field and acknowledge previous work done in the same field. “The trick is to use it (the literature) without letting it stifle your creativity or strangle your theory.” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 166). She explains that being competent in the theoretical background of the field that you are studying strengthens your position as a researcher and gives you the right to argue your theory strongly.

In this study, I followed Kathy Charmaz’ school in doing the literature review. I did an initial literature review before the start of the research project when I was applying for the research grant. Another literature review in a very broad sense was done before the collection of data, which focused on theories, related to blended learning and the general issues related to internationalization of education. During the collection of data, I felt compelled to go back to examining the literature all the time mainly due to the comparative nature of grounded theory as a research methodology. I found myself going back and forth from one general level of literature review to the more specific levels concerning the specific issues in the countries under study. I focused on 4 main levels of literature review: (1) Internationalization of education, (2) Issues in Export of education using blended learning, (3) Regional Issues in blended learning, (4) Issues in Egypt and Vietnam (See Figure 12). I refrained from doing a thorough review of the available literature and from building a consolidated theoretical framework before data collection. In this study, the review of literature was basically directed by the analysis of the empirical data and so the specific literature review was done during the coding and memo writing stage as a comparative literature review.

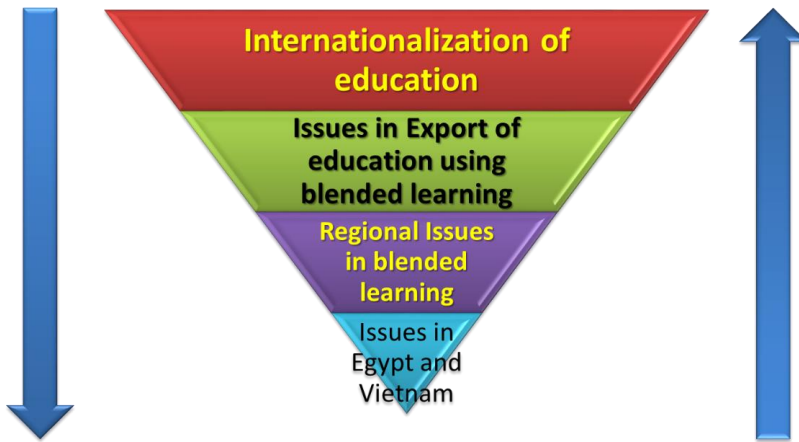


Figure 12: Levels of literature review – from general to pin point specific

In this study, the thorough literature review is not presented as a separate chapter as is customary in other doctorate research projects writing, but is presented together with the research findings presentation as a comparative literature review. Due to the scarce literature available about specific studies conducted in Egypt and Vietnam, literature about countries in the same region with similar cultural structure was studied. For example, in studying the literature about cultural issues in using the Internet in education in Egypt, all studies done in Arab countries were considered as they share the same language and religious beliefs of most Egyptians. In studying the same issues in Vietnam, the literature discussing studies done in Confucian Heritage Culture countries (CHC) were included in the comparative literature review.

4.6.3 TRANSCRIPTION

Transcription is the first step that the researcher takes in getting familiar with the data and accurate and correct transcription is crucial for a proper coding process. Especially when using qualitative data analysis software, the accuracy of transcription can save a lot of time and mistakes later on. All audio and video data was transcribed using F4 software that provided the function of automated time stamps. This function was very helpful during coding as codes were linked in Atlas.ti software to both transcribed text and audio or video. Also using F4 helped reduce background noises that made the transcription process more thorough and accurate. I found the transcription process to be an eye opening process as it helped

me relive the participants' responses and listen again and again to, not only their words, but also their tone of voice and watch their facial expressions and reactions. All this made me feel closer and closer to my data.

4.6.4 LINE BY LINE CODING AND MEMO WRITING

4.6.4.1 Coding process illustrated

Atlas.ti software was used for the process of coding, memo writing, comparative analysis and category formation. Coded materials included: text of observations, transcribed text of audios and video, the audios and videos themselves, and photos taken by the researcher during field study. All these files were uploaded in Atlas.ti software in a separate project for each of the 2 countries Vietnam and Egypt.

Atlas.ti gives the option of coding all types of data at the same time and in the same screens shown in the diagram (see Figure 13) with (from the left) a list of all the codes, transcribed focus group text, codes related to text on screen, video corresponding to transcribed text, video codes, picture linked with corresponding codes in transcribed text. This function in Atlas.ti of having more than one data file on the same screen was very useful in the constant comparison process which is essential in doing grounded theory. After coding, the codes were placed under code families and eventually categories start to be formed.

4.6.4.2 Line By Line Coding:

To do the line-by-line coding as suggested by Kathy Charmaz, I found the sensitizing questions suggested by Strauss and Corbin quite helpful. These questions increase the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher towards what the data indicates. They include questions like: *“what is going on here? Who are the actors? How do they define the situation? What is its meaning to them? Are their definitions and meanings the same or different? When, how and with what consequences are they acting, and how are these the same or different for various actors and various situations?”* (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 77)

The following diagram (Figure 14) is an example of the method of line-by-line coding of Vietnam data which resulted in 84 codes. In this table, the codes are listed in descending order of groundedness (number of times data was coded with the same code)

#	Code Name	Grounded	#	Code Name	Grounded
1	Teacher role --> motivate students	9	43	Judging teachers	1
2	Students feel responsible for their own learning	6	44	A good teacher encourages creativity	1
3	Action learning seen as essential	6	45	share	1
4	Group work enhances learning	6	46	Learning = Memorizing (Learn by heart)	1
5	Confidence	5	47	Interesting lecture - linked with peer discourses	1
6	Loss of control in online environment	4	48	A good teacher is serious	1
7	Use of Technology related to high quality education	4	49	He makes us feel comfortable.	1
8	Learning is a joint responsibility between student and teacher	4	50	A Good teacher is dedicated	1
9	Confidence building as a value in the learning process	3	51	Private universities are perceived to be more modern	1
10	Students value participation in class	3	52	One sided teaching	1
11	Face-to-face communication preferred to online communication	3	53	A Good teacher loves students	1

12	Learning as a joint responsibility	3	54	Effective teaching linked with teacher's passion for teaching and for subject	1
13	Teacher's guidance is essential	3	55	Students power over teachers in Private universities	1
14	A good teacher is strict	2	56	Students are very shame to talk.	1
15	A good teacher helps students gain self confidence	2	57	Change of schedule and how it affects students' lives	1
16	Confusion about American English versus British English	2	58	Making excuses for public universities' lack of organization	1
17	Confidence related to better future career	2	59	Student expectations about teacher's level of knowledge	1
18	Overcoming Language difficulties in learning	2	60	Instructional teaching perceived as less quality teaching	1
19	Teacher's knowledge	2	61	Expressing own ideas in presentations	1
20	A good teacher is funny	2	62	Teachers' importance is derived from their leadership role	1
21	Teacher seen as a father figure	2	63	Language problems with "academic terms"	1
22	Passive learning in primary and high school	2	64	Teacher is the leader in the class	1
23	Distractions in online participation	2	65	A good teacher focuses on topic	1
24	Foreign teachers' dialects is a problem	2	66	A good teacher does not only teach curriculum	1
25	Success in Future is linked to studying now	2	67	A good teacher teaches by example	1
26	Severely less convenient for them	2	68	A good teacher uses games in teaching	1
27	Group work increases students' confidence	1	69	Large number of students in public classes	1

28	A good teacher is confident	1	70	Internet as an alternative to teacher in learning	1
29	Teacher is the ONLY source of knowledge	1	71	Online learning saves time and money	1
30	Not popular here	1	72	Learning new Vocabulary	1
31	Build up my confidence	1	73	E-learning suitable for busy students	1
32	Teacher has the secret formula	1	74	We can experience what we have	1
33	A good teacher uses action learning (learning by doing)	1	75	Assuming responsibility for your own learning	1
34	A good teacher helps students develop competencies that they can use in their future career	1	76	Students are responsible for learning	1
35	Printed materials linked to better understanding	1	77	A Good Teacher treats students equally	1
36	Fear of public speaking	1	78	A Good teacher sticks to the curriculum	1
37	Lazy teacher = makes no effort to help students understand	1	79	"Good" versus "Bad" teacher	1
38	Lazy teachers	1	80	Sharing in small group is easier	1
39	Students' Participation leads to self confidence	1	81	Insufficient number of teachers	1
40	Schedule is not stable	1	82	Teacher helps students to understand when they ask	1
41	Students' perseverance to attend class in public universities	1	83	Working in groups perceived as enhancer of learning	0
42	Private university = international	1	84	Effective teaching linked with teacher's passion for topic	0

Figure 14: Codes of Vietnam Focus group line by line coding

4.6.4.3 Memo Writing

Strauss and Corbin define memos as “Written records of analysis that may vary in type and form”, memos are analytical in nature and they categorize them into code memos, theoretical memos or operational memos or mixed memos. Memos can either be written manually or by using a QDA software as Atlas.ti (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 217).

Memos progress as the process of coding and analysis progresses and become integrated in the theory formulation. Strauss and Corbin also suggest that working with memos forces the analyst to distance him/herself from the data and move towards conceptualizing early enough in the process. Memos are generally reflective in nature and vary in depth and organization according to the stage of analysis of data. Glaser and Strauss in their book suggest that memo-writing be done as part of the process of constant comparison suggesting that in doing so the analyst is less likely to speculate and more likely to root his/her reflections in the data:

“In doing so, the analyst should take as much time as necessary to reflect and carry his thinking to its most logical (grounded in the data, not speculative) conclusions.” (Glaser, Strauss et al., 1968, p. 107).

Perhaps Kathy Charmaz’ approach to constructing grounded theory relies on memo-writing more than most other grounded theorists due to the central role of the researcher’s reflections and personal interpretations in the analysis of data in this approach. In her book “Constructing Grounded Theory”, she goes into extensive details about different methods of memo-writing explaining the value of memo-writing by saying:

“Through conversing with yourself while memo-writing, new ideas and insights arise during the act of writing.” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72)

Kathy Charmaz gives examples of different types of memos and advises researchers to “do what works for you” and she explains that memos should be free floating and spontaneous rather than mechanical and organized. Kathy Charmaz explains many benefits of writing memos, among them “Develop fresh ideas, create new concepts, and find novel relationships” and also “Demonstrate connections between categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 85). I found these two benefits of great help for me in writing memos and I found Kathy Charmaz’ approach to memo writing useful for my study as it was in line with the constructive approach of my research.

In this study, memo writing was simultaneously done with the process of initial line-by-line coding. Figure 15 is an example of a memo written at this stage of

analysis of Vietnam data. As I was coding the data, a lot of participants' terms were not well understood in the context of the interview questions due to the limited English vocabulary that Vietnamese students possess. In this memo, I tried to analyse the deep meaning of a statement that students mentioned in response to a question about the criteria of a good teacher in their opinion. Students responded by saying that the teachers are efficient if they like teaching, I reflected on this idea by using different synonyms and antonyms of the word "like" to overcome the language barrier and limited English vocabulary of the students. This memo was inspiring for me later on during the theoretical coding stage as it was integrated in the concept of the mentor-teacher role which helped in formulating the theory at the end.

MEMO: The assumption that teachers may or may not like teaching or the subjects they teach

Why did this student link effective teaching with the teacher "liking" teaching and/or the subject? do teachers choose to be teachers or are (for some reason) forced to be teacher? why does she assume that teachers "may" not like teaching?

In another interview I had with a vietnamese teacher, he told me that teachers get very low pay in vietnam, can this be the reason she thinks that teachers may not "like" teaching?

I looked up the word "like" in the thesaurus, and I found these synonyms: *care to, desire, elect, fancy, feel disposed, feel like, have a preference for, incline toward, please, prefer, select, want, will, wish*

I will try different synonyms in the same sentence:

1. it depends on the teachers **"desire"** if they **"desire"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will try their best to teach us
2. it depends on the teachers **"want"** if they **"want"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will try their best to teach us
3. it depends on the teachers **"have a preference for"** if they **"have a preference for"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will try their best to teach us
4. it depends on the teachers **"prefer"** if they **"prefer"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will try their best to teach us
5. it depends on the teachers **"select"** if they **"select"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will try their best to teach us
6. it depends on the teachers **"desire"** if they **"want"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will try their best to teach us
7. it depends on the teachers **"preference"** if they **"have a preference for"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will try their best to teach us

I will now try antonyms of the word "like" in the opposite sentence

1. it depends on the teachers **"dislike"** if they **"dislike"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will **"not"** try their best to teach us
2. it depends on the teachers **"ignore"** if they **"ignore"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will **"not"** try their best to teach us
3. it depends on the teachers **"dislike"** if they **"dislike"** it - the subject, the teaching, so they will **"ignore"** trying their best to teach us

What is the reason that students think that teachers may not like teaching?

In the book Higher Education in Vietnam Challenges and Priorities

"Vietnam has low-cost human resources, but its competitive capacity remains weak. A society with a low level of development sees little need for new knowledge, or for talented people and their initiatives, and, consequently, it does not feel a need to invest heavily in a system of higher education that produces the highly qualified researchers and engineers required for economic development."

"Few university lecturers have been trained in teaching and learning methodologies. Most learn by trial and error, drawing initially on their own experiences as students. There has been much debate about how to reform teaching methods and the curriculum in higher education."

It is clear that teachers neither have the skills and teaching needed to teach, nor have the appreciation and financial reward they desire. This kind of explains the assumption of the student that teachers may or may not like being teachers and teaching. Of course, it also makes sense that consequently, teachers may be demotivated and work only half-heartedly and so make little effort to help students understand the subjects they teach and students can sense this.

Figure 15: Example of a memo written for analysis of Vietnam data

4.6.4.4 Focused Coding and Categories

The next step in coding is more focused looking at groups of codes and the quotations that are linked to them and identifying the most analytical codes that the researcher feels point more towards the central issues in data.

I used the analytical tools of Atlas.ti to help me in this process where I extracted the highest incidence of co-occurrence for all codes and based on this list, I started placing codes into groups of codes within similar concepts and eliminating the codes that seemed of peripheral or isolated relation to the main ideas expressed by respondents. I then used the query tool in Atlas.ti to filter all quotations linked to each super code (which is the name used in Atlas.ti) and re-read these quotes to further modify the code families. These focused codes were then again reorganized into categories, which include super codes of similar concepts and these categories formed the basis of theory building later on in the analysis process.

Example of some categories of Vietnam Data Analysis are: Good vs. Bad Teachers; Lazy Teachers; Teacher as Leader in class; Teacher possess all knowledge; Teacher's role is to motivate students; Active vs. Passive Learning; Learning = memorizing; Learning as a joint responsibility between student and teacher; Students prefer group work.

Example of some categories of Egypt Data Analysis are: Inefficient Public Higher Education System in Egypt; Corruption of Teachers; Appreciation of application over traditional teaching; Learning = Passing Exam; Frustration with students' assessments; Private Tutoring an alternative to official lectures

The following is an example from Egypt data analysis; showing how super codes were integrated in a category (Figure 16).

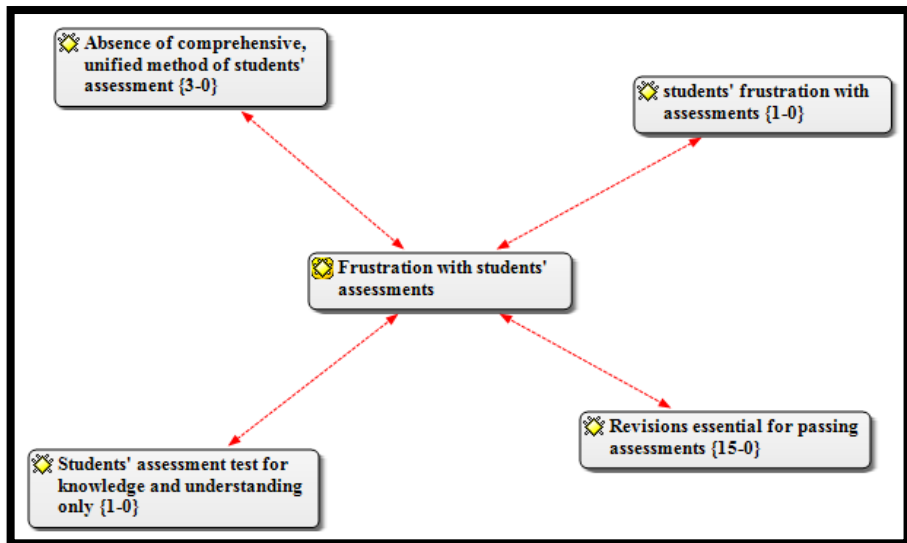


Figure 16: Example of a super code integrated in a category during analysis of Egypt data

4.6.4.5 Diagramming:

Strauss and Corbin describe diagrams as “the visual form of memos” and that diagrams “are devices that depict the relationships among concepts”. They also suggest that memos and diagrams should go hand in hand all along the analytical process (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 218)

The following is an example of a diagram (Figure 17) showing links between code families of Vietnam Data:

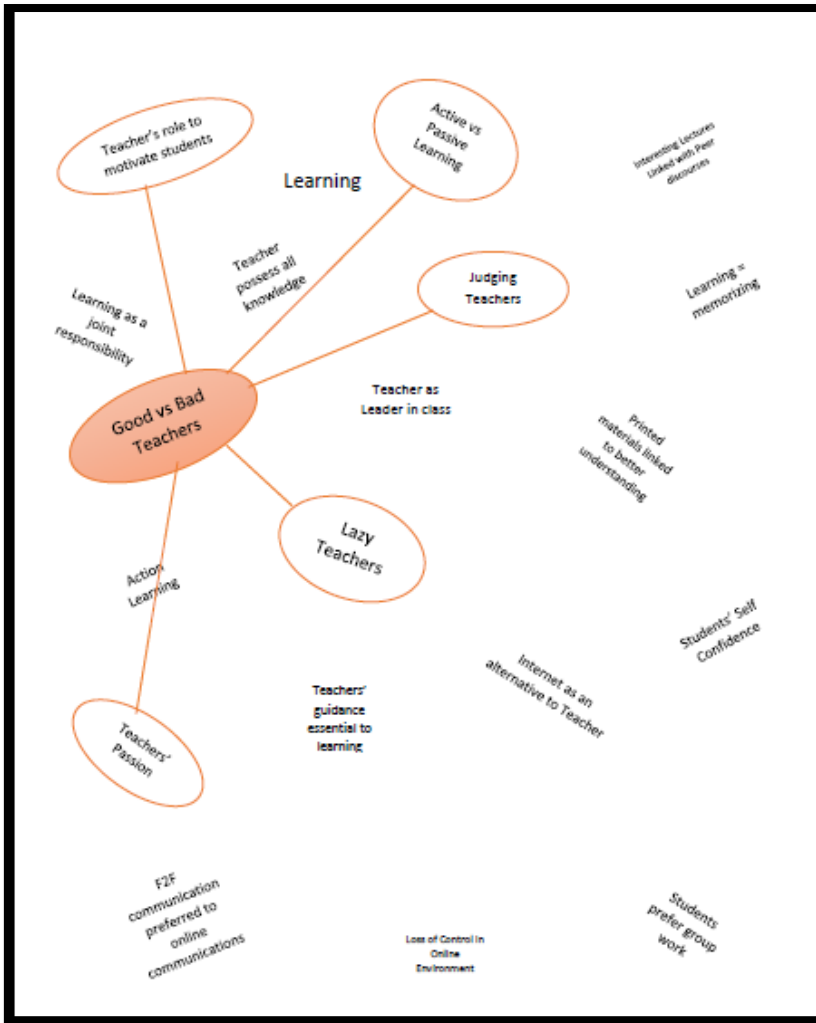


Figure 17: Good versus Bad Teachers Code Diagram (Vietnam Data Analysis)

4.6.4.6 Constant Comparison by using Link Views

Constant comparison is one of the methods that are widely agreed upon by all schools of grounded theory as one of the essential corner stones of the methodology. Glaser and Strauss express the importance of constant comparison as one of the main criteria of doing grounded theory research and as a pivotal process for theory development. Comparison can be done between incidents or categories either in the same group or in different groups that are coded in similar or the same

category (Glaser, Strauss et al., 1968). Strauss and Corbin emphasize the importance of comparative analysis in their genre of grounded theory and call it “theoretical comparisons” - (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 78) - referring to its value in the process of theoretical sampling. Theoretical comparisons include comparing, not only incidents as Glaser suggested, but going beyond this to comparing concepts which are implied by the incidents. Kathy Charmaz also advocates the important usage of constant comparison on all levels of analysis, comparing segments of data to other segments of data, comparing codes to codes, categories to categories, codes to categories, categories to quotes, categories to concepts. ...etc. Comparisons can be done within the same group or between different groups of data (Charmaz 2006).

Atlas.ti facilitates the constant comparison process all through the analysis by using the “Link Views” option. In the link views, the researcher can compare codes, categories, quotes, super codes and even links to links. I found this option very helpful in carrying out the constant comparison process, I created many ‘Link Views’ at different stages of analysis (which were saved by date of production in Atlas.ti HU). These comparisons also helped a lot in writing the memos, and the relations between all items of comparison kept developing and changing along the course of the analysis process.

This is an example of a network view during analysis of Egypt data, which was created in Atlas.ti to compare 3 sources of data: (1) the participants’ responses in interviews; (2) non-participant observation comments; (3) the World Bank OECD report about higher education in Egypt. By comparing text in these 3 sources, I was able to prove, verify, explain, expand, contrast or support examined data.

The following diagram (Figure 18) shows one of the “Network Views” in Atlas.ti showing relations between different data sources discussing the lack of official sources of learning in Egyptian Lectures and its replacement by teacher dictated lectures

4.7 Am I doing Grounded Theory? Validity and Reliability

Many researchers think that they are doing grounded theory research while in fact they are only stating the obvious in their conclusions or simply doing superficial analysis of data. To verify the quality of my research I used a list of questions that Kathy Charmaz poses as a checklist to evaluate the validity and reliability of any grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006, p. 182-183). In this section, I examine selected questions from the list of questions that Kathy Charmaz writes (in italics) and my answer to each of the questions.

4.7.1 CREDIBILITY

4.7.1.1 Are the data sufficient to merit your claims?

Since I used theoretical sampling, this allowed for going back to the field after the initial coding stage to collect more data and explore more defined research problem areas as for example adding teacher interviews in Vietnam after the initial coding of the first focus group data. Nevertheless, if I had more time and funds, I would have been more satisfied with the amount of data collected for this research.

4.7.1.2 Are there strong logical links between the gathered data and your argument?

All through this study, I was always guided by the data in forming any conclusions. Also, the use of Atlas.ti as a qualitative data analysis software helped eliminate human error during the process of coding and category formation. In the papers that I published, I presented large sections of the data collected and the concluded arguments and showed the link between them.

4.7.1.3 Do categories offer a wide range of empirical observations?

The categories formed during the data analysis phase were based on the frequency of occurrence of codes and code families as well as on the importance of the codes to the research problem area. During categories formation, comparative analysis between data collected from interviews, focus groups, non-participant observations, pictures and study materials used in teaching was done.

4.7.1.4 Has the research provided enough evidence for the researcher's claims to allow the reader to form an independent assessment?

In presenting the results I present many quotes as mentioned by the participants and also long narratives to allow the reader to assess the results that I conclude. I chose to even keep the English language mistakes that the Vietnamese students made and not to correct them, so that the reader can make an independent evaluation of what is said. In analysing the data collected from Egypt, I first transcribed the interviews and focus groups word for word as they were said in Arabic, then translated the transcripts to English (NB: an example of one of the focus groups transcripts is available in the Appendix section both in Arabic and in English)

4.7.2 ORIGINALITY

4.7.2.1 Are your categories fresh? Do they offer new insights?

During my review of literature either before the start of the study, during the study or after the data was coded, I found very few literature about the topic of cultural issues affecting the export of e-learning educational programs to the 2 countries under study, Egypt and Vietnam. This shows that this problem area is a less researched area than other areas; at least the published work in English is scarce which proves that the research is an original one. The categories formed after the line-by-line coding were not published in any work in English language before (to the best of my knowledge and at the time of publishing this thesis)

4.7.2.2 Does your analysis provide a new conceptual rendering of the data? What is the social and theoretical significance of this work?

The research results have great significance to exporting educational organizations (like IBSS, the host company for this research) as it provides them with better insight into how students from developing countries feel about and view the e-learning component of these programs. There is generally a trend of standardization of educational programs when exporting these programs, which holds the assumption that students are all the same and that they react to e-learning courses in a similar way. In my experience and from literature, this proved to be an incorrect assumption and the results of this study shows how students are very different in the way they approach learning, the teacher and e-learning.

4.7.2.3 *How does your grounded theory challenge, extend and refine current ideas, concepts and practices?*

The results of this grounded theory research challenges the trends used in internationalization of education as the use of standardized educational programs for students from all countries. These results show that students differ in their perception and appreciation and thus differ also in their level of engagement in e-learning as a result of their differing cultures. The implications of the study prove that adaptation and customization of educational program pedagogies is a must when exporting these programs to students in developing countries. Also, teaching teachers how to modify their teaching methods based on their understanding of the different cultural values in every country, especially in online learning environments is as crucial as teaching them how to use different e-learning platforms and tools. This adaptation and customization may be challenged since it reduces profits incurred by exporting organizations, yet it certainly would increase the efficiency of the teaching of these programs and thus enhance students' learning experience which will in the future result in increased profits.

4.7.3 RESONANCE

4.7.3.1 *Do the categories portray the fullness of the studied experience? Have you revealed both liminal and unstable taken-for-granted meanings?*

During the analysis phase, I followed Kathy Charmaz suggestions of coding to dig deeper in the analysis beyond the obvious conclusions that may be clear and evident. The use of constant comparison was helpful in including the fullness of the studied experience in the categories formed following the line-by-line coding process. The constant comparison was done between codes in the same country and codes in other countries, between quotes of participants in one country and quotes of participants in another country, between participants' responses in this study and responses in other studies. The line-by-line coding process helped in revealing the hidden meanings and the constant comparison process helped in challenging the taken-for-granted meanings.

4.7.3.2 *Have you drawn links between larger collectivities or institutions and individual lives, when the data so indicate?*

This research is very much related to participants' daily lives as well as to their institutions and policy makers. The focus group method for collection of data was helpful for participants to exchange points of view and arguments. The research participants helped me in linking the larger picture with their individual day-to-day life practices. Also, since I myself teach students from the countries under study, this gave me a feel of their daily struggles and lives in relation to the institutions' practices and policies.

4.7.3.3 *Does your grounded theory make sense to your participants or people who share their circumstances? Does your analysis offer them deeper insights about their lives and worlds?*

After the analysis of the empirical data was concluded and after writing publications presenting the research findings, I sent a copy of the results to some of the participants in the study to consult them about the results. Their feedback was very favourable and they agreed to the conclusions in my publications and some participants from Vietnam mentioned that the results gave them new insights into their own lives and attitudes towards learning. I do strongly believe that the findings of this research will be very useful to teachers and students in developing countries who are at the receiving end of exported educational programs as well as to decision makers and course designers of exported programs.

4.7.4 USEFULNESS

4.7.4.1 *Does your analysis offer interpretations that people can use in their everyday worlds?*

Same answer as in question 4.6.3.3

4.7.4.2 *Do your analytic categories suggest any generic processes? If so, have you examined these generic processes for tacit implications?*

The analytic categories of this research provide suggested pedagogies and actions beneficial for western educational organizations that attempt to export their educational programs to Egypt and Vietnam using an e-learning component in their teaching methodology. These suggestions have not been tested in this research and can be a point of departure for future research projects using participatory design or action research methodologies.

4.7.4.3 Can the analysis spark further research in other substantive areas?

I believe that the field of cross cultural issues affecting the use and acceptance of e-learning programs is an infant field that is still under researched and the current study is living proof of the vast differences in students' as well as teachers' approach towards learning in different countries. Further research is needed to explore learning situations in more developing countries that are recipients of exported western education especially in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

4.7.4.4 How does your work contribute to knowledge? How does it contribute to making a better world?

This research will hopefully be a wakeup call and an eye opener to western exporters of education to developing countries that use standardized programs and pedagogies in all countries. The study represents students' voice in developing countries and voicing their needs and problems in education in general and in using exported e-learning programs in particular. If western exporting educators pursue a better understanding through research about each country before exporting their programs to them, and consequently adapt their programs to suit each country's cultural needs, students' learning experience will be enhanced and thus the quality of these programs will eventually be improved.

4.8 Research Limitations

The main research limitation in this project was the language barrier, since neither of the 3 countries' first language is English, nor the researcher's; most interviews were carried out in the participants' and researchers' second language (English). With the exception of data collected from Egypt (where both participants and researcher spoke Arabic as a first language), the limited vocabulary and heavy accent of Vietnamese participants posed a considerable challenge to the research. In Denmark, participants' English was much better, yet expressing opinions openly in a second language may have been a limitation as well. In Egypt, data was collected in Arabic language, transcribed in Arabic, then translated to English, which was an extra burden to the research process, and also the meaning may have been slightly altered in the process.

The second limitation in this study was obtaining legal approvals for conducting the research in Vietnam that was a challenge especially in public universities. This, together with the language limitation, resulted in limiting the data collected to private universities and colleges. Similarly, in Egypt teachers refused to participate

in the research for fear of retaliation from the universities where they work if they revealed any unfavourable information.

The third limitation for this project was the high cost of traveling between the 3 countries located in 3 continents more than once to collect new empirical data after the full analysis of the first round of data collection. Thus, fulfilling a major requirement of doing grounded theory research, which is theoretical sampling, was limited.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This study was set out to explore the impact of culture on learning practices in different countries and how they affect the way that students from developing countries as Egypt and Vietnam view and interact with exported educational programs with an e-learning component. Motivated by the difficulties faced by the Danish business school (IBSS) that is co-funding this research project, the focus was on studying these two countries where most of the problems with the use of e-learning that IBSS faced were concentrated. The literature available on these 2 countries in this area is extremely scarce and little attention from scholars was directed towards studying them and thus emphasising the innovative nature and the significance of this research.

This research had 2 questions to answer (as stated in chapter 1 of this thesis) which are:

1. (a) What are the cultural roots that influence the way students and teachers in Egypt and Vietnam view learning and (b) how this view affects their acceptance and usage of e-learning in the context of exported blended learning programs from Denmark and other developed countries?
2. (a) How do the educational systems and learning practices in Egypt and Vietnam contrast to those in developed countries as Denmark and (b) how these differences affect students' acceptance to teaching practices of exported educational programs from the west?

These 2 research questions, each has 2 parts where the 'b' part is an interpretive conclusion that is based on the more concrete results of the answers to the 'a' part of the question. In the following section, I will summarize the results and conclusions of the research project, presenting the concrete results which answer the "a" questions and the implications which answer the "b" questions.

5.1 Empirical findings and their implications

Chapter 2 of this thesis outlines the theoretical framework of the current study by discussing the problem of internationalization of education and blended learning from an economical and cultural perspective. It details the results of similar studies in Arab countries and Confucian heritage countries.

The detailed empirical findings are explained in length in the 3 papers in chapter 7: *“Exporting a Scandinavian Learning Model to Egypt and Vietnam: Challenges and Implications”* and *“The Good, the Bad and the Lazy teacher. A grounded theory approach to higher education learning situations in Vietnam”* and *“Modern day ‘Kuttab’ - A grounded theory study of higher education learning situations in Egypt and implications for e-learning course design”*.

In this chapter, I present my final conclusions and reflections on the empirical findings and how they answer the two research questions of this project.

5.1.1. RESEARCH QUESTION NO. 1: (a) What are the cultural roots, which influence the way students and teachers in Egypt and Vietnam view learning? (b) and how they affect their acceptance of e-learning?

5.1.1.1 Teacher as mentor and guru In Vietnam: cultural beliefs that are rooted in Buddhism and Confucius teachings are the most influential factors affecting the Vietnamese belief systems. The pursuit of learning is a high value in life and thus the view of a teacher as a source of wisdom and righteousness affects the attitudes of Vietnamese students towards learning. Learning is highly dependant on the teacher and consequently a teaching method that lacks the physical presence of the teacher (as online learning) would imply the absence of the most important pillar of learning. Learning is viewed as a spiritual impartation of wisdom and the medium for this impartation is the “spirit of the teacher” (Fahmy, 2014) and thus the absence of this medium implies failure of the process of transfer of wisdom and eventually failure of learning. The teacher is expected to pursuit knowledge and its impartation to his/her students as the highest goal in life and should be active and energetic in excelling in this pursuit. In this sense, learning is not a cognitive process which may or may not require the presence of a teacher as in other cultures (like the Danish culture) but it is more of a mythical/magical process which only happens in the presence of the teacher.

These results which were presented in my paper *“The Good, the Bad and the Lazy teacher. A grounded theory approach to higher education learning situations in Vietnam”* were in line with other studies (which are presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis) that also concluded that students from Confucian Heritage Countries (CHC) as Hong Kong and Singapore prefer the face-to-face teaching to online teaching (Aylward, 2004 ; Munro-Smith, 2002).

Inherent in this belief system is the fact that students’ learning is solely the responsibility of the teacher. Students have very high expectations of their teachers, they expect them to be role models, father figures, mentors and an unlimited source of information. Teachers are expected to guide students to the learning sources, motivate them to study, explain to them the structured assignments and exams and help them memorize the content. (Fahmy, 2014; Strother, 2003).

5.1.1.2 THE TEACHING MATERIALS (MALAZEM) AS A PHENOMENON

IN EGYPT: rooted in a predominantly Islamic cultural belief system, the written materials “malazem” (as explained in the paper “*Modern day ‘Kuttab’ - A grounded theory study of higher education learning situations in Egypt and implications for e-learning course design*”) is the most central means of learning in Egypt. Just like the holy book of Muslims (Quran) is the fundamental basis for their beliefs, teaching materials are the undisputed source of learning to Egyptian students. Teachers, students, policy makers, teaching institutes and universities all focus on teaching materials in their evaluations of students’ learning through exams that test for the level of students’ memorizing of the contents of these materials. Unlike in Denmark where materials are not standardized and sources of learning are diverse, in Egypt the written words are the main sources of learning that students must thrive to obtain, memorize and recite in exams.

It is not clear if Egyptian students consider the responsibility of teaching to be theirs or the teachers’ and the ambiguity comes from the focus in learning being on a non-human factor (teaching materials) and thus the responsibility neither falls on students nor on the teachers or on the educational structure. The teacher is merely a channel through which the contents of the course materials are being transferred and students are passive recipients of this content, expected to memorize it and repeat it in the exam. This was evident in the lecture in Cairo University where the teacher dictated the lecture and the students wrote after her, confirming that not only students view teachers as merely a channel, but even teachers view their role as such.

Thus the presence of the teacher and the students in the same physical or virtual space is irrelevant to the learning process. To Egyptian students, a successful online session should include the course materials in a simplified context that would make it easier for them to memorize them and pass the exams. This can take place in the presence or absence of an online teacher without affecting their perception of the quality of the course.

5.1.2. RESEARCH QUESTION NO. 2: (a) How do the educational systems and learning practices in Egypt and Vietnam contrast to those in developed countries as Denmark? (b) How these differences affect students’ acceptance to teaching practices of exported educational programs from the west?

The interpretation of research findings in this area was aided by the “Learning Situation Model”, which is explained in full details in Chapter 4: The Research Methodology. In Chapter 3, I detail the learning theories which are relevant to this research project and I present learning theories as they correspond to each of the 3 learning situations used in this research. In this chapter, I reflect on how it all fits together. I attempt to tie the research findings (presented in the papers) with the

learning situation model and the learning theories. Through this process, the reader would be better able to appreciate the implications of the research findings.

5.1.2.1 THE TEACHER-CENTERED/BEHAVIOURIST APPROACH:

This approach is the base of the educational system and learning practices used in Vietnam where all activities are teacher-centered and thus the teacher has the power of positive or negative reinforcement. In this system, students are conditioned to learn by memorizing courses and the repetitive stimuli are the exams. This approach corresponds to the “Learning Situation Model” type “a” (see Figure 5 – The Learning situation model) where most learning activities take place in the “student-teacher interface” and are controlled by the teacher and students accept punishment from the teacher when they do not repeat the information as the teacher instructs them to (Fahmy, Bygholm et al., 2013).

The Vietnamese education system is dependent on lectures which are characterized by one-sided instructional teaching and students are only expected to memorize what the teacher says in class in the exact same way. This is applied in public and private (international) universities similarly, the only difference being the number of students in each class which is smaller in private universities (Fahmy, 2014).

This educational system approach results in decreased levels of competencies acquired by university students in Vietnam as compared with the level required by employers in the country. In an empirical study carried out in 2008, 3 surveys were done with 251 department managers, 717 final-year students and 1838 students in different years of four different Vietnamese universities to evaluate their competencies’ levels. The results of the survey showed that students’ level of skills, and especially soft skills was much lower than required by employers (Trung and Swierczek, 2009).

5.1.2.2 THE MATERIALS-CENTERED/COGNITIVIST APPROACH:

This approach is the foundation of teaching and learning practices seen in Egypt, where all activities are materials-centred and thus the role of the teacher is undermined and replaced by the resources and books (referred to as materials in the learning situation model). This approach corresponds to the “Learning Situation Model” type “b” (see Figure 5) where most learning activities take place in the “student-material interface”, where the focus is on obtaining and memorizing the content of the materials. The teacher’s role in this model is preparing the materials and encouraging students to interact frequently with them. As Piaget suggested, the concept of equilibration and cognitive conflict can be best implemented by using textbooks with materials of optimal difficulty, which is what the educational systems in Egypt follow.

The 2 most characteristic findings in the analysis of the empirical data from Egypt, the ‘malazem’ phenomenon and the diploma disease, reflect the results of using this approach where all focus is on memorizing the largest amount of materials’ content and this is used as the criteria for evaluating learners. The result of this approach is a higher education system which does not cover the country’s employment needs (as mentioned in the OECD report about Egypt) (OECD, 2010). This approach has roots in the old ‘kuttab’ system of religious education (which is explained in full details in the paper “*Modern day ‘Kuttab’ - A grounded theory study of higher education learning situations in Egypt and implications for e-learning course design*”).

5.1.2.3 THE STUDENT-CENTERED/CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH:

This approach is the foundation of teaching and learning practices seen in Denmark in this study, where there is a synergy between the role of the teacher and the student as well as the teaching materials in students’ learning and it corresponds to the “Learning Situation Model” type “c” (see Figure 5). This approach is based on the assumption that the student is an active learner who acquires knowledge and skills through a process of interpretive meaning forming while constantly interacting with the surroundings as the teacher, teaching materials, other students and technology. Thus the main responsibility of learning lies on the student and at the same time the student lies in the centre of focus of all teaching activities.

The empirical data collected from Denmark show that students display less dependence on the teacher or the materials and place higher value on their own search for information and discussion with colleagues, thus the teacher’s role is a facilitator or a participant in learning, as one of the students put it that the teacher provides “a different take on the topic” occasionally. Students in Denmark do not take the teachers’ views for granted but subject them to evaluation and criticism as well as information presented in textbooks and publications. The result of this approach is a high level of engagement of students in their learning and positive interaction on all levels as the “student-teacher” interface and the “student-material” interface.

5.2 Implications of findings

Exported educational programs which are designed in western developed countries as Denmark are designed with the assumption that all students learn in the same way and that this is why most of them are designed as standardized programs (one size fit all as explained in Chapter 2 of this thesis). While this may be true to students who studied all their lives in Western countries and know how to take responsibility for their own learning, it is not true of students who have approached learning all their lives as passive recipients of information from a teacher (as in Vietnam) or from a book (as in Egypt). For these students from developing

countries, to expect them to search for the information themselves or analyse and compare different pieces of knowledge to interpret their meaning is like asking a grown man who never swam before to jump in deep waters.

The problem is much more complex than simply to teach them to learn to use a different method as the cultural underpinnings of their perception of learning makes their learning process a part of their character and pride. For Asians, working very hard to memorize what the teacher asks them to is a virtue that is most appreciated and to take this away from them by providing an easier method of learning that does not require so much memorizing is taking away their virtue and honour. For Arabs, having a fixed reliable and unquestionable text is part of their security system. To ask them to construct knowledge by interpreting their realities, evaluating abstract concepts in books and even criticizing them is taking away their foundation of trust and security. For Arabs, security comes from the abstractness of the written word and to ask them to trust in their own judgement instead of in fixed information is a frightful thought.

In order to achieve the desired level of educational success in exporting programs to developing countries, western education providers must tailor their programs to suit the learning approach that students in recipient countries have been used to all their lives instead of forcing their own approach on them and asking them to adapt to it. This adaptation may impact the financial gains achieved by these education providers on the short run as they would need to design a different program for each region. Nevertheless, eventually it will increase the number of enrolled students in their programs, as more students from the recipient countries will find the adapted programs more suitable for their needs. When students in developing countries will feel that exporters of education understand and, even more importantly, respect their cultural structure, they will trust their programs and engage in them without the fear of losing their unique identity.

5.3 Research Limitations

This research had 3 limitations:

1. The language barrier, as the mother tongue of all participants in the research from the 3 countries Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam as well the researcher was not the same. This posed a challenge as sometimes the meaning was not clear which led to a lot of anticipation from the researcher.
2. Obtaining legal approvals was challenging especially in Egypt and Vietnam, which led to omitting some participants as teachers from Egypt.

3. Limitations to the theoretical sampling method in Grounded Theory which required more traveling back and forth between the 3 countries under study that the limited budget of the research grant did not allow for.

5.4 Recommendations for future research:

In the course of this research, the researcher identified new areas for research that would further this research field as:

1. The project timeline did not allow for further inquiring about many of the participants' responses in the empirical data, therefore, more meetings with the same (or different participants) with more specific questions would be a point of departure for phase 2 of this study.
2. The study of learning practices in other developing countries with similar demographic and cultural composition as Egypt and Vietnam. Like United Arab Emirates and Cambodia.
3. Research testing the hypotheses resulting from this study about how to best modify western exported educational programs using participatory design.

5.5 Final reflections:

When I look back at how my understanding of this research problem area has changed over the course of this project, I am amazed at how I myself have changed. I set out with the belief that I know what learning really is and I want to find out how students in different countries think learning is. I now realize that I have no clue what learning really is and if there is one concept of learning that everyone should conform to or if learning is highly relative and what one may consider to be learning may very well be ignorance to another person.

Exporters of education in the west (as I am one of them) think that we know what education really is but in reality, sometimes we view education as a 'thing' when in fact we should think of it as a 'being' that is rooted in constructions of knowledge, cultural heritage, political systems and societal values. Education may be viewed as an evolving entity that does not have one fixed form that we as exporters of education alone have the keys to. We can not limit 'education' and 'learning' to a few sophisticated definitions, rather we should seek to explore what 'learning' really represents in every culture and appreciate its meaning even when it differs from our textbook definitions.

Export of education from Western developed countries to developing countries in the global south is a highly complex field of study, especially when a study is multi-sited and addresses more than one issue. Nevertheless, the use of Grounded Theory combined with ethnography provided the needed insight into the roots of the issues associated with export of education to developing countries as Egypt and Vietnam.

The published results as well as this conclusion chapter attempt to highlight the main cultural roots associated with students' rejection to some elements of these educational programs as the use of e-learning. By understanding these cultural differences and how they impact the approach to learning and teaching practices in these countries, western education providers may be better informed to modify their programs to suit students in different countries. Through future research on learning practices in other developing countries, western education providers might be able to adapt their program designs to each country's individual needs and thus ensure better learning outcomes.

CHAPTER 6: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER 7: PUBLICATIONS

Publication 1: A Conference paper about issues in internationalization of education

Title: Fahmy, S. S., A. Bygholm, et al. (2012) " Issues in Internationalization of EDUCATION: THE CASE OF A DANISH BUSINESS SCHOOL EXPORTING A BLENDED LEARNING MBA PROGRAM TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES".

Link:

<http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fss/organisations/netlc/past/nlc2012/abstracts/pdf/safwat.pdf>

Summary:

This first paper was a conference paper that I wrote together with my supervisor Ann Bygholm and my co-supervisor Kirsten Jaeger. The objective of writing this paper was to set the stage for the following papers by highlighting the issues encountered by exporters of western education to developing countries when using blended learning. In this paper, we mentioned many issues with a special focus on cultural issues that may affect students' learning experience when studying a western educational program. The case of the host company, the Danish business school IBSS, was introduced as an example of such problems. The case presents a general argument at the end discussing the most relevant factors that affect students' experience in general with a particular focus on factors related to exporting education.

Reflections:

I wrote this paper after doing the preliminary literature review and the main motivation for writing it was to consolidate the main issues that were found in literature with the actual real life problems that I encountered in teaching students from different countries using blended learning.

At this stage in my project, my research questions were still very vague and not in any way well defined. The process of writing this paper and receiving reviews from the conference reviewers shed the light on the more specific problem area of my

research. This paper was the first building block in the state of art of the current study, going from the general problems encountered in internationalization of education to the more specific problems encountered in export of educational programs using blended learning as a methodology and finally ending with the case study under research, the private Danish business school IBSS.

The paper also examines the discrepancy between some scholars' assumptions about the ease of exporting western educational programs to developing countries after the spread of Internet usage and the actual problems faced in real life situations where students from developing countries may not accept either the content or the form of delivery of these exported programs. The paper concludes with a discussion section that sets the stage for the study by highlighting the main areas that may affect students' learning experience in a country that is different from the country of origin of any educational program.

Issues in Internationalization of education: The case of a Danish Business School exporting a blended learning MBA program to developing countries.

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Abstract

Internationalization activities, according to Roger Bennett (Bennett and Kane 2009) include, but are not limited to, international franchising, curriculum internationalization, exchange programs, and the recruitment of foreign teaching staff. Internationalization also includes cross-border delivery of educational services, for example in the form of net-based distance education or blended learning programs (Hughes 2008). This paper addresses the issues that an educational institute may face when offering blended learning programs in countries, in which the cultural and social context, the educational and pedagogical traditions, and the access to supporting technologies differ markedly from the corresponding conditions in its home country. Based on the insights emerging from a discussion of these issues, the paper points out the problem areas in which further research is needed in order to establish a theoretical and practical platform for cross-cultural delivery of higher education as blended-learning programs.

In theory, there seems to be a perfect fit between the principles of blended learning and the needs of both the provider of cross-border higher education and the students. Within a blended learning framework, it should be possible to achieve the fine balance between exposure to high quality learning material, well-qualified teachers and face-to-face interaction in local learning environments. However, concrete experience made by a Danish higher education provider when offering an MBA education as a blended learning program in Egypt and Vietnam strongly indicates the pedagogical, organizational, social and cultural complexity involved in such an endeavour and the need to further develop blended-learning methods.

The case of a Danish private business school "International Business School of Scandinavia" (IBSS) and its experience in exporting a blended learning MBA program designed in Denmark to countries in the Middle East and Asia show that the use of the blended learning mode of teaching and advanced distance learning technologies was not enough to overcome the barriers that arise in countries which in significant ways differ from the program's country of origin.

Within the overall framework of internationalization of education and blended learning theory, this paper accounts for the obstacles met by the Danish MBA provider and discusses how these experiences challenge state-of-the-art theory and practice in the area of blended learning.

Keywords

Internationalization, export, education, globalization, blended learning, e-learning, culture, Middle East, Asia, technology.

Introduction

The Universal Human Rights declaration number 26 states that "Everyone has the right to education" and that "Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit". This declaration that was released by the Human Right and adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations in December 10, 1948, has inspired the international community to partner with local governments of developing countries, to work together to bring quality higher education and professional education to people in these countries. Obviously, despite their accession to Human Rights

declarations on rights to education, many developing countries lack the resources to establish higher education opportunities which, in practice, are equally accessible to all citizens. Thus, to most developing countries, various forms of internationalized education represent attractive opportunities to raise the educational level of their populations.

Internationalization activities, according to Roger Bennett (Bennett and Kane 2009) include, but are not limited to, international franchising, curriculum internationalization, exchange programs, and the recruitment of foreign teaching staff. One aspect of internationalization of education is the enrolment of international students in overseas universities in western countries, which has been increasing in numbers markedly in recent years, for example, in UK the numbers of international students account for over 40% of UK postgraduate students and 50% of those doing full-time research degrees (Source: UK council for international student affairs – September 2010). The direction of international student mobility is clear: from the global South to universities within the western educational tradition, situated in the main Anglophone countries (Hughes 2008, 5). The migration of students away from their countries of origin to western countries may provide these students with a chance to receive quality education on the short run, but may eventually lead to 'brain drain' caused by uneven distribution of the world's knowledge resources on the longer run. Thus, subsidiaries of Western universities may be able to play a positive role in the 'knowledge economy' of developing countries if they, on the one hand, can provide more people with higher education and, on the other, enable talented people to stay in the developing countries instead of going abroad. With this vision and in an attempt to bring global educational standards to all nations, many institutes from Europe, Northern America and Australia export educational programs to other countries in Asia, Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe and Latin America.

Within the wide range of different activities subsumed under the term internationalization of education, this paper will focus on cross-border delivery or 'exporting' of education. Since such international education programs are delivered in a country different from their country of origin, a blended learning mode of teaching would seem to be the optimal method as it provides the flexibility of online education where students can study on their own time and without the obligation of geographical relocation to be in class. At the same time, the part of the program which is provided as "face-to-face" helps students not to feel isolated from their learning community and gives them the opportunity to interact with teachers as well as with other students in a physical world rather than interacting with them only in the virtual learning environment.

"Options for blended learning go beyond the classroom. They're formal and informal, technology and people-based, independent and convivial, and directive- and discovery-oriented. If you want to help employees with retirement planning, for example, a blend makes sense because the need extends over time. People can seek the information that they need, when they need it." (Rossett, Douglass et al. 2003)

Although blended learning, in theory, provides an attractive solution for exported education, yet in practice, it encounters many challenges that have been overlooked by researchers who have studied blended learning extensively. Consequently, little attention has been given to blended learning in the context of export of education from one country to another country and the cross-cultural difficulties and challenges that may face the educators as well as students in implementing this mode of education in cultures that may not be used to it or may even be resistant to it.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the challenges that a western educational institute may face in exporting its programs to developing countries. These challenges go beyond the obvious language barriers to more complicated cross cultural barriers and even infra-structural problems like access to internet and internet speed and even availability of steady electrical power. The fact that these educational programs are developed in one country and therefore rooted in its cultural values and belief systems and furthermore affected by the social and political system of the society in which it is produced, may in itself pose a challenge in getting students from other cultural backgrounds to adopt and engage in these programs. Students may feel alienated from the program as it does not conform with their own traditions, values and beliefs. The authors hope that highlighting these challenges may help western educational institutes to prepare well for these challenges on beforehand, and thus save a lot of otherwise wasted time, energy and money. The attempt to raise the level of awareness of challenges in technology-enhanced cross-border delivery of education is motivated by the experience made by a Danish private business school "International Business School of Scandinavia" (IBSS) when setting up a blended learning MBA program in Egypt and Vietnam which was designed in Denmark.

Blended learning - a teaching method for international education?

Many factors contributed to the spread of exported educational programs from developed to developing countries, these factors include but are not limited to: the spread of web based learning and the enhancements in technology and the increased number of English speaking people in non-English speaking countries. In their book "The Impact of E-Learning Programs on the Internationalization of the University", Amirault and Visser argue that the spread of web based learning in recent years can lead to increase of internationalization of education but some issues must be taken into consideration such as the faculty and students roles and migration, and the willingness of educators to take the role of facilitators in the online classrooms. (Amirault and Visser 2010). Caswell refers to the impact of the reduced costs of reproduction of distance learning educational programs saying:

"This marked decrease in costs has significant implications and allows distance educators to play an important role in the fulfillment of the promise of the right to universal education. At relatively little additional cost, universities can make their content available to millions. This content has the potential to substantially improve the quality of life of learners around the world." (Caswell, Henson et al. 2008)

These assumptions of researchers like Amirault and Visser make it sound so easy to upload some course materials on a "Learning Management System" for students from different countries and couple this with some face-to-face sessions and turn it into a high quality western education exported to developing countries. Such combinations of learning material and face-to-face interaction are commonly referred to as "Blended Learning". Graham, Harding, Kriger and Woltering and many others have studied the value as well as the change in satisfaction level of students when using a blended learning program compared to using a traditional program and concluded that students' satisfaction level is higher when using a blended learning program. In a study comparing medical students' satisfaction level when using a traditional program to using a Blended Learning program, the results show that using the Blended learning program increase student satisfaction. (Woltering, Herrler et al. 2009). In another study which was carried out at the University of Granada, with 1431 students in 17 groups, testing the outcome of a blended learning experience, the results show that the use of blended learning reduced dropout rates and improved students' exam marks and their perception of the program. (López-Pérez, Pérez-López et al. 2010)

But in practice, the use of "Blended Learning" mode of teaching may not be as easy as it sounds in spite of the fact that the face-to-face part of the blended learning programs is a traditional and well accepted teaching methodology for most students. Yet there may be other factors that can affect students' acceptance and use of the e-learning component of the "Blended Learning" program. Cultural barriers are among the most relevant issues which may be encountered in internationalized blended learning programs. As these programs are designed in one cultural, linguistic and social context and are influenced by the educational traditions in that context and then made available to target groups in a broad variety of different cultural and social contexts, this represents in itself an intriguing set of problems, both seen from the perspective of the provider and the student. Language as one of the aspects of culture can also be a challenge even with the students who are fluent in using English as a second language since the relation between culture and language goes beyond the simple use of words and understanding their meanings. It also includes ideas and values that are deeply embedded in these words and the difference that these values represent from one culture to another. The different technological infrastructure in each country is another important factor which may affect the quality of students' use of the e-learning component of "Blended Learning", for example if the e-learning activities include online streaming videos and the internet speed in one of these countries is not high enough to support these streaming videos, then students' experience with these videos will be unsatisfactory and their understanding of the content of the video may be impaired. The speed of internet also affects synchronous e-learning activities like online classes and webinars, where students need to participate at the same time with the teacher in an online class. If there is difference in internet speed used by students from different countries at the same time, this will affect the reception of the information and the use of webcams and audio and so the interaction between students among themselves and also between students and the teacher will be interrupted and thus their benefit of the online class will be affected as a result of this.

The issues which students face when using the e-learning component of the exported "Blended Learning" educational programs raise a question of the quality of the education those students receive who enrol in these programs. Since these programs depend in their pedagogy on the online portion of their programs, so it is

expected that if students fail to benefit from the online part of the program, then the overall benefit that the student gets will be markedly decreased. These questions may contradict with the rather naive assumption that enhancements in technology have managed to solve the geographical distance barrier and have made it possible for exporting educational institutes to export their programs freely to students in the developing world and that this goal can be achieved by simply making their curriculum, books and teaching materials available to those students online.

Developing countries represent an attractive market for franchising western educational institutes and so many universities seek this opportunity both for acquiring a global presence in a world that is moving very rapidly more and more towards a global reality and also for the obvious financial gains that come from these franchises in developing countries. A western degree is becoming a "passport" which gives young people access to the global employment market. Within this context, "Blended Learning" represents an opportunity to achieve the double purpose of global presence and financial gain and a challenge, especially if the program is not well planned and adapted to suit the diverse needs of the students in these countries. The risk is that students will either abandon these programs for lack of a perceived value or, which is more dangerous, will continue in these programs but fail to benefit fully from the programs' learning potential. A good example of this is the issue which was encountered in the Middle East and specifically in the Arab Peninsular Gulf region in Dubai and Qatar, where a lot of branches of American Universities were opened offering undergraduate and post graduate education. After a few years of opening, the governments in these countries found that these universities are more concerned with their profits than with the quality of education that they provide to these students, which meant that students graduating from the same university in the home country may hold the same degree as the ones graduating from the overseas branch of the same university but with much less qualifications, education and skills (Bollag 2006).

The case of a Danish business school

In this paper we present the case of a Danish private business school "International Business School of Scandinavia" (IBSS) and its experience of exporting a blended learning MBA program designed in Denmark to countries in the Middle East and Asia and the challenges that it faced in doing so. IBSS started in the year 2000 with the belief that training and education is optimized by the use of new technologies and has ever since worked on using blended learning as the platform for learning. Consequently, IBSS developed a blended learning MBA (Master of Business Administration) program aimed at developing applied skills of students within the business field. The program targets two kinds of students, first experienced managers with lack of theoretical knowledge and secondly B.A. Graduates with little experience.

IBSS uses a teaching pedagogy derived from the social constructivist ideas in teaching which requires students to form new ideas and gain knowledge from experience and sharing of experience and ideas. Modules are delivered as blended learning courses which include classroom teaching and instruction, home and self study, and e-learning tutorials with text and streaming videos supported by online group activities which are either synchronous as online classes and webinars or asynchronous as online group forums.

For years, IBSS used Blended Learning in presenting different training programs for professionals in Denmark and it was widely accepted by all attendees. But when "International Business School of Scandinavia" started exporting its MBA program to other regions like Asia and the Middle East, students from these countries did not adopt the use of the e-learning component of the program and viewed it as a less quality education tool than the conventional face-to-face teaching method. Furthermore, when International Business School of Scandinavia (IBSS) applied for the EFMD-CEL accreditation (EFMD is a global organization devoted to the continuous improvement of management development www.efmd.org) after they interviewed MBA students from Vietnam, their feedback was that students enjoy face-to-face contact with teachers and each other but they do not engage in the online activities, partly because of the language barrier and partly because they feel more comfortable organizing joint study sessions among themselves instead of participating in online group forums as they enjoy the personal interaction in meeting face-to-face more.

The constructivist teaching pedagogy adopted by IBSS, which uses simulations and activities to teach students and where the teacher's role is more of a facilitator than a "Guru" who has all the knowledge, was not appreciated nor adopted by students in countries like Egypt and Vietnam. In Vietnam, some of the students refused to participate in the activities and when they asked the teacher a question and the teacher, instead of giving them a ready-made answer, asked them to look the answer up in the internet, the students were frustrated

and complained that the teacher was not an experienced one. This teaching pedagogy was very strange to the students, to the extent that they reported it to some local newspapers that "ridiculed" the Danish business school educational pedagogy and the use of "games" in class for post graduate students and they even considered it an insult.

In Egypt, also, students did not adopt the e-learning component of the MBA program, and although all students are computer literate and use email and social networks like "facebook" almost daily in their personal as well as professional dealings, yet it was difficult for them to see that this can apply to education. While they expressed their appreciation of the face-to-face component of the program, they were reluctant to use the online component of the program (synchronous and asynchronous equally). Some of the students expressed their dissatisfaction with having any online components in the program and their concern that if the graduation certificate contains any notion that this program has any teaching parts done online, that this would decrease the value of the MBA certificate in the eyes of their employers. This indicates that online education is perceived in some countries to be non equivalent to face-to-face education and less effective.

All these incidents drew the attention of the management in "International Business School of Scandinavia" to the fact that students in some countries like Egypt and Vietnam prefer the human-human interface to the human-computer or human-material interface. In addition to students' preferences in the method of education, there are many other cultural differences in teaching students from different countries which raise a lot of questions that the school must attempt to find answers to, some of which may include but are not limited to:

- How formal or informal should the interaction in the synchronous e-learning setup be?
- During group debates and forums, how much conflict can people tolerate in content or style of argumentation?
- What role exists for personal opinion as opposed to group opinion?
- How should teachers or trainers act – as facilitators or gurus?
- Which interface is preferred in each country, computer-human interface or human-human interface or human-materials interface?

There are also a lot of other issues that have been raised while teaching these students especially from these two countries and most significantly, there were the difference in gender roles and language. Some gender issues rose in some conservative cultures like: can men teach women and vice versa? Can men and women attend same classes? Can men and women co-exist in the same virtual class? Will men accept being taught by a woman teacher, even if it is online? Is the use of webcam in online class culturally accepted for both men and women?

Language issues were also encountered in some countries, specifically in Vietnam where students speak very little English and even though some of them can read and write English well yet it was almost impossible for them to understand or be understood by a native English speaking teacher. This problem was overcome by translating all the teaching materials to Vietnamese language and by using an interpreter during classes, but this raised some more language related cultural issues as: should the curriculum and content be translated to the language of the students in all countries? Or should the international educational programs admit only English speaking students? And if the schools admitted only English speaking students, would this deprive the non-English speaking students from quality international education? Can the new online translation tools (like Google translate) be used to solve the language barrier issues and be successful in translating contents of curriculum from English which is a rather simple language to more complicated languages like Arabic or Vietnamese or Chinese?

Other issues encountered by "International Business School of Scandinavia" were the different technological infrastructure in different countries, for example in Denmark 86.1% of the population are internet users while in Egypt only 21.1% of the population and in Vietnam 27.1% of the population are internet users (source: Internet World Stats: an International website that features up to date world Internet Usage, Population Statistics and Internet Market Research Data, for over 233 individual countries and world regions). This may result in limitation of the people who can benefit from the exported "Blended Learning" programs.

Also, the speed of internet is different from one country to the other, for example in Denmark the maximum speed of download is 60.94 Mbps while the maximum speed of upload is 41.27 Mbps. This is different from a country like Egypt where the maximum speed of download is 8.17 Mbps while the maximum speed of upload is 5.62 Mbps and in Vietnam where the maximum speed of download is 24.04 Mbps and the maximum speed of

upload is 13.97 Mbp. These differing speeds make synchronous e-learning difficult where the transfer of data from the computer of either the teacher or the student in one country can be much slower or much faster than that of another user in another country which may have a negative effect on the learner's experience with e-learning altogether. (Source: www.speedtest.net Speedtest.net is a broadband speed analysis tool that allows anyone to test their Internet connection). The different time zones between different countries may also make it difficult to schedule a time for synchronous online activities, like online classes, which will be suitable for all students and the teacher, so always someone will be waking up in the middle of the night for the class, which again makes the learner's experience unpleasant.

These challenges have intrigued research by the Danish business school under study to further study the effect of culture and cross cultural communication on internationalization of education and how this can be overcome in a manner that would benefit the students and the school at the same time.

Discussion

Blended Learning method of teaching provides a logical choice for exporting of education as it eliminates the need for long term geographical relocation of both students and staff while providing the students with the needed international teaching and exposure to both students and teachers from other countries. But as seen from the case of the Danish business school IBSS and the resistance from students towards using the e-learning component of blended learning, this raises the question of the usability and the real learning value that students may gain by using this method. A question that needs to be explored further is the quality of education that students get when they fail or refuse to make use of a large component of the blended learning program which is the e-learning component, whether this is due to their lack of faith in the online method of learning or due to their lack of experience in dealing with technology in a satisfactory way that allows them to make the best of the content of the program. In order to work with these questions we need to gain a better understanding on the issues involved in acceptance/non-acceptance of the e-learning parts of blended learning.

Another point that needs to be further investigated is the attractiveness of developing countries as a market for exported education especially by private operators in that field and although it seems to be a profit generating option for educators, but will the costs of adapting the courses to fit the local markets culturally, linguistically and pedagogically still make these markets profitable for these organizations?

Hence there are many problems involved when western education providers' export programs to developing countries and we suggest that these problems can be differentiated into four categories:

- Pedagogical considerations: the pedagogy used in developing the programs being exported may be not understood or not appreciated by the students in another country if the pedagogy of teaching they are used to is different and thus the educational provider must decide how to handle this: should the pedagogical approach be changed or adapted to meet the expectations of the students? Or should the provider attach importance to explaining the pedagogy and make sure that students are aware of this issue before they start?
- Contextual considerations: the context in which the program is presented should make sense to the students' culture and background. Since the educational programs are developed in western countries with ideas deeply rooted in the cultural and conceptual structure of the country of origin, this may pose a challenge for students from other cultures to relate to them and process the information in a way that makes sense within their own frame of reference and thus may affect the effectiveness of the learning process to them
- Organizational considerations: Offering blended learning programs in countries significantly different from the country of the providing institution represents considerable organizational challenges to that institution. For example, the institution often relies on teachers familiar with the educational tradition, culture, and language of the students. At the same time, such teachers must be experts in the disciplines they are teaching. Thus, in all forms of staff development activities ranging from recruitment to quality control, cultural barriers and geographical distance play a role.
- Technical considerations: the technological infrastructure of the countries that they export education to is also an important factor that should not be over looked. Examples of these considerations are availability of an easy access to internet and the speed of the internet. The availability of technologically advanced computers in the country, at affordable prices together with the level of computer literacy of the majority of the target population for these programs. The technical requirements of the software you use for e-learning is also very significant in how useful the e-learning will be to the students, for example streaming videos

with high resolution may need a very high speed internet, which may not be available in many developing countries. Also, if you use synchronous e-learning sessions using webinars tools with students and the teacher from different countries and the speed of the internet is not the same then the teacher's presentation may be interrupted or there may be a time lag between the picture and the voice of the teacher and students.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, internationalization of education is a rising trend nowadays and theoretically speaking, blended learning method of teaching – which combines face-to-face sessions with online synchronous and asynchronous activities – is ideal for exported educational programs. Yet, in practice, this method of teaching was faced with many challenges as cross cultural barriers, technical infrastructure, pedagogical and contextual issues.

So what is learning? And is there only one method of learning that should be suitable for all? Or does learning have a "national identity" of its own? Learning to one culture may be linked to watching a "Guru" and learning from his/her experience or having a mentor, like in Vietnam where students go to colleges and get a mentor and learn just by following this mentor's daily dealings. Maybe learning is just the simple acquiring of knowledge and storing them in the brain to be ready for use when needed. A more important question is how exporting educational institutes may approach the different methods of learning? Should they force their own methods and just expect everyone to follow them? Or should they modify their teaching methods to meet the different needs of each group of students? And if they take this approach, what impact will this have on their profitability

Further research is needed taking an ethnographic observational approach to study the learning process of students in higher education levels in Denmark (representing Northern Europe) and Egypt (representing Middle East region) and Vietnam (representing developing countries in Asia) to find these points:

- What are the factors that influence students from different educational and cultural backgrounds and their acceptance and usage of e-learning?
- What are the students' expectations from e-learning in different cultures?
- What are the elements of e-learning that need to be modified in each culture to improve students' experience with e-learning?
- What are the factors that affect students' acceptance and usage of e-learning component of the specific blended learning MBA program which is under investigation in this study?

Also, Action Research is needed aimed at verifying the real effect of the factors concluded from the first study on the acceptance and usage of students in Egypt and Vietnam of the e-learning component of IBSS blended learning MBA program.

The result of these two studies is expected to shed the light on the most important factors that should be taken into consideration when educational institutes are considering internationalization of their educational programs and this would lead to better introduction and implementation of these programs in new countries.

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Publication 2: A book chapter in "Changing education through ICT in developing countries"

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Summary and Comments:

This book chapter details and compares 3 different non-participant observations in Aalborg University in Denmark, Cairo University in Egypt and Kent College in Vietnam with a discussion about the implication of these observations. The 3 observations were interpreted and analysed using the Learning Situation model (inspired by Situational Analysis approach by Adele Clarke) and detailed in the form of field notes.

I introduce more details about the research methodology in this book chapter and explain in full details the main focus point of the research, the learning situation model and the implications of using it in this research.

I wrote this book chapter, with my PhD supervisor Ann Bygholm and co-supervisor Kirsten Jaeger, after collection of data from the 3 countries and before the in-depth line-by-line coding process using Atlas.ti software. The objective of writing this publication was to have a coarse and general comparative analysis of the 3 learning situations and thus draw the major outline for the major comparative levels between the 3 countries' data. I tried to enlist as many observation points and field notes in each learning situation as possible to help the reader see the situations that I described exactly as I saw them. Since at this stage in the research the coding process and analysis were not finalized yet, the paper concluded by relating each of the 4 learning situations to one of the 3 types explained in the learning situation model.

Exporting a Scandinavian Learning Model to Egypt and Vietnam: Challenges and Implications

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Abstract

The recent advances in technology have made the process of exporting Western education more easy, and Blended Learning techniques is often the method of choice for exported educational programs. Although, in theory, this makes perfect sense, yet in practice, the export of education has encountered many challenges.

In this paper, we will present findings from an ethnographic study of the learning systems in higher education in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam. The sample includes undergraduate level classes taught in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam. The selected learning settings include an 'Academic Communication and Grammar' class in Denmark, a 'Financial Management' class in Vietnam and a 'Marketing Management' class in Egypt. To analyze the data collected, the researcher developed a model based on a constructivist understanding of learning processes.

Three detailed descriptions of observations made in the above mentioned classes by the researcher are offered in this paper. In the "Learning Situations" (LS) observed in Denmark, the interaction is interpreted as arranged in agreement with basic constructivist principles, whereas the interaction in Vietnam is predominantly student-teacher centered, and the LS observed in Egypt is predominantly student-materials centered.

Introduction

The export of education from Western countries in Europe, North America and Australia to other countries in the developing world has recently become very popular. This is due to the rising demand in these countries for Western education, which makes them an attractive market due to the obvious financial gains and also due to the aspiration of achieving global presence. A Western degree has become students' passports into the very competitive job market either globally or in their home countries. The result is that "There are 420,000 people outside the UK taking UK degrees through various arrangements in

100 countries.” (UNESCO, 2011). This is both a challenge and an opportunity for educational institution exporting higher education programs because they may differ in context and in goals from the receiving country’s educational system and practices.

The export of education is part of the larger framework which is “Internationalization of Education”. Internationalization activities, according to Roger Bennett (Bennett and Kane 2009) include, but are not limited to international franchising, curriculum internationalization, exchange programs and the recruitment of foreign teaching staff. One aspect of the internationalization of education is the enrolment of international students in overseas universities in Western countries, which has increased significantly in numbers in recent years. For example, in the UK, the numbers of international students account for over 40% of UK postgraduate students and 50% of those studying in full-time research degree programs (UK council for international student affairs 2010). The direction of international student mobility is clear: from the global South to universities within the Western educational tradition, situated in the main Anglophone countries (Hughes, 2008, p. 5). The migration of students away from their countries of origin to Western countries may provide these students with a chance to receive quality education in the short run, but may eventually lead to a brain drain (the immigration of a large group of individuals with technical skills or knowledge) caused by an uneven distribution of the world’s knowledge resources in the longer run. Thus, subsidiaries of Western universities may be able to play a positive role in the knowledge economy of developing countries if, on the one hand, they can provide more people with higher education and, on the other hand, enable talented people to stay in the developing countries instead of going abroad. With this vision and in an attempt to bring global educational standards to all nations, many institutions from Europe, North America and Australia export educational programs to other countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Latin America.

Many factors contribute to the spread of exported educational programs from developed to developing countries. These factors include but are not limited to: the spread of web based learning, the enhancements in technology and the increased number of English speaking people in non-English speaking countries. In their book “The Impact of E-Learning Programs on the Internationalization of the University”, Amirault and Visser argue that the spread of web based learning in recent years can lead to an increase of internationalization of education, but some issues must be taken into consideration such as the roles of faculty and students and the willingness of educators to take the role of facilitators in the online classrooms (Amirault and Visser, 2010). Caswell, Henson, Jensen, and Wiley (2008) refer to the impact of the reduced costs of reproduction of distance learning educational programs suggesting that the marked decrease in costs of online materials content has significant implications and allows distance educators to play an important role in the fulfillment of the promise of the right to universal education. At relatively little additional cost, universities can make their content available to millions. This content has the potential to substantially improve the quality of life of learners around the world (Caswell

and Henson et al., 2008)

Remarks like these made by Amirault and Visser (2010) and Caswell et al. (2008) make it sound so easy to upload some course materials on a Learning Management System for students from different countries and couple this with some face-to-face sessions and turn it into a high quality Western education exported to developing countries. However, the problem with this fairly simple and cheap method of exporting education may be that students will not fully accept it as an alternative to the human interaction element in the learning process. Thus, the Blended Learning mode of delivery offers an ideal solution for exporting education as it provides the flexibility of online education, where students can study in their own time and without the obligation of geographical relocation to be in class, and the face-to-face part helps students not to feel isolated from their learning community. Blended Learning offers students the opportunity to interact with teachers and with other students in a physical world as well as interacting with them in the virtual learning environment.

Many researchers emphasize the great benefits of Blended learning (Woltering et al., 2009; Rossett, Douglass & Frazee, 2003; López-Pérez et al., 2011). In theory, it provides an attractive solution for exported education, yet in practice it encounters many challenges. Some of these challenges are the quality of education provided in the country of origin versus the quality of education provided in the countries to which the programs are exported (Bollag 2006) and teachers' acceptance and ability to use the e-learning component of the blended learning program (Ocak, 2011; Klein et al., 2004). The cross-cultural difficulties and challenges that educators as well as students may face when implementing this mode of education in cultures that may not be used to it or may even be resist it should not be overlooked. Nor should the technological infrastructure limitations be ignored. (Fahmy & Bygholm et al, 2012).

Danish Business School Experience as a Point of Departure for the Research

This research was triggered by the case of a Danish private business school "International Business School of Scandinavia" (IBSS) and its experience of exporting a Blended Learning MBA program designed in Denmark to countries in the Middle East and Asia and the challenges that it faced in doing so. IBSS started in the year 2000 with the belief that training and education could be optimized by the use of technology and has ever since worked on using blended learning as the platform for learning. Consequently, IBSS developed a blended learning MBA (Master of Business Administration) program aimed at developing applied skills of students within the business field.

IBSS uses a teaching philosophy derived from the social constructivist approach to teaching, which requires students to form new ideas and gain knowledge from experience and the sharing of experience and ideas. Modules are delivered as Blended Learning courses, which include classroom teaching and instruction, home and self study, and e-learning tutorials with text and streaming videos supported by online group activities which are either synchronous as online classes and webinars or asynchronous as online group forums.

For years, IBSS used blended learning when conducting different training programs for professionals in Denmark, and this was widely accepted by all attendees. But when “International Business School of Scandinavia” started exporting its MBA program to other regions such as Asia and the Middle East, students from these countries did not adopt the use of the e-learning component of the program and viewed it as an educational tool of lower quality than the conventional face-to-face teaching method. Furthermore, the constructivist teaching pedagogy adopted by IBSS, which uses simulations and activities to teach the students, was not appreciated nor adopted by students in countries like Egypt and Vietnam (Fahmy and Bygholm et al, 2012).

The problem which caused the Danish business school to instigate this research was the reaction of Vietnamese and Egyptian students to e-learning. Students from these countries did not engage in nor adopt the use of the e-learning component of the MBA program provided by IBSS. However, it seems that this reaction is only the tip of the iceberg of the much more fundamental problem (or set of problems) that we cannot address e-learning problems without understanding the underlying concepts of learning and teaching of the (e-) learner. The complexity of this problem is due to the differences between educational systems in different countries, which involve fundamentally different ways of conceiving of education and of what activities to expect within educational practices. In our opinion, learning in itself cannot be understood as an exclusively individual cognitive process but must be understood as embedded in social, cultural, economic and political contexts, which have a deep impact on the concepts of learning, or what is understood as learning by individuals and educational systems in different countries. This is particularly important when addressing learning in the context of ‘exported education’ since understanding these different learning processes and contexts in every country would help exporting institutions to adapt and customize their programs according to the varying needs of the students in each country.

Theoretical Framework: The Learning Situation Model

With the challenges faced in the export of blended learning educational programs as a core issue that drives this research, specifically the Danish Business School which is co-funding the research, the current study aims at shedding light on the differences in the learning practices of students in different countries. What we mean by learning practices is the planned activities and relations involved in creating some form of cognitive learning. Exploring and comparing the different educational systems and practices in different countries would help IBSS and other exporting educational institutions to understand how these differences in learning practices affect students’ approach to learning and consequently their acceptance of new tools used for learning such as e-learning.

This study is an ethnographic study of teaching and learning practices within the higher education systems in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam. The aim of the study is to understand the contexts in which higher education in these three countries takes place and what factors affect students’ concepts of learning.

This will hopefully result in identifying the incongruence between e-learning tools and design and the actual sequence of events happening in the learning process in these countries. By observing the natural settings in which learning takes place and making descriptive analyses of selective learning situations in the three countries, we attempt to develop a better understanding of the different relations between the key players of learning in these countries. Coupling the non-participant observations with other methods of qualitative research such as in-depth interviews and focus groups will lead to better insight into the reality of how students and teachers (the key players in the learning process) understand and feel about learning, and how this can differ greatly from one culture to another.

The researcher chose an ethnographic research approach because of the long tradition of using ethnographic research methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the natural setting in which an activity (such as learning) occurs, with minimal disruption to this natural environment from the researcher. J. D. Brewer (2000, p. 10) defines ethnography as:

“the study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally”. (Brewer, 2000, p. 10).

Hence, using ethnographic research gives a broader understanding of the natural setting in which higher education takes place in these three countries, Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam, and by comparing learning practices in the countries, conclusions can be drawn about how to better design and adapt the exported educational programs to fit the natural understanding of education from the learners’ perspective.

The sample studied included higher education students and teachers in public and private universities and colleges in the three countries: Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam. Denmark represents Northern Europe and Scandinavia while Egypt represents the Middle East and Vietnam represents developing countries in Asia. The study examines teaching setups in both public and private universities in Egypt and Vietnam, while in Denmark the focus was on public universities only as they represent the majority of education in the country.

The methods which were used by the researcher include:

1. Data collection by the researcher using non-participant observation and note taking, diary keeping, audio recordings and data reports for observing the activities and interaction taking place in the natural setting of higher education and identifying the detailed sequence of events involved in the routine performance of these activities.
2. Observation was coupled with focus group activities conducted in each of the three countries, using a semi-structured questions guide. The value of focus groups at this stage was that students from the three groups could

reveal aspects of experience and perspectives that would not be as accessible without group interaction. All focus groups were either video recorded or audio recorded.

3. Unstructured in-depth interviews were also conducted in all three countries with either students only or students and teachers to identify how teachers design and develop their courses and how students perceive the methods of teaching that are currently being adopted by teaching staff in the three countries and all interviews were audio recorded.
4. Documentary evidence from some of the materials used for teaching and studying in the three countries was obtained for analysis and comparison.

The researcher visited the three countries under study in this research project during the period from October 2011 to February 2012. The data collected in Denmark included two hours of recorded lecture, interviews with 5 students, non-participant observations of a two-hour lecture, as well as course materials. All this data was collected from one university: Aalborg University.

The data collected in Vietnam included visits to six different universities, and non-participant observations in three of them, which included total observations of fifteen hours of teaching (of which some was audio recorded), in addition to one hour of video-recorded focus group with eleven student participants and another hour of video-recorded focus group with four student participants and a total of ninety minutes of audio-recorded interviews with nine students and two teachers. Course materials, photos and timetables were also collected for analysis.

Data collected from Egypt include visits to five different universities and non-participant observations of a total of twelve hours of teaching at three of them. Most were audio-recorded. A focus group with four male students was video-recorded for fifteen minutes, and another focus group with twelve students was audio-recorded for twenty minutes (some female students who were in the focus group refused to be video-recorded), and an in-depth interview with two students was audio-recorded for forty minutes. Teaching materials, photos, student articles and timetables were also collected for analysis.

To analyze the data collected, the researcher developed a model inspired by the data collected as well as the constructivist approach to learning as opposed to the instructivist approach to learning. As most educational scholars agree, instructivism is based on the learners' passive reception and memorizing of didactically arranged information (Merrill 2008) and in accordance with this approach, exams are based on knowledge recall (Sweller, Kirschner et al. 2007). Constructivism understands learning as the learner's active construction of new knowledge based on the application of and to some extent also the alteration of existing cognitive structures (Bandura and McClelland 1977) and situated learning (Lave 1991). These two different approaches represent the opposing poles of the educational continuum that the "Learning Situation Model" is built on.

Our definition of a "Learning Situation" is an institutionally arranged situation in which the actors fulfill well-defined roles (as teachers and students) in order to accomplish student learning. The third element in the "Learning

Situation" model is the materials, like books, lecture notes, presentations-etc., which also play an important role in the learning process that takes place in these countries. Each "Learning Situation" is a formal teaching-learning episode which takes place within an institution and is normally scheduled in advance between students and teachers in the presence (or non-presence) of materials. This episode is intended to result in some form of cognitive learning by the students. In this research, students' accounts of "Learning Situations" were also included. Their feedback and feelings expressed towards the learning situations were analyzed as well.

The description and analysis of each "Learning Situation" (LS) categorizes it as either **(a)** predominantly student-teacher interaction, **(b)** predominantly student-materials interaction or **(c)** a mixed balance between student-teacher-material interaction (Figure 1). The model reflects a constructivist understanding of the learning process in that it identifies the learner's interaction with, on the one hand, learning materials and, on the other hand, the teacher(s) as producers of the inputs to the learner's construction of knowledge. This, of course, applies predominantly to formal learning settings within a classroom environment. If the main classroom activity takes place as interaction between students and teacher (a), it indicates that the learning situation may be controlled and dominated by the teacher. If the major part of the activities is organized as interaction between the individual student (or groups of students) and course material, this indicates that the class is organized as independent or self-managed learning (b) in which the teacher typically adopts the role of facilitator or supervisor instead of the role of instructor. Finally, if the class is organized as a combination of teacher-student interaction and student-material interaction, this indicates that the teacher is seeking to strike a balance between teacher-managed and self-managed learning (c). It is important to understand, however, that these categories are only initial, rather crude generalizations which require further refinement. For example, teacher-student interaction (a) may take place as student-centered dialogues in which students define the frames of the discussion and seek to elicit information from the teacher for purposes defined by the students themselves. Student interaction with learning materials may also be highly teacher-controlled if, for example, the students' options for action have been limited (e.g. in the case of a multiple choice test). Thus, the application of the model must be combined with qualitative studies of the actual interaction processes in the classroom.

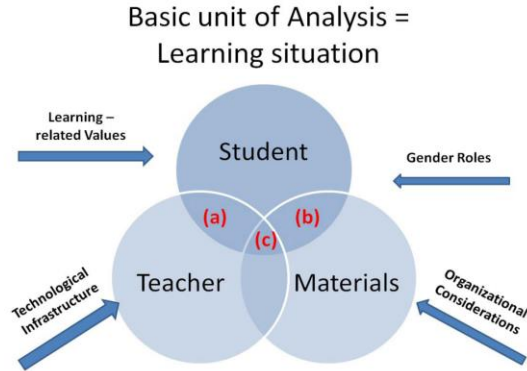


Figure 1: The unit of analysis in this study “the Learning Situation”

Although we are aware of the fact that learning is much deeper and broader than described in such simple relations, we find this model helpful in reaching the goal of this research. This model would help the Danish business school funding this project as well as other higher education exporting institutions in understanding the basic differences in learning practices among students from different countries and their approaches to learning. Understanding and appreciating these differences would help institutions to become more sensitive to students’ needs and thus offer them the programs which truly cater to their cognitive practices, which would result in better results and better education.

An In-depth Descriptive Analysis of Three Different “Learning Situations” (LS) in Three Countries

In this paper, we present a part of the data which were collected from the three countries where the major players (students and teachers) share many similarities in terms of age, specialization and educational degree that they study. Before describing the “Learning Situations” which were analyzed in each country, some general data about higher education in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam will be presented. Then, one observation of a “Learning Situation” in each of these three countries will be presented in an attempt to evaluate how similar or different the learning practices in these three learning situations may be.

Denmark

According to the statistics of the World Bank in 2008, the rate of enrollment of Danish students in tertiary education is 79% and out of these, only 2% are enrollments in private tertiary education. Higher education in Denmark is divided into three levels: short-cycle, medium-cycle and long-cycle. Short-cycle higher education is acquired at a non-university college and it includes programs in the commercial and technical fields mostly. The aim of these programs is to qualify students for practical and vocational jobs and to qualify

graduates to find employment at specialist or middle-management level. Diplomas in short-cycle programs (business academy programs) or the Academy Profession Degree are awarded after two years of study (120 ECTS points). The medium-cycle programs prepare students for specific professions and include for instance Teacher training programs, programs in social work, journalism, nursing, engineering etc. Diplomas are awarded after a 3- to 4-year professionally oriented program at a level corresponding to a university Bachelor. The Professional Bachelor degrees are awarded on completion of programs which include research, practical training and development, and all of these programs also include compulsory periods of practical training. The long-cycle higher education in Denmark is conducted at university-level, and its main objective is to conduct research and offer research-based education at an international level.

There are four types of institutions offering higher education programs: first, the academies of professional higher education (offering short-cycle programs) and second, university colleges (offering medium-cycle programs) and third, universities (offering long-cycle programs), finally there are institutions which offer study programs in arts. All short-cycle higher education is concentrated on 10 business academies (academies of professional higher education), while most of the medium-cycle-education will be concentrated in eight University Colleges, and long-cycle higher education is concentrated in eight universities in Denmark. Five of these universities are multi-faculty universities, and the other three specialize in fields such as engineering (the Technical University of Denmark), information technology (The IT University) and business studies (Copenhagen Business School).

An observation study was conducted at Aalborg University (AAU) on 8 November 2011. We will provide a descriptive analysis of a “Learning Situation” of one of the lecture sessions of the first semester course “Academic Communication and Grammar”. The session took place from 10:00am to noon.

The researcher entered the class at 9:45am and took a seat in the last row in the class to have a good view of all activities and interaction taking place during the session. The classroom was big enough for 100 students with around 50 students attending and chairs were arranged in the classroom style. The equipment used in this class were white boards, a screen, video projector and all classrooms in AAU are equipped with Wi-Fi connections, which means that each student gets a personal username and pass code for the university campus Wi-Fi. The teacher came into the classroom a few minutes ahead of the time scheduled for the beginning of the lecture, and the materials she used were power point presentations and the set book. The lecture started by the teacher asking the students to work in pairs to discuss a previous assignment, and then she presented a new idea for 20 minutes. The teacher then asked students to read from the course book and solve an activity in the book in groups and compare their answers to the answers at the end of the book. She finished the activity by a recap of the exercise. The lecture was generally interactive with questions from teacher to students and from students to teacher – students asked questions and the teacher answered patiently.

Some general observations were that few students had books but most had

laptops. Students worked alone and in groups, and the teacher was moving around giving comments and motivating them. Students sometimes listened to the teacher, and sometimes they did other things, like listened to a fellow student or looked at their computers. The teacher seemed to be aware of each student's participation, or at least most of them – she walked around helping them with the exercise and asking those who seemed busy doing other things questions to make sure they were following the class. The general atmosphere was one of learning and mutual responsibility towards the learning process and although it was clear that students were engaged in the learning process and were participating, they also reverted to facebook every once in a while – this seemed to be out of habit. Apparently, all students were at the same level of understanding and learning – only two students seemed to be alone and not integrated in what was going on. One of them looked foreign.

The observations concerning interaction during class showed a high level of interaction between the students and the teacher and between students and their peers and also between students and the course materials. Technology seemed to be an important catalyst in all these levels of interaction, and the use of technology was an integral part of teaching, and class exercises included search on the internet. Students with laptops opened sites like Facebook – Youtube – some wrote notes – some googled words to answer teacher's questions. Students were allowed to eat and drink inside the classroom, and in a two-hours session, the teacher spoke for a total length of time of thirty minutes (fragmented).

During group work, students were all working and interacting together and learning, also discussing and having fun, some were playing games but overall it was clear that they were all keen to learn, and that they respected the session and the teacher. The same two detached students were not participating in group exercises, and each of them was doing something else on their laptops. The teacher came to each of them separately and talked with them – clearly asking if they were following the session or not. The session ended with homework being set (workshop after class), and this would link this class with the following class and motivate students to self learn.

In this observation, there was a high level of interaction at all three levels, student-teacher interface and student-student interface and also student-materials interface, which led to a high degree of interaction at the "(c)" level (as shown in the diagram). Based on the observation of this "Learning Situation" we can conclude that this class showed favorable interaction at all levels, and that the LS of this class is of level "(c)".

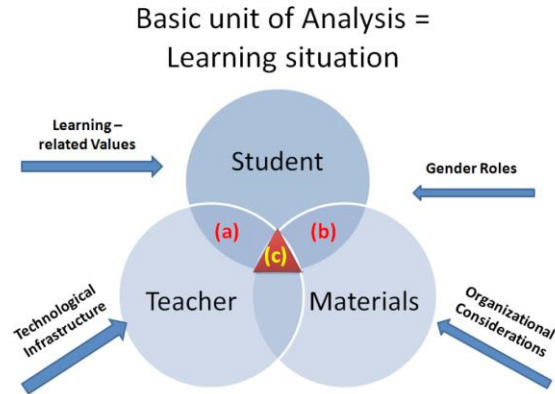


Figure 2: "Learning Situation" in Denmark

In the observation at AAU in Denmark, all the teacher's activities are student-centered and mutually interactive. The teacher respects the class and arrives on time and is always aware of everyone in her class, trying to motivate and help them. Students are equally responsible for their learning and participate proactively in all activities, while the teacher role is rather that of an orchestrator of the learning process, but the teacher is not the person responsible for it.

Vietnam

According to the statistics of the World Bank in 2008, the rate of enrollment of Vietnamese students in tertiary education is 18%. The current higher education (HE) system in Vietnam includes university (from 4 to 6 years, depending on the field of study), college (3 years), master (from 1 to 3 years after getting a university degree, depending on the field of education and the forms of study) and doctorate education (2 to 4 years after acquiring a master's degree). The total number of students in higher education in 2008-2009 was 1,719,499 and 87.3% of them went to public institutions (1,501,310 students) while 12.7% of them go to non-public universities and colleges (218,189 students). There are 295 universities and public colleges in Vietnam, while the number of non-public higher education institutions increased from 15 non-public universities in 1997 to 81 institutions by May 2009 (44 universities and 37 colleges).

An observation study was conducted in one of the private higher education colleges in Vietnam, Kent College, on 6 December 2011. A descriptive analysis of a "Learning Situation" of one of the lecture sessions of the course Financial Management which was held from 08:00 to 10:30 am, is presented.

This class was towards the end of the semester, and in the class students were presenting their assignments, which they had submitted a week before the presentations. There was no schedule for the whole course. Instead, students received a weekly schedule at the beginning of each week. There were

15 students at the start of the class in a classroom, which was big enough for 40 students. The number of students ended up being 24 as more students kept coming into the classroom 45 minutes after the session started. The number of females in this class was twice the number of males in the class. The class was air-conditioned, and the chairs were arranged in a theatre-like style. A note on the wall said "No food, drinks, chewing gum in class". The equipment used in this class was computer and video projectors. In this session, students presented their assignments in pairs. Students had sent their presentations to the teacher before the class in order to discuss them during the presentations. The teacher and the students were Vietnamese, but all interaction in class was in English.

The researcher observed that students had their laptops in class while the teacher was sitting at the end of the class watching the whole class and the presentations. The teacher asked other students to comment or ask questions but no one spoke up. Also, the teacher asked questions in an interrogating manner as illustrated in the following monologue produced as a comment on one of the student presentations:

"I said this point in class before and other students too did the same mistake ... We had a standardized format, why didn't you use that?"
 ... "for sure follow the standardized format" ... "didn't I ask everyone to use the standardized formats?"

One of the presenting students seemed embarrassed in front of other students and whispered to her partner, and they both laughed. The teacher asked the student to skip the introduction and go to the "income statements" (which was the topic of the assignments). Both students (two females) looked at each other and laughed. While the two students were presenting, the teacher did not pay attention but kept receiving assignments from other students and reading them. The teacher asked students to explain what they wrote in their presentations, and they found it hard to explain. The teacher seemed to be looking for "the right answer". Some students had their laptops in class, some looked at presentations on their computer screens, some opened facebook, and some were chatting. The teacher made fun of the students' presentations. Again, the students presenting seemed to be embarrassed and whispered to other students sitting in the first row. While students presented, none of their colleagues asked questions or gave feedback or comment. The teacher commented by saying "Really?" and "Are you sure" and "Oh, Gee". When presenting, one of the students put her hand over her mouth, and the other student locked her hands behind her back. The teacher commented that only two students wrote references in their assignments. During all of the students' presentations, the teacher did not listen to students but kept receiving the assignments. The teacher was sitting right behind one of the students, who was on facebook, and asked her to explain what was going on, and when she could not answer, the teacher commented "when you did your presentation they listened but when it is their turn you don't listen to what they say". The teacher asked this student to walk out of the classroom because she was not paying attention and was on facebook and chatting. Some other students sneaked out of the class, and they all stood

outside next to the stairs chatting with her. She was allowed by the teacher to enter the class again after fifteen minutes. Again, she went to her laptop and opened facebook while the teacher was sitting behind her in class and could see what she was doing on her computer.

The teacher made a wrong comment in class, then apologized for it and corrected it. Some students looked at each other and laughed. All students were embarrassed and looked ashamed when they presented in class, and the teacher talked about exams and mentioned again the importance of using the standardized formats and templates.

During the session, students kept their mobiles on, and they made calls and took calls during the class. Students called the teacher "TEACHER", and they submitted assignments to the teacher using both hands while bowing down a little (as is the custom of Asians as a sign of respect and humility).

The analysis of this "Learning Situation" is that all interaction is in the "student-teacher interface" (which we refer to as the ("a") section as shown in the figure). One-way communication from teacher to students is the dominant form of communication, and the relationship between the teacher and students is very formal. The teacher is the source of all information in class, and both students and teacher act on this basis. Students accept this distance and may even see it as justified and essential to their learning process (as was clear from students' comments in the interviews). This is coherent with the Vietnamese belief system, which is very much affected by Chinese culture, due to the long history of colonization of Vietnam by China, a fact mentioned by one of the students in the focus group interview. The Vietnamese –just like the Chinese – are affected by the teachings of Confucius, and an important virtue in Chinese culture is what is called "filial piety", which means holding the highest level of awe and respect to one's parents and ancestors, and this respect extends to teachers and elders in general (Yao 2000). This concept is reflected to a great extent in this "Learning Situation", where the students hold a lot of respect for the teacher's opinions and for the teacher himself, while the teacher, at the same time, treats the students as less competent and assumes that they should follow his instructions without arguing. Thus, we can conclude that the learning process in this case is mainly centered on the relations and interaction between the students and the teacher.

Basic unit of Analysis = Learning situation

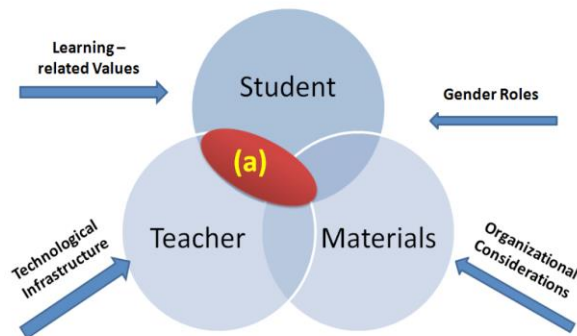


Figure 3: "Learning Situation" in Vietnam

In the Vietnam observation, the teacher's role is that of a "Guru" rather than a facilitator of learning. He has all the knowledge and he passes this knowledge on to students and expects them to keep this knowledge locked in their heads and use it as it is in evaluations such as assignments and exams. This is made clear in the teacher's comments, for example "I said this point in class before". The teacher provides standard concepts and puts them in templates that the students are expected to use without making alterations, which we can see from comments like "didn't I ask everyone to use the standardized formats?" When the students do not follow the exact instructions of the teacher and use the "standardized formats", the teacher is not satisfied with their work and starts to punish them by making harsh comments, and he ridicules them in front of other students in class by uttering comments like "Really?" and "Are you sure?" and "Oh, Gee". At such moments, students are clearly embarrassed. There is also a controversy in the students' attitude towards the teacher where, although they respect him and call him "Teacher" and bow down a little when they hand in their assignments, they arrive late in class and keep their mobiles on during the session, answer calls in class and do other things on their computers in class rather than concentrating on the session. This is also clear from the incident of the student who was chatting on her computer in class, and the teacher asked her to leave class for some time (as a punishment). Instead of complying with the punishment, her friends went out to keep her company. When she was allowed to come back in class, she started chatting on her computer again as if rebelling against the control of the teacher in class. The teacher is the center of the learning process, and students are followers and passive participants in the learning process. The teacher is not obliged to give them his undivided attention in class because he represents the "core" of their learning, and thus students do not take any responsibility for their own learning.

Egypt

According to the statistics by the World Bank in 2008, the rate of enrollment of Egyptian students in tertiary education is 31% and the number of students in tertiary education per 100,000 is 3328. There are two education systems in Egypt, the secular and the religious (Al-Azhar) system. We will focus only on the tertiary education level in the secular system, which consists of all post-secondary education institutions including universities and 2- or 4-year degrees offered by non-university higher education institutions. The higher education system in Egypt is composed of public universities (dominant and large), public non-university institutions (small and limited), a number of small private universities, and a large number of private non-university institutions. In 2008, the system was composed of: eighteen public universities and sixteen private universities and thirteen public non-university institutions. The public non-university institutions are subdivided into eight technical colleges and five higher technical institutes, which provide four to five years of higher technical education. There are also 96 institutions, 88 of which offer four-year education programs. Out of these, eight institutes offer two-year middle technical programs, and four offer both two and four-year programs. There are another eleven non-university institutions established by entities other than the “Ministry of Higher Education” or under special agreements and two private foreign institutions: the American University in Cairo (AUC) established 1919, and the Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport (AAST-MT) established in 1972.

An observation study was conducted in one of the biggest higher education universities in Egypt, Cairo University, on 14 February 2012 and we will present a descriptive analysis of a “Learning Situation” of one of the lecture sessions of the course “Marketing Management”, which was held from 10:00 to 11:00am.

The lecture was held in an auditorium big enough for 500 students, and 300 students attended. Female students were almost four times the number of male students in the auditorium, where the genders were segregated from each other, so that females were sitting together and males sitting together. The auditorium had broken windows and no air conditioners, and there were fans hanging from the ceiling. None of the students had a laptop or hand-held devices in the class, only mobile phones. The equipment used in class was an over-head projector and a video projector.

The teacher dictated the lecture to the students, and they wrote down what she dictated. She read from her notes and explained to the students and then continued to dictate to them. Students studied by memorizing the lecture notes that the teacher dictated. In the exam, the students wrote down what they memorized. The teacher wrote down on transparencies (on an old over head projector) while explaining to students and dictating them slowly so that they could write what she said. Some of the words she wrote in English were spelled incorrectly. She kept dictating to them, and they wrote what she said. She stopped every once in a while to explain a certain concept and give examples to illustrate it. During the lecture, all students were silent and wrote down every word the teacher said. Some students made their own notes, which con-

tained the contents of the lecture but rewritten in good handwriting or typed, and they would distribute them to their fellow students who did not attend the lecture. Students kept coming in class after the start of the lecture, and the teacher let them in. The teacher asked questions to test students' knowledge, and some students answered her. One student asked a question about an example which the teacher had used to illustrate a point, and another student gave an example of an incident that happened to him to confirm a point that the teacher was explaining and the teacher listened attentively and commented on the student's example.

The analysis of this "Learning Situation" is that all interaction is in the "student-material interface" (which we refer to as the ("b") section as shown in the figure. Students learn by memorizing information written in books or notes which the teacher obliges them to study, and the students' relationship with their teachers is based on the teachers' giving the students the "materials" and explaining (or not) explaining to them the contents of the materials.

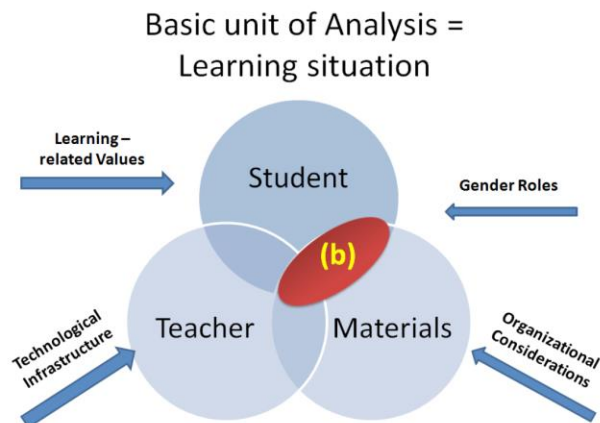


Figure 4: "Learning Situation" in Egypt

The case of Egypt is not so different from the Vietnamese case, as the students are also not in the center of teaching activities and are not viewed as active players in their own learning. In this observation, the materials prescribed by the higher education council in Egypt are in the center of teaching activities. The teacher is only a "representative" of these materials and tries, to some extent, to help students make sense of the information presented to them and relate this to their previous knowledge. There is minimal direct interaction between the teacher and the students, and the teacher can very easily be replaced by a tape recorder or printed materials, and this would not have affected the teaching process taking place in this class observation. The "instructivist" nature of this learning situation is very obvious, and students are viewed as passive reservoirs of information into which the teacher pumps the information from approved materials. They are expected to keep this information inside

their heads until the exams and simply pour it out of their heads into the exam papers. This is how they would pass the exams in Egypt.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

The analysis of the three “Learning Situations” show major differences in the learning practices followed in the three countries, Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam. In the following, only the differences pertaining to the problem of Western export of education in the form of Blended Learning programs will be discussed.

Obviously, Denmark has a much higher enrollment rate of students in tertiary education. Almost all students study in public education institutions. In Vietnam and Egypt, the overall rate of students’ enrollment in higher education is lower, but the rate of students’ enrollment in non-public education is higher than in Denmark.

The low enrollment rates in Vietnam and Egypt compared to Denmark and the social and economic factors determining these rates must be seen as the backdrop against which the described learning practices are understood and discussed. Despite the determining influence of such macro-level factors, institutional everyday practices and the ensuing conceptualizations of teaching and learning have to be taken into account when planning curricula and programs. Thus, this study includes ethnographic observations in different learning settings in three different countries. Among these observations, three learning situations were selected and described in depth in this paper.

When comparing the learning situations, profoundly different concepts of teaching and learning and of the roles played by teachers, learners and materials emerge. In the Danish case, the student is constituted as the agent of the learning process, and the teacher is responsible for creating a resourceful learning environment through a careful arrangement of learning materials, collaborative learning forms and her own presence as a provider of help and encouragement. Learning is assumed to result from the student’s active involvement and participation in planned activities. Within certain boundaries, learning activities are self-managed. Contrary to the high levels of learner responsibility and agency found in the Danish setting, self-managed learning is discouraged in the Vietnamese and the Egyptian learning settings. In the Vietnamese case, students are expected to present acquired knowledge on their own but are through reprimands and corrections combined with constant reminders of upcoming exams made aware of the teacher’s and the institution’s authority. The available laptops allow for diversion of the students’ attention from the teacher-controlled interaction. Such diversions are considered to have adverse effects on learning and are punished. Thus, classroom practices reinforce the notion that learning takes place in the interaction between teacher and students, and that the teacher (not information found on the internet) is the only source of relevant knowledge. The absence of elements of self-managed learning processes is even more striking in the Egyptian context. Apparently, student behavior is fully controlled by the teacher’s instructions. However, as it turns out, both student and teacher behaviors are controlled by an external

authority. Thus, the real authority of the learning situation is the *text* transmitted by the teacher (presenter) and received and repeated in a written form by the students.

An important lesson to be learnt from this study is that ethnographic studies of teaching and learning practices represent a necessary supplement to quantitative studies and statistic data. The observations show how the availability of technology can coexist with authoritative notions of teaching and learning and with classroom practices discouraging, and even punishing students' independent use of technology. They also reveal that students' engagement with study materials does not necessarily involve such processes as independent information retrieval, creative thinking or (self) reflection. In none of the learning settings outside of Denmark is the student perceived as a self-motivated, self-regulating individual capable of pursuing knowledge on his/her own.

However, this is the type of learner that many blended learning programs take as their point of departure, especially programs designed in contexts in which such learners constitute the majority of higher education students. The observation of the Danish EFL class demonstrates how students are encouraged to adopt the role of the self-managed learner, who is driven by intrinsic motivation, i.e. his/her own interest in learning and uses the learning environment to obtain his/her goal. When starting a university education, Danish students are well trained in collaborative and independent learning forms such as those applied in the observed learning situation, and the observed students perform more or less as expected. However, when learning forms demanding high degrees of individual agency, self-motivation, independent, technology-enhanced information retrieval and collaboration with peers are introduced as parts of blended learning programs, students socialized in settings similar to the Vietnamese or the Egyptian classes described above have no prior experience that might help them make sense of these learning forms. On the contrary, as the observations show, some types of conduct demanded from the students in blended learning programs are directly discouraged in these settings.

An important question is how exporting educational institutions may approach these different modes and concepts of learning? Should they enforce their own methods and just expect everyone to follow them? Or should they modify their teaching methods to meet the different needs of each group of students? And if they take this approach, what impact will this have on their profitability? In continuation of this study, two strategies towards a more satisfying study experience for non-Western students enrolled in 'exported' education are suggested. First of all, more research on concrete learning practices in higher education institutions in developing countries is needed. Importantly, research should acknowledge the fact that learning practices are varied and diverse as a consequence of the different types of higher education institutions. Secondly, the task of adjusting blended learning programs to specific ethnic and cultural groups may exceed the capacity of the individual provider of blended learning programs. However, this study demonstrates that it is very important for blended learning providers to explicate in great detail and in a language accessible to future learners the expectations regarding the levels of student motivation, activity, and agency demanded in such programs. In a sim-

ilar vein, research results as those presented in this study must be communicated to blended learning providers in order to help them make realistic assessments of the resources needed when offering education in culturally, socially, and economically unfamiliar settings. Without the necessary investments in training, materials, technology, and not least human resources, it might not be worth the effort to enter the educational market of developing countries.

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Publication 3: A conference paper presenting results of analysis of data from Vietnam

Title: Fahmy, S.S. (2014). “ THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE LAZY TEACHER. A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH TO HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING SITUATIONS IN VIETNAM .”

Link:

<http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fss/organisations/netlc/abstracts/fahmy.htm>

Summary and Comments:

In this paper, I present the results of analysis of the empirical data collected from Vietnam using grounded theory with the aid of the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. The paper was presented in the networked learning conference and describes the research process, methodology, problem area and the categories formed after the line-by-line coding process. The paper focuses on one major category as the main research finding from Vietnam and explains the findings in light of the learning situation model and relates the results to the teacher centred approach to a learning situation.

My aim of writing this paper was to share the results of my study in Vietnam with the research community in the field of networked learning and to draw the attention of researchers to the value of understanding the culture of students from other cultures, especially from Asia. Especially developing countries in Asia like Vietnam are under researched and very little is known to the e-learning course design research community about students’ needs, struggles and daily life. The conference is attended by many research academics in this field and thus presented a great opportunity for me to try and trigger interest in further research in this geographical area and research field.

Another benefit of writing this paper was consolidating the theory itself after the empirical data analysis. As grounded theorists usually do, the more they write paper drafts, the more the theoretical category evolves and is clarified to them first then they can clarify it to the reader. Writing this paper forced me to read many textbooks and publications about Chinese and Vietnamese culture which gave me better insight into the respondents’ values, norms and beliefs and also reflected on my interpretation of the research findings and formulating the theory.

The Good, the Bad and the Lazy teacher. A grounded theory approach to higher education learning situations in Vietnam

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Abstract

This research discusses the issue of export of education from western countries to developing countries, as Vietnam, using blended learning methodology and the problem of students' resistance to using the e-learning component of these programs. In this study, the researcher used ethnographic tools for collecting empirical data and constructivist grounded theory tools for coding and analysis of the data. Inspired by Adele Clarke's writings about Situational Analysis, the researcher developed a "Learning Situation" model with the objective of relating the empirical data to the main research question of the project. This paper details the findings from one focus group conducted in Vietnam followed by line-by-line coding of the data (using Atlas.ti software). The paper focuses on the detailed presentation of two main categories which had the highest occurrence during the analysis of the transcribed focus group. The first category is students' assumptions that their learning is the responsibility of the teacher and the second is students' view of the teacher as the centre of all learning processes. Their description of the perfect teacher matches, to a great extent, the picture of a mentor or guru in some Asian religions as Buddhism and Confucianism. The role of the guru or mentor is believed to be to motivate mentees (students) and guide them to reach a better enlightened self. Vietnamese students categorize teachers into "good" and "lazy" teachers, which is a concept that is deeply rooted in Buddhism where learning is viewed as an active process requiring a lot of effort, discipline and dedication. These research findings have many implications for educational institutes that export their educational programs which may have an e-learning component to Vietnam. They should be aware of Vietnamese students' need for sufficient one-on-one time spent with the teacher, so if the teacher can't be present physically in class, then this should be substituted by regular scheduled online video meetings with each individual student. Similarly, teachers who teach international programs to Vietnamese students should be aware of their expectations of teachers and thus adopt a role that is less of a facilitator, which is the recently acknowledged and accepted role worldwide, and more of a mentor/guru who has all the answers and provide students with step-by-step guides for learning.

Keywords

E-learning, Vietnam, export of education, grounded theory, blended learning, higher education, teacher, guru, learning situation, Denmark

Research Background

The Universal Human Rights declaration number 26 states that "Everyone has the right to education" which was adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations in December 10, 1948, has inspired the international community to partner with local governments of developing countries, to work together to bring quality higher education and professional education to people in these countries. Consequently, export of education from Western countries to countries in the developing world has recently become very popular due to the rising demand in these countries for Western education. Many factors contribute to the spread of exported educational programs as spread of web based learning, the enhancements in technology and the increased number of English speaking people in non-English speaking countries. In theory, blended learning mode of delivery is the ideal and convenient option for delivering these programs (Caswell, Henson et al. 2008, Amirault and Visser 2011) where students have the opportunity to interact with teachers and with other students in a physical world as well as interacting with them in the virtual learning environment. Unfortunately, in application, the theory and reality do not always coincide as a number of western educational institutes reported facing various issues in implementing their exported programs overseas (Lohr 2005, Bollag 2006, Ocak 2011)

This research was triggered by the case of a Danish private business school "International Business School of Scandinavia" (IBSS) and its experience and challenges in exporting blended learning educational programs. These programs were designed in Denmark and taught through blended learning methods in some developing countries in the Middle East and Asia. IBSS uses a teaching pedagogy derived from the social constructivist ideas in teaching and all modules are delivered as blended learning courses. The blended learning approach used by IBSS includes classroom teaching and instruction, home and self-study, and e-learning tutorials with text and streaming videos supported by online group activities which are either synchronous as online classes and webinars or asynchronous as online group forums (Fahmy, Bygholm et al. 2012)

For years, IBSS used Blended Learning in presenting different training programs for professionals in Denmark and it was widely accepted by all attendees. But on exporting its MBA program to other regions like Asia and the Middle East, students from some countries did not adopt the use of the e-learning component of the program and viewed it as a less quality education tool than the conventional face-to-face teaching method. For example, students from Vietnam enjoy face-to-face contact with teachers and each other but they do not engage in the online activities and organize joint study sessions among themselves instead of participating in online group forums.

The constructivist teaching pedagogy adopted by IBSS was not appreciated nor adopted by students in countries like Egypt and Vietnam. In Vietnam, some of the students refused to participate in the activities and when they asked the teacher a question and the teacher, instead of giving them a ready-made answer, asked them to look the answer up in the internet, the students were frustrated and complained that the teacher was not an experienced one. This teaching pedagogy was ridiculed in the local newspapers in Vietnam to the extent that it was mentioned in a newspaper article that the use of games in class for post graduate students is considered an insult to them.

These challenges have intrigued research by the Danish business school under study to further study the effect of culture on internationalization of education and how this can be overcome in a manner that would benefit the students and the school at the same time.

Research Methodology

This study is an ethnographic study of teaching and learning practices within the higher education systems in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam. The aim of the study is to understand the context in which higher education in these three countries takes place and what factors affect students' concepts of learning. The aim of the study is to identify the incongruence between the pedagogical approach in e-learning and the actual sequence of events happening in the learning process in these countries. By observing the natural settings in which learning takes place and making descriptive analyses of selective learning situations in the three countries, we attempt to develop a better understanding of the different relations between the key 'actants' of learning in these countries. Coupling the non-participant observations with other methods of qualitative research such as in-depth interviews and focus groups led to better insight into the reality of how students and teachers (the key players in the learning process) understand and feel about learning, and how this can differ greatly from one culture to another. I chose an ethnographic research approach because of the long tradition of using ethnographic research methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the natural setting in which an activity (such as learning) occurs, with minimal disruption to this natural environment from the researcher (Brewer 2000). The empirical data collected included observations, in-depth interviews and focus groups of students and teachers in higher education public and private universities/colleges in Denmark, Egypt and Vietnam from October 2011 to February 2012. The study examines teaching setups in both public and private universities in Egypt and Vietnam, while in Denmark the focus was on public universities only as they represent the majority of education in the country.

Being a teacher in IBSS and encountering Vietnamese students' resistance and concerns about the use of e-learning, makes me too involved to use the positivist approach which is suggested by Glaser. This school assumes that there is a 'reality' out there that the researcher sets out to discover and inherent in this assumption is the hypothesis that the researcher can be totally neutral to the situation under analysis and also can have no effect on altering the results of the research by his/her presence in the situation (Glaser 2002). Thus, inspired by Kathy Charmaz' work and writings (Charmaz 2006), I take a constructivist approach to Grounded Theory which has its roots in symbolic interactionism and thus views the empirical data as a tool in the entire process of theory building rather than the central and ultimate source of information. Constructivism assumes the relativity of

multiple social realities and admits that the researcher can never be totally neutral to the data and can never exist in the situation being studied without affecting it even minimally (Charmaz, 2003 #32). I was also inspired by Adele Clarke's writings about GT and Situational Analysis (Clarke 2005) yet, I decided not to use Situational Analysis method because it includes Discourse Analysis as a core method and language is one of the limitations of this research (Vietnamese students speak little English with limited vocabulary) thus it would have been misleading to use SA for this research.

The Learning Situation Model:

This model was inspired by Adele Clarke's work and writings on Situational Analysis (SA). Although I chose to use Kathy Charmaz' constructivist approach to Grounded theory and not SA, yet I found Adele's description of the "Situation" and its relation to social worlds and arenas very useful to find a point of focus for describing and analysing my empirical data. Adele Clarke built her work on the previous research and writing of Strauss on social worlds and arenas, where arenas are collections of social worlds that involve actions and interactions revolving around issues (Strauss 1993). In this research we look at the arena of higher education system in Vietnam and inside this arena we focus on one social world that is the higher education institutes social world. Adele Clarke adds a constructivist approach to focusing on situated actions of the actors/actants of a specific social world where an array of discourses occur "the conditions of the action are inside the situation and therefore we should study the situation itself as the focus of analysis" (Clarke 2005). According to Adele Clarke, the most important focus of negotiations and discourses is the situatedness of action and interaction and accordingly, the conditions of the situation are in the situation, where everything in the situation both constitutes, affects and conditions everything else in the situation. (Clarke 1991). In this research I focus on the "Learning Situation" (LS) as the main core constituent of the higher education institutes social world where different issues are fought, manipulated, negotiated and agreed upon inside the boundaries of the broader learning system Arena in Vietnam (Clarke 2005).

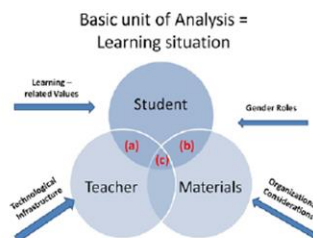


Figure 1 - The Learning Situation Model (LS)

Our definition of a "Learning Situation" is an institutionally arranged situation in which the actors fulfil well-defined roles (as teachers and students) in order to accomplish student learning. The non-human actants inside which have significance value in the "Learning Situation" is materials (books, lecture notes, presentations-etc.), technological infrastructure of the country, cultural values. Each "Learning Situation" is a formal teaching-learning episode which takes place within an institution and is normally scheduled in advance between students and teachers in the presence (or non-presence) of materials. This episode is intended to result in some form of cognitive learning by the students. In this research, students' accounts of "Learning Situations" and their feedback and feelings expressed towards the learning situations were coded and analysed as representations of learning situations in addition to the observations of the situations. The learning situation model represents the unit of analysis in focus in this research, where the main human actors represented are the teacher and student and the non-human actants are the materials and technology (Fahmy, Bygholm et al. 2013). The model also shows other factors that may have an influential effect on the situation, as values, gender roles and context of education. (Figure 1)

Research Findings:

In this paper, I focus on the analysis of one of the focus groups conducted in Vietnam which included eleven participants who were all under graduate Vietnamese students from "Kent International College"

(<http://www.kent.edu.vn/>), an Australian college in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The duration of the focus group was one hour which included discussions around twelve pre-planned question points and was video recorded. In presenting the data analysis results, I have intentionally kept the quotes as mentioned by the students without any correction of grammar or using stronger synonyms to give the reader a feel of the actual responses from the respondents.

Tools for analysis suggested by Kathy Charmaz (Charmaz 2006), as “line-by-line coding”, constant comparisons between codes and codes, codes and categories, codes and codes in other similar situations in addition to memo writing, were used in analysing the transcript of the focus group using Atlas.ti software. Coding and memo writing of this focus group transcripts included comparisons between students’ responses in the focus group and the researcher’s non-participant observations in lectures in the same college and in public universities in Vietnam and Denmark. Comparisons were also made between students’ responses in this focus group and other students’ responses in interviews done in Vietnam and Denmark. Many relevant categories were formed based on the line-by-line coding of this focus group, but for limited space in this paper, I focus only on two major categories which ranked highest in frequency of occurrence of their included codes in the analysed transcript of the focus group.

Students’ learning – whose responsibility?

In students’ reply to a question about the reason they chose an International university rather than a local one, one of the students referred to the method of teaching in Public Universities in Vietnam as defective (in her opinion) since it is “one-sided” and also “student learns by heart”. One student responded by saying “I chose to study in an International College because of the method of teaching used in international colleges in Vietnamese universities (by Vietnamese she means public) it is a one sided teaching, the teacher just says the Information to the student and the student learns by heart. In international college there is more communication between the teacher and the student”. In the book “Reforming Higher Education in Vietnam: Reform Challenges and Priorities”, which is one of the few recent books about education in Vietnam that are available in English, it was highlighted that teaching in Vietnamese universities is instructional and communication is one sided:

“Teaching in Vietnam’s higher education institutions continues to be conducted mainly in a traditional way, that is, lecturers present the material verbally to students and students record what they hear. Discussion is rarely used as a means of instruction or of learning” (Harman, Hayden et al. 2010) page 54.

Also, during my observation of classroom sessions in Vietnam, I noticed that teachers ask questions expecting students to answer ‘the right answer’ which refers to the same information that the teacher presented in class earlier by saying things like “I said this point in class before and other students too did the same mistake”. In a financial management course in Kent College, the teacher developed ‘standardized formats’ and expected students to use them in a group assignment that was part of their evaluation, he said statements like “We had a standardized format, why didn’t you use that?” and “for sure follow the standardized format”. When students did not use the formats in their presentations, he criticized them and ridiculed them by words like “Really?” and “Are you sure” and “Oh, Jee” and students did not argue when the teacher criticized them and they did not try to defend their projects. Although students see that teaching in international universities in Vietnam is not instructional, I think that the only difference is in the number of students in each class and the method of evaluation, but the teaching methodology is the same. Although teachers evaluate students by group assignments and presentations, they still expect them to repeat what the teacher says in class.

In another observation that I made in a public university, where the lecture was in Vietnamese, it was a small class with around 200 students (compared to 30 students in private colleges), with no air conditioners in a temperature of around 32 degrees. The teacher uses the white board and a microphone to lecture, and he talked and wrote on the board for hours without interruption from any of the students while students wrote down every word the teacher was saying. Students did not have laptops in class and when I interviewed students from a public university, they said that they are allowed to bring in their laptops in class, but it is considered impolite to sit in the front rows in front of the teacher and have your laptop open, but you can sit in the back of the class and open your laptop. There was an atmosphere of “awe” and respect for the teacher in class and no one said a word, but kept writing after the teacher. I could see one of the students sleeping in the back of the class and the teacher did not notice. Also, in one of the interviews with a Vietnamese student studying in an international university he mentioned that he thinks that teachers in public universities cannot care for students even if they wanted to, because of the large number of students compared to the number of teachers:

“Usually, in Vietnamese Public University, in a class, we have more than one hundred students and just one teacher. You know, no one try to help them, just one teacher and they try a little bit.

They just do their responsibility that is teaching the lesson, and when they finish, they go home. They cannot care, if they want to care, they cannot, they don't have time and they cannot. For example, you are the teacher and you are standing on the board, you are teaching and you see at the end of the class a student who is talking or sleeping, playing games, reading the comics, you know, what can you do? You are just able to finish your work."

This is different from public universities' approach in Denmark, where students are guided by the teacher on where to search for information and how and it is mostly the responsibility of the students to learn new ideas. In an interview with students in Denmark, in response to a question about how they learn, one of the students said "To me, I usually start by reading a book, reading the chapter that is related, after that in case that I still don't understand I would be around on the internet, I ask around how to answer. To me technology is great, but it not a base of knowledge. Other times, I was told to look at a website and the professor would say "Hey, check out this link". Another student responded to the same question by saying "Mostly we get the book and we are told which pages to read and I try to read it and review..... read it and come up here (to class) and talk about what I read". In Denmark, the teacher's role is a facilitator not an instructor, the teacher is a catalyst to the process of learning and not "the" source of learning as is the case in Vietnam. Also, during my observation study in one of the public universities in Denmark, the teacher spoke a total of 30 minutes in a two hours session, where the rest was group work among students (guided and facilitated by the teacher) and also individual students work in class. Students seemed engaged in their own learning process at all times during this class and also seemed to be taking full responsibility for their own learning through reading in class, search on internet, group discussions, reflecting and asking questions.

In the focus group in Vietnam, when responding to a question about the responsibility of learning, there was a long debate between students about who was responsible for students' learning as one of them said that she believed that students were responsible for 80% of learning while teachers were only responsible for about 20% of students' learning. The rest of the students who were participating in the focus group disagreed with her markedly, saying that the teacher's role is 50% not as low as 20% saying: "But the teacher is the leader in the class in school so I think they are very important. They teach us anything", another said "Just 20% is not fair for the teacher". This debate was quite interesting because it represents a struggle between modernized thinking that sees learning as a process which can happen through different vehicles but the most important element in it is the student her/himself and the old "Guru" figure of teacher whose role is central to the learning process of students. Another student had a different argument, saying that teachers are 100% responsible for learning and also students are 100% responsible. This concept is similar to the role of mentor and disciple in Buddhism (MacCallum 2007) where the teacher helps the student find enlightenment by themselves and thus without 100% effectiveness of the mentor and also 100% devotion of the student, the objective of reaching enlightenment will not be achieved. The student who argued that teacher's role is only 20% eventually agreed to this idea which is in its core a combination of Confucius teachings about learning as a holy pursuit and that people have to work hard to achieve it (Palmer, Bresler et al. 2002), and Buddhists' teachings about mentorship.

Assumptions about "good" and "lazy" teachers:

Students in this focus group categorize teachers as either good, bad or lazy. The student here describes the "good" teacher as someone who "has a good way" and his/her teaching is "Good". The opposite of "good" teacher (according to Vietnamese students) is the "lazy" teacher, other synonyms for "lazy" are apathetic, careless, indifferent and lifeless. The opposite of "Lazy teacher" is active/energetic teacher, which shows that students see a "good" teacher as active, energetic and stimulating while the "bad" teacher to them is one who does not do much effort, and thus they call him/her "lazy".

Students described their idea of a good teacher as being strict "he is very strict and what he told we have to do it" and is also fair "he doesn't have discrimination about students, he is equal". Also, a good teacher motivates students to study, which is a criteria for evaluating teachers that came up many times in students' responses during the focus group. As the English vocabulary used by Vietnamese students is quite limited, I tried to look up different synonyms for the same word to get a better understanding of what they mean. Synonyms of the word "motivate" are: inspire, stimulate, encourage, persuade, provoke, arouse, influence, prompt, cause and move. These are all actions that make the teacher's role seem to be more like a 'coach' or a 'mentor' or 'spiritual teacher' in many Asian religions (as Buddhism). The role of a mentor and the Guru-disciple tradition in Buddhism includes "father figure, teacher, role model, approachable counsellor, trusted adviser, challenger, and encourager"(MacCallum 2007). This role is viewed by students as the most important role of a teacher as one of the students said "But the most important from the teachers is how they can motivate the students can

study”, another student emphasized the same idea by saying “The knowledge of the teacher is very important but here is the motivation. Maybe somehow you just meet the teacher in one hour and he cannot send a lot of information to you but how he can motivate you to look for more information at home”. In another debate among students about what makes a teacher “good”, a student added another level of evaluating a teacher’s efficiency and dedication, which is the teacher’s love for his/her students “the teacher – if they love them (students), they motivate them to study. They are dedicated teachers as they have responsibilities to do that”.

One of the students’ responses paints a vivid picture of his best experience with a teacher: “We study with Mr. Monroe. He is a really funny guy. You know, he motivates us a lot in class. He teaches us of course how to present, how to work, how to stand in front of everybody, how to please people in front of you, how to make them calm down. He does not teach us just in the book, he teaches us a lot outside like: what is the changing of the world now. He teaches us a lot and he really motivate us. Like when we come back home we have to study more. If you want to have a good future we must study. And he is really a good teacher to us”. This description, again, has a great resemblance to the mentor’s role in Asian religions, the teacher is a charismatic and charming person (funny), he also inspires students to improve their inter-personal skills which they need for their future careers and helps them build their self-confidence, teach them how to deal with different people. A ‘good’ teacher would inspire students so much that they go home eager to study and learn more, in contrast to what would be expected of a teacher in Denmark where students would expect the teacher only to guide them about what to read and most learning activities are self-managed.(Fahmy, Bygholm et al. 2013)

Vietnamese students expect teachers to teach them about real life and help them prepare for life’s challenges after higher education. They expect them to help build their self-confidence by teaching them how to overcome their shyness and fear of speaking in public which implies that they view teachers as older experienced role models and “personal coaches”. One of the students’ responses about the best teacher experience he had were “And he knows what the society needs and he get us to do that. Somehow he wants us to do that and I think in the future it is very practical. For example, confident when in front of a lot of people, we can control what we say, what we act, what we do. Students are very shame to talk with a lot of people but he teach us how to talk well”. This is different from Denmark students’ responses, where one of the students replied to my question about the role of the teacher by saying that “the teacher is the last resort that we go to, if I can’t understand the information from the book or from the internet, then I go to the teacher to see if he/she has another take on it”. Another student that I interviewed in Denmark referred to the books as the main source of information for his learning process, and the teacher’s role is more of a moderator to learning who guides students to where to look for information. Most answers from Danish students referred to the teacher as a sort of add-on element in the learning process, not a central and determinant factor as with the students from Vietnam. Another student from Denmark also mentioned that he found the discussions among his fellow students to be “most efficient” in helping him to learn and that this is where he gets most of his knowledge.

In one of the interviews with students from Vietnam, a student responded to a question that I asked about their acceptance to online classes by saying that he does not think that it is an effective way as students will not “feel the spirit of the teacher”. This answer shows how students in Vietnam view learning as a spiritual process rather than a cognitive process and the teacher to be the spiritual guide to this process. This might be the reason to why students classify teachers as “good” and “lazy”. To students, teachers are either spiritual dedicated mentors who love them and treat them fairly and have deep insight into their emotions and inner struggles and help them overcome their short comings or they are lazy mentors who do not make an effort to understand and develop them. This is the same concept that Confucius held as of highest value in learning: “To love humanness (ren) without loving learning is liable to foolishness” (Yao 2000). Confucius teachings emphasized the importance of learning as a spiritual path and moral training. It is only through learning that one can reach ‘humanness’ which according to Confucius was the ultimate goal of any person. In the book “Fifty major thinkers on education: From Confucius to Dewey”, the authors expressed the influence that Confucius teachings had on China and its neighbouring countries-as Vietnam: “Confucius and his followers emphasized education and learning, a tradition which can still be felt in China and many other neighbouring nations.” (Palmer, Bresler et al. 2002)

Other characteristics of the ‘good’ teacher mentioned by Vietnamese students in the focus group are: encouraging creativity, building students’ self-confidence, focusing on subject being taught, confidence of the teacher, dedicated teacher, serious, funny, strict, loves students, sticks to curriculum (some mentioned the opposite “does not only teach curriculum”), uses games and examples in teaching, treats students equally and helps students develop competencies which they can use in their future career. (Figure 2)

The analysis of this learning situation in Vietnam indicates that it is of the ("a") type in the learning situation model (Figure 1), where most learning-related interactions are in the "student-teacher interface" and are controlled and dominated by the teacher. While the analysis of the learning situation studied in Denmark indicates that it is of the ("c") type, where a balance between student-teacher-material interactions is maintained.

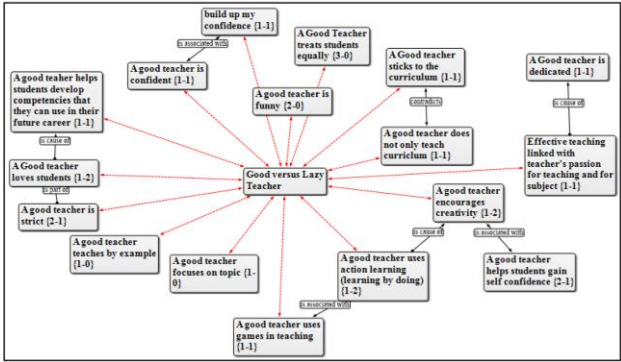


Figure 2 – The Category “Good vs Lazy Teachers” and the codes included

Discussion

When you first meet any Vietnamese, they will usually start telling you about their religious beliefs even when you never ask about it. They will tell you that they do not have a religion, except the “Veneration of the dead” (worshipping, praying and making offerings to one’s dead ancestors) (Hwang 1977). But in reality, you will encounter many aspects of their day-to-day life which is greatly affected by religions as Buddhism and Confucianism, one of these aspects is education. In the ethnographic study presented in this paper, the cultural effect on students’ expectations and attitude in higher education learning situations is strikingly obvious. The teacher-centred learning practices as well as discourses has a lot in common with the spiritual teacher (mentor – guru) in the Asian culture and religions. When students were asked about their best student-teacher encounters, they painted a vivid image of a spiritual mentor rather than a facilitator to their learning process. They emphasized the value of closeness with the teacher to their learning process as well as the teacher’s level of knowledge and personal characteristics as empathy, encouragement, motivation and confidence. These findings draw the attention to the strong influence of religious beliefs on discourses between human actors under study in this learning situation. The reason that Vietnamese do not relate their expectations of teachers to their religious beliefs is attributed to the influence of communism on Vietnam since Vietnam is ruled by one communist party.

Both findings in this research that Vietnamese students’ expect teachers to act as father figures and mentors and the teacher-centred learning process that students adopt in Vietnam, have strong roots in religious cultural images in Vietnam. For example, the biggest national celebration event in Vietnam, the Tet, which coincides with the Chinese Lunar New Year, includes various religious rituals, one of which is visiting teachers on the second day of Tet celebrations with gifts. Being a teacher myself to Vietnamese students, I always receive emails of appreciation and gratitude from my Vietnamese students during the Tet holidays. This shows religious tinting of the way students view as well as relate to teachers in Vietnam, even though it is not a high paying job, yet it is a much respected role rather than simply being viewed as a job.

These findings have strong implications to Western educational institutes that export their educational programs to Vietnam, and may possibly result in tailoring their programs differently for Vietnam. They should be aware of the fact that Vietnamese students need to have more one-on-one time spent with the teacher, so if the teacher can’t be available physically in class, then this should be substituted by regular scheduled online video meetings with each individual student along the course of teaching the subject. Teachers also should be aware of Vietnamese students’ expectations as they expect them to act as mentors which can be applied in online teaching

environments by using detailed step-by-step guides for students on how to study, read, do research and complete assignments, a guide similar to tutorials for software new users which has steps with pictures as well as detailed descriptions of how to apply each step. Also, when teachers schedule live online classes in Vietnam, they should expect the possibility of students gathering in one place and attending the class online together. As strange as this may sound, it is students' way of compensating for the missed feeling of the physical presence in a class which is linked in their minds with the spiritual act of transferring the spirit of knowledge and wisdom. Teachers should always use webcams in online classes as it helps students to better relate to the teacher thus affecting their perception of the level of learning that they achieve along the course of the program. Final words, it is a key success factor for online teachers to assume the role of a "coach" rather than the current widely accepted role of a "facilitator" when teaching Vietnamese students. To honestly admit lack of knowledge of the answer to one of the students' inquiries can result in permanent loss of credibility of the teacher and the assumption that he/she is a "lazy" teacher who does not work very hard to acquire the highest level of knowledge possible.

Limitations of this study are the language barrier, as the researcher did not speak Vietnamese and so all interviews and focus groups were conducted in English. Vietnamese students who can speak English have limited vocabulary and this affected the accurate interpretation of many words that they used in their responses. Also, because of the language barrier, the observations were done only in international colleges and universities as the teaching language in public universities is Vietnamese. This limited the ability to compare both categories of educational institutes. The language barrier limitation can be overcome in future researches by using an interpreter. Another limitation of the study is the lack of the ability to use theoretical sampling, which includes coding the data at the time of collection and then collecting more data related to the questions that were raised through the coding process. This could not be done in this study because of budget limitations due to the high cost of travel between the three countries included in this research.

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Publication 4: A journal paper submitted to ijedict (international journal of education and development using information and communication technology)

Title: Fahmy, S.S. (2014). “ MODERN DAY ‘KUTTAB’- A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING SITUATIONS IN EGYPT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR E-LEARNING COURSE DESIGN”

Summary and Comments:

I wrote this paper targeting the IJEDICT journal since it is one of the journals which address my field of research very specifically. In this paper I present the results of the empirical data collected from Egypt and the analysis of the data using Atlas.ti. Like the previous conference paper presenting Vietnam research findings, the paper details the line-by-line coding process of this data and the main theoretical categories that emerged from the analysis process and discusses each category in lengthy details. I included long quotes as mentioned by participants in the research to give the reader the opportunity to form an independent opinion about the conclusions and theory which I reached at the end.

My main objective in writing this paper was to highlight the issues faced by students studying in Egypt in general and how this would pose a challenge when exporting western educational providers run their educational programs in developing countries, especially if these programs use e-learning as a mode of delivery. Exporters of education may think that it is an easy task to get students to change their way of learning and interacting in class but in reality they face a lot of opposition from students and policy makers and even teachers from developing countries. By reading about these challenges and differing approaches to learning, exporters of education would be better prepared to deal with these challenges.

Writing the paper helped me fine-tune my theory and using the constant comparison method brought in a level of analysis of the data that was sometimes hidden or less obvious. In many cases, students’ struggles were similar to those of the Vietnamese students but the centre of the learning process was different. Comparing the results from Egypt and Vietnam with the results from Denmark showed a considerable variation in terms of the level of independence of students and the presence of a balance between the role of the student/teacher/materials, which is the case with the participants’ responses from Denmark but not the case in Egypt and Vietnam.

Writing the concluding section of the paper inspired me to read many books about the history of education in modern Egypt (my home country) which was an eye opener to me about many aspects of the Egyptian culture and their roots. I enjoyed writing this section and took my time reflecting on many books that I read to write this section, it was also depressing for me as I saw that all past attempts to

modernize education in Egypt have been fought by conservative people in power and conservatives always won. In my opinion, the introduction of exported western educational programs represents a hope for advancement of education in Egypt, but this needs to be “robed” with a local cultural understanding and modification so that students would accept them and engage in them.

Modern day 'Kuttab' - A grounded theory study of higher education learning situations in Egypt and implications for e-learning course design

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ABSTRACT

The deteriorating condition of higher education in Egypt is a complex issue and has been studied by different development organizations to date. This paper presents the results of a constructive grounded theory study about the current learning practices in Egypt and their impact on exporting western educational programs using e-learning or blended learning. The paper focuses on empirical data collected from one public university in Cairo and the analysis of this data.

Results show that students' and teachers' efforts in education are content centred and the emphasis is on passing exams, a condition referred to by Dore as 'Diploma Disease' (Dore 1976). An interesting result of the study was students' focusing on transcribed lectures as the main source of learning and passing exams, which is referred to in this study as "the malazem phenomenon".

Recommendations for exporting western organizations using an e-learning component are to explain the rationale of activities, use a practice-based approach and use project-based rather than question-based assessments. Online activities should be linked to rewards as points included in assessments or bonus points. The teacher role is not central to the process, but is rather viewed as the "controller" of the learning environment (not facilitator).

Keywords: *Egypt; higher education; kuttab; grounded theory; e-learning; internationalization; learning situation*

INTRODUCTION

The OECD report about higher education in Egypt published in 2010 opens its executive summary by: *"The Egyptian higher system is not serving the country's current needs well, and without far-reaching reform it will hold back Egypt's economic and social progress."* (OECD 2010).

In the same vein, Tarek Heggy, an Egyptian writer and anthropologist, discusses the education system in Egypt in his book *"Culture, Civilization and Humanity"* and describes it as: *"Egyptian education is a closed system, detached from contemporary realities and isolated from the common cultural heritage of mankind, without which no educational system can hope to produce individuals capable of enriching their nations"* (Heggy 2003), P.149).

With an inefficient higher education system in developing countries like Egypt, the opportunity of getting international education represents an alternative for students who thrive to enhance their skills and suit the labour market requirements. This need has encouraged western education providers to export their educational programs to developing countries in different parts of the world. The spread of internet use also contributed to the spread of exported western educational programs where blended learning mode of delivery is considered the optimal method for these programs. Blended learning provides the flexibility of online education without geographical

relocation, while the "face-to-face" part of the program helps students to engage in their learning community and gives them the opportunity to interact with teachers and other students on a physical level. Students from countries in regions like Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East welcomed exported educational degrees as a source of developing their competencies on a global level and viewed these programs as being their passport to good careers on an international level.

Despite students' enthusiasm for studying these programs, many challenges were encountered by these students. An example of these difficulties was noticed in the Middle East when governments of UAE and Qatar found that many of these institutes were more concerned with making profits than with the quality of the education that they provide (Bollag 2006). Other problems were encountered due to the fact that these programs were developed by western instructors who were neither aware nor sensitive to the cultural differences between students in the institutes' home countries and students in other countries as Africa, Asia, Middle East and Latin America (Yang 2003). The programs were designed as a 'one size fit all' product or as some authors call it "higher education McDonaldization" (Hayes and Wynyard 2006), regardless of the differences in students' expectations, different cultural norms and values, or their country's political and social structures.

This paper discusses the results of a research initiated by a Danish private business school that is involved in exporting educational programs designed in Denmark to countries in the Middle East and Asia and the challenges that it faced in doing so. The business school exports an MBA (Master of Business Administration) program delivered as blended learning courses to countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Students from these countries did not adopt the use of the e-learning component of the program and viewed it as a less quality education than the conventional face-to-face teaching method. In Egypt, although students are computer literate and use email and social networks like "facebook" almost daily in their personal and professional dealings, they were reluctant to use the online component of the program (synchronous and asynchronous equally). Some of the students expressed their dissatisfaction with having any online components in the program and their concern that if the graduation certificate contains any notion that this program has an online component, this would decrease the value of the MBA certificate. These challenges intrigued research by the Danish business school under study to further study the effect of culture and cross cultural communication on internationalization of education and how this can be overcome in a manner that would benefit the students and the school at the same time (Fahmy, Bygholm et al. 2012). In this paper, I attempt to compare the current learning practices in Egyptian higher education and the historical 'kuttab' system of religious education in Egypt where students memorized Quran (the holy book of Muslims) by rote learning, which was the public education means in the 18th Century onwards.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research is a constructive grounded theory study aiming at developing a better understanding of the learning practices in Egypt and how they affect students' acceptance to e-learning. Grounded theory is defined as "*the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research*" (Glaser, Strauss et al. 1968). Unlike in traditional qualitative research, the researcher enters the field without a preconceived hypothesis or a clear theoretical framework (Cutcliffe 2000). After data is collected, a process of in depth coding and analysis takes place, until a core concept is reached and a theory is built on this core concept.

Ethnographic tools were used for gathering data in this study as non-participant observations, note taking, diary keeping, audio recordings and data reports. Observation was coupled with focus group activities using a semi-structured questions guide conducted in 3 universities, a public university, a semi-private university and a private academy. Unstructured in-depth

interviews were conducted with students but I was unsuccessful in recruiting teacher participants in this research due to the complicated and long process of approvals needed from their universities to approve their participation. Documentary evidence, as some of the materials used for teaching and studying was obtained for analysis and comparison. Using an ethnographic approach gave a broader understanding of the higher education systems' arena in the countries under study and an in-depth view about higher education major actors and the negotiations and discourses taking place inside the classroom.

The constructivist approach to Grounded Theory was used which views the empirical data as a tool in the entire process of theory building rather than the central and ultimate source of information. Constructivism assumes the relativity of multiple social realities and admits that the researcher can never be totally neutral to the data and can never exist in the situation being studied without affecting it even minimally (Charmaz 2003). Some of the scholars who belong to this school are Anselm Strauss, Kathy Charmaz and Adele Clarke where the researcher in the constructive version of grounded theory is an interpreter of data, as Strauss and Corbin suggest (Corbin and Strauss 2008) or even a co-author of data as Kathy Charmaz suggests (Charmaz 2006). The traditional 'Glaserian' approach takes a more positivist stance towards the data as Glaser assumes that there is a reality out there that the researcher sets out to discover and thus the researcher must remain "uncontaminated" and objective so that he can be "more faithful to his data" and "less theoretically biased" (Glaser, Strauss et al. 1968)

The unit of analysis in this research is the "Learning Situation" (LS) which is the main core constituent of higher education. In this learning situation, different issues are fought, manipulated, negotiated and agreed upon inside the boundaries of education setups. This model was inspired by Adele Clarke's book on Situational Analysis (SA) where she focuses on situated actions of the actors/actants of a specific social world where an array of discourses occur. She explains the importance of focusing on situations as *"the conditions of the action are inside the situation and therefore we should study the situation itself as the focus of analysis"* and elaborates on the importance of focusing on the situation since this would eventually help us to understand the larger, more complex picture *"a situation is always greater than the sum of its parts"* (Clarke 2005). According to Adele Clarke, the most important focus of negotiations and discourses is the '*situatedness*' of action and interaction, accordingly, the conditions of the situation are in the situation, where everything in the situation both constitutes, affects and conditions everything else in the situation.

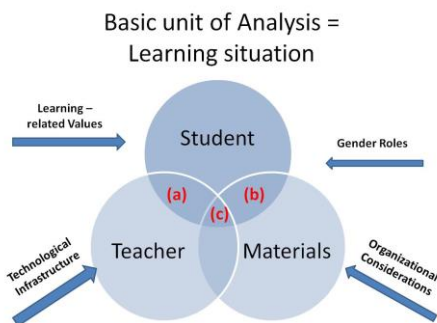


Figure 1: The Learning Situation Model

In this study, a “Learning Situation” refers to an institutionally arranged situation in which the actors fulfill well-defined roles (as teachers and students) in order to accomplish student learning. The non-human actants inside which have significance value in the “Learning Situation” is materials (books, lecture notes, presentations-etc.), technological infrastructure of the country, cultural values. Each “Learning Situation” is a formal teaching-learning episode which takes place within an institution and is normally scheduled in advance between students and teachers in the presence (or non-presence) of materials. (Fahmy, Bygholm et al. 2013)

During analysis of the data collected, a process of zoom-in and zoom-out by going from the broader macro level of the country’s political and educational system arena to the meso and micro levels of analyzing the specific and detailed negotiations taking place inside the learning situation, helped in keeping a balanced view during the analysis between all levels of analysis.

A process of line-by-line coding was done initially, using the software Altas.ti followed by focused coding and core category formation. After the core category was identified, a comparative literature review was done to compare the core category results with other pre-existing empirical data. In the rest of this paper, I will present the main core category identified and the collected data supporting it as well as comparative data with other sources identified from literature.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following core categories are the result of analysis of one focus group with student participants from Faculty of Commerce, Cairo University. The participants’ responses are compared with responses from another focus group with students from an international program in Cairo University, the Faculty of Commerce-English section. The core categories presented in this paper are the categories with highest groundedness and highest rate of occurrence of the initial codes included in each of the categories during analysis of data. Constant comparison of the results with results from other empirical data and publications is also illustrated in this section, which is a core process in doing grounded theory.

The ‘Malazem’ phenomenon:

As the World Bank report about the higher education system in Egypt mentions:

“In the majority of public institutions, teachers prepare lecture/laboratory notes for students to use as their main source of information. These texts contain the assessable content of courses of study” (OECD 2010)

This is what Egyptian students refer to as “malzama” in Arabic which they consider to be the most important item in their education and they usually consist of the transcribed word-for-word lecture notes. This word literally mean ‘an obligatory item’ and this reflects students’ approach to these lecture notes treating the teacher’s words in the lecture as obligatory content that they should memorize by heart to be able to pass the exams. In one of the interviews which I conducted in Cairo University, one of the oldest and largest public universities in Egypt, one of the students studying commerce explained the process:

“We buy some booklets summarizing scientific content of subjects and compare it to the content of lectures, which we copy from those, who attend the lectures in order to correct any mistakes in the booklets or add additional information said during the lecture....that’s how we study.”

These booklets which contain transcribed lectures are what is referred to as 'malazem' and it has become a flourishing business for many bookshops who hire graduates to sit in lectures and write them word-for-word and then they were typed, photocopied and sold to students (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Bookshop selling 'malazem' in front of Cairo University

Both students and teachers treat these transcribed lecture notes as the official source of learning as I saw in one of the observations that I did in a lecture where the teacher was dictating students slowly, pausing to give them a chance to write after her and repeating new words and spelling them so students can write it correctly and all students were quiet and writing after her. Interviewed students' complained that the teachers whom they classified as non-caring teachers talked very fast and didn't give students a chance to write after them *"Many of the doctors do not really care that we have enough time, to write what they say in the lectures"*. Students evaluate the quality of teaching based on how well they can write after the teacher and make notes (malazem) out of these notes as one student expressed in the interview:

"Some teachers are very goods and they explain very well in the lecture and all students write after them and then we study from these notes but some teachers are not good so we cannot study from the notes that we write after them in the lecture then we have to study from other sources"

These transcribed lecture notes are then summarized and again photocopies are sold to students close to exam times. In an article published in the most famous local newspaper in Egypt "Al Masry Al Youm" (Figure 3), a highlight on the subject of "Summary notes" was made explaining different point of view. In an interview with « Syed Mohammad - bookseller » he explained why, in his opinion, students resort to summaries as a source of learning and that it is not because they are lazy or do not wish to attend the lectures but because most of the students are convinced that attending the lectures will not benefit them. Another interviewee mentioned that university books are both expensive and too long (maybe 500 pages each book) so students prefer to study summaries of about 50 pages of expected exam topics. (Al Masy Al Youm Newspaper, 2013).



Figure 3: Article about summary booklets business

The owners of the bookshops which sell these notes say that the ones who write these notes are either students who attend lectures regularly and write every word in these lectures, or by younger teachers who are aware of the professors' method of teaching and exam questions and thus they write these notes in the form of questions and answers. The fees for these teachers varies depending on the difficulty of the subject.

There were conflicting views of students about the importance of these summary notes, some of whom supported their use due to the ease of presenting information in them and how they help students understand the ideas in a fast and easy way. These notes also help students practice for the exams, while university books that are written by the same professors who teach the subjects are expensive and very long and hard to understand.

The Diploma Disease in Egypt

The objective of the whole education process in Egypt is the passing of exams, which is not different from many other countries as part of what Ronald Dore referred to as the 'Diploma Disease' where all schooling activities and motives become more a 'ritualized process of qualification-earning' (Dore 1976). Dore suggests that this is attributed to the competition in Third World Countries over scarce high paying jobs which depends more on having a certificate rather than the actual ability and competence to do the job. Although Egypt was not mentioned in Dore's thesis as one of the countries where the diploma disease is evident, a study by Eleanore Hargreaves in 1996 interviewing primary school students, teachers, parents and policy makers concluded that the ritualization and exam pressure characterized all activities related to education in Egypt which puts it among the countries with diploma disease. (Hargreaves 1997). Thus the purpose of all learning practices in the higher education system in Egypt become directed towards passing exams not towards learning, which gives teachers an unlimited amount of power over students' future and a chance to abuse this power as some students explained:

"Some teachers in the lectures, oblige us to buy their published books and practice the examples, by solving them in the book, during the lecture"

In an educational system with no clear rules for assessment of students' learning nor of teachers' teaching, teachers have a free hand to abuse this system to compensate for the low income that

they receive. They manipulate students to buy their books and compete over students' attendance in their "revision courses":

"And the doctors whom we do not take courses with, or those whose lectures we do not attend, ask about topics in the exams that were either not explained or are not in the university book. In order to force us to take private courses with them"

The non-participant observations which I made in Cairo University confirmed the same thing happening in one of the lectures where the teacher clearly instructed students that they should use the examples he gives in class and that they should not improvise. He kept repeating that when they improvise they start making mistakes, he advised them to stick to the knowledge that is in his book and not try to add other notes which are outside his book. Teachers ignore their role in the official lectures which they get paid to conduct, and create a new unwritten and unofficial, but widely accepted system of their own, where the real teaching happens in the private tutoring "revision courses" and where their books and/or summary notes are the 'bible' that students must abide by if they want to pass the exams. An important element of this unofficial system, is students' assessments "the exam", which in this system turns into the final goal that students are pushed towards and the exam results become either the prize or the whip by which students are rewarded for paying to the teacher. One of the students explained this in an interview by saying:

"In some subjects the Doctor, in the revision lecture gives us a special way to solve the exercise, so that in the exam he can exactly identify who took part in the revision session and who did not."

Similar observations were published in the OECD report about higher education in Egypt:

"The Country Background Report reports the findings of a 2007 survey of public university students, where 42% of participants indicated problems with assessment and examination procedures, half of whom expressed concern about unfairness in examination grading" (OECD 2010)

A similar system was seen in Vietnam, where students pay money or buy gifts to the teachers to bribe them to pass the exams. The exam becomes the centre of the learning process and students' focus shifts from real learning to inventing creative ways to predict questions that will be asked in the exams and eventually ways to somehow miraculously pass those exams. Students express their frustration with the unfair examination system and abuse of teachers' authority, *"Sometimes, the teacher makes some tricks, like giving a Homework, in those private revision groups organized by the university in order to know, who is taking part in it"*, another student expressed her frustration by saying *"and at the end you never know what the exam will look like"*.

Teachers use the exams as a whip that they use to threaten students, knowing that students have no means of responding to these threats. A student explained this by saying, *"Sometimes the teacher gives a private message...for example: 'If you upset me anytime... I will prepare an extremely difficult Exam' - so he continues threatening us again and again"*. In the face of teachers' authority over the most important determinant of students' future careers and success in life, which is the exams, students are helpless and even sometimes hopeless, *"There is no standard, some teachers say: 'We throw the paper in the air, if it falls like on this side or this side in both cases you fail', they want to frighten us"*. Another factor which makes teachers' authority unquestionable and untouchable is the absence of a link between their promotions and raises and their performance in teaching, as was published in the OECD report:

"Academic and general staffing of higher education institutions follows Egypt's public service system of permanent appointments to post, with promotion based on seniority, and pay based on salaries fixed by the Ministry of Finance. Under this system, there is no difference in remuneration or tenure for high-performing and under-performing staff"
(OECD 2010)

Although curriculums are engraved in stone and very hard to change, assessments are neither unified and regulated nor controlled by higher education officials. The result is a system where students don't learn anything, and teachers control students' fate by controlling exams while they themselves are not accountable to anyone for their teaching's efficiency or commitment.

Theoretical versus application based teaching

Higher education in Egypt, like all other levels of education, is characterized by a focus on memorizing by rote learning of the content which is decided by the teachers. Teaching about theories without sufficient practice on application or critical thinking leads to insufficient skills' development eventually resulting in an unskilled labour force as reported in the World Bank's report:

" The combination of narrow content and disconnected context risks a failure to broaden the perspectives of graduates and prepare them with the skills they will need to adapt to future change."(OECD 2010)

Students don't appreciate the theoretical teaching approach and realize that it is not useful for their future careers and mention in the interviews that teachers recognize this defect too as one of the students said in an interview, *" Even the teachers who lecture in our university and who are experts in the field of accounting, say that the executive work differs a lot from the theoretical studies we take in the university."* The students interviewed in this study expressed their disapproval of the highly academic and difficult (according to them) content of the subjects they study in higher education and teachers' lack of appreciation of the level of difficulty these subjects pose to the students *"as if it doesn't take a genius to understand these topics"* as stated by one of the interviewed participants.

The prevalence of theoretical teaching and scarcity of practice creates a mismatch between graduates' level of competencies and the competencies required by employers in the job market which increases unemployment rates in Egypt (Loveluck 2012). The World Bank report supports this as it states that students' concerns included *" inadequate preparation for employment as a result of curriculum irrelevancies; and lack of practical skills formation..."*(OECD 2010) Students clearly find the more practical subjects more interesting than theoretical subjects, but they treat them as theoretical subjects and memorize the exercises as one of the students said, *" Also some practical subjects like in accounting, which we like very much, because it does not depend on memorizing, we sometimes fail to solve the problem if it does not come in the exact same form as we practiced during the lectures"*. Students do not find a way to pass exams in Egypt except through memorizing everything even exercises as the teachers do not help them understand how to solve these exercises *"There is a minority of teachers, who have a conscience and make the effort to teach us how to solve the exercises in the university."*

Since the focus of learning and assessments is based on rote learning, students consider 'revision' to be an essential factor for passing exams. They consider lack of revision to be a defect in university teaching and they compensate for this by taking private tutoring lessons *"teachers try to finish the content of the subject in the limited time of lectures but there is no time*

to make revisions, while in private tutoring they teach mainly by revisions and practice solving exercises". The World Bank report supports this research participants' responses as it highlights the problem of focus on theoretical learning and memorizing resulting in low level of skills development:

"Higher education in Egypt can generally be described as being based on a narrow, rigid and often outdated curriculum bound by the single perspective of the lecturer whose texts form the assessable content of a course. An emphasis on the memorisation of content predominates over the development of critical reasoning and analytical skills. A focus on "theoretic" as opposed to "practical" ways of knowing gives precedence to "knowing what to say" rather than 'knowing how to perform' "(OECD 2010)

Interviewed students attending public universities never had a learning experience based on practical teaching rather than theoretical teaching during their official education years but they gave account of participating in some international courses provided by a western education provider. They refer to this experience as a real transformation in their view towards learning, *"we feel that it changed something in us"* and an enlightening one to the value of learning, *"These courses made us feel that our studies are of benefit"*. They attribute the benefit of these courses to the use of projects and group work as pedagogy, *"They introduce new ideas to us and motivate us to search and try to work"*. One of the participant in the interviews described one of the projects:

"The project which we worked on recently was to make signs for students who just newly joined the university to help them find their way in the University instead of losing time and getting lost. We started to think of doing something useful for our University, we asked our colleagues from the faculty of Engineering to help us by drawing a plan of the university with all buildings for us in order to know where to put the signs and they helped us to draw the signs also. Even our teachers were surprised to see our project and did not believe that we are students in the faculty of Commerce.

It is clear that our University does not know how to use our ideas and energy. On the other hand, the teachers in these international courses knew how to use our energy and ideas. You know in the university they do not try to use or ask for our ideas. "

Students who participated in these courses appreciated the opportunity to prove that they are creative and capable of doing something useful to their society. Compared to the traditional theory based and content laden teaching pedagogy that teachers in their public university use, this practice centred and project based teaching pedagogy was a revelation to them. They suddenly realized that learning can be useful and that they can learn practical things that they can use in their future careers. When asked what would they change about their education if given the chance, they mentioned many things, most of which were related to the textbooks and resources that they use in studying, *"The reference book should contain only the subjects that students will benefit from in their future work life"*.

Students in public universities assume that learning practices in private universities, since their fees are higher, are more practice based than in public universities. One of the interviewed participants expressed this by saying, *"We hear that the private Universities take other subjects than those which we take here. Some of them are of a more entertaining nature not like our subjects, which are all academic and more boring"*. This assumption is contradicting with the responses of the interviewed participants from a private university who were studying commerce, the same specialization as interviewed public university students, they also highlighted the use of

transcribed lecture notes ('malazem') which they consider to be the main source of learning. When students from private universities were asked about what they would change about their learning practices, they mentioned similar aspects of education to what their colleagues from public universities stated:

"I would recommend that education would be more related to real life situations. Now our education is very far from the reality, or what we study is very old theories that have nothing to do with reality, and also in some subjects we study Laws and orders of other countries which I will never use when I work in my country so it was a big waste of time"

"This is the most important thing we like to change, we want an education that is directly related to the real world"

Although teaching in private universities is more modern in context where teachers use power point presentations and some of them have facebook groups for their students where they upload presentations and announcements, yet the teaching pedagogy they use is very similar to public universities. Teaching is centred around theory and memorizing content rather than practice and just like in public universities, students miss learning that will help prepare them for a successful career in a very competitive market with scarce job openings.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of this learning situation reflects a focus on the relation between students and materials (content) of the subjects of their studying. It is of the (b) type in the learning situation model (Figure 4), where the teacher's role is, at best, to transfer information present in materials to students and at worst, use these materials to manipulate students for financial gain. The 'malazem' phenomenon highlights the high value of materials in the education process in Egypt, a concept which is supported by the spread of the diploma disease thus laying more burden on exam results in shaping the future of students.

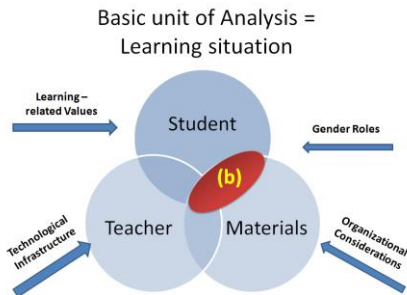


Figure 4: Learning Situation in Egypt

The current situation of the higher education system and the teaching pedagogy used in it has roots in the history of education in Egypt and the spread of the 'kuttab' system in the 19th century. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, education was provided to the majority of Egyptians through the "kuttab" (or Quran School). In these schools, students memorized the holy book of

Quran and recited the verses back as test of achieving this task, which took two to three years to accomplish. The teacher was a religious man called "fiqi" and his role typically included reciting the holy versus and asking the students to recite them back after him, while students were not expected (or even allowed) to understand the meaning of these verses. (Heyworth-Dunne 1968). It was very common at this time that the 'fiqi' would hold a palm-stick while teaching students, to enforce discipline in the class and use it to punish the disobedient student or the student who did not do the homework of memorizing the verses at home.

The non-muslim Egyptians (Christian Copts and Jews) went to schools where they also studied religion, Arabic and Coptic languages, good manners in addition to geometry and arithmetic to use them later on in accounting, secretarial jobs, land-surveyors and collectors of taxes. These professions were handed down from fathers to their sons and so were closed to few families (Saleh 2012). After finishing the 'kuttab' studies, muslim students either started working or if they come from a family of "sheikhs", they would go to Al-Azhar to get higher education in Arabic language and religion. Those who graduate from Al-Azhar qualify later on to be one of the teachers in Al-Azhar "ulama", which was a high paying job and high position. There was no higher education for non-muslims at this time. (Heyworth-Dunne 1968) P. 15)

Heyworth's description of the teaching method used in higher education in Al-Azhar at this time holds resemblance in many aspects to the current research's findings about teaching practices higher education system of Egypt. Heyworth based his writings in this regard mostly on the work of Lane (Lane 1890) and on the accounts of the great historian Al-Jabarti (al-Jabarti 1882). The teacher appoints a repeater "mu'id", to repeat what the sheikh said during the lesson when he is absent and this "mu'id" is usually the best student in class and is appointed by the teacher himself. The same name that is still given to the newly hired university teacher today and hiring is based on achieving the highest grades in exams. In the 'kuttab' the teacher used to dictate the lesson and students wrote after him, then they checked what they wrote in their notes with the "mu'id" and with each other, then these notes became the textbook that they study from. (Heyworth-Dunne 1968) P.66). In the research findings of this study, the teacher still dictates the content to students and they write after him/her and compare their notes to each other and form 'malazem' (lecture transcribed notes) which they memorize by heart.

The resemblance between religious lessons where students chant verses of Quran repeatedly to memorize them and today's learning practices in Egypt was reported in another anthropological study by Sarah Hartman. Although the research studied school students and not higher education students, yet the researcher observed similar practices as she wrote:

"Mr. Hisham moves dynamically in front of his audience, writing formulas onto the blackboard and explaining them at the same time in a rhythmical recital through his microphone. From time to time, he chants certain formulas and phrases, which are then repeated several times in chorus by the students who seem to know their cues very well.....It occurs to me that the way of teaching and studying chemistry (and this is also true for the other subjects at school) strongly resembles the traditional way of studying the Qur'an: the emphasis lies on rote memorization through rhythmical repetition" (Hartmann 2008)P. 51)

In the old 'kuttab', also called 'madrasah' the teacher's name was 'mudarris' and it is the same name that is still given to a teacher at any level of education nowadays. The name referred to teaching and also to beating students up as *"the teacher would use a large stick to keep order"* (Newby 2013)P. 121). Modern day university teachers use the exams as a stick to beat students up if they did not do as the teacher pleases, as interviewed student participants mentioned many examples of in this study's interviews.

In the history of Egypt, there has been numerous attempts for educational reform yet they all failed in reforming curriculums and pedagogy of education. Muhamed Ali, Egypt's ruler from 1805-1849, introduced a major educational reform during his rule by developing a new modern secular education system, running side by side with the traditional religious education system. He started by sending students to study in Europe, they studied in subjects as military sciences, engineering, ship building and printing. He also started modern western high schools for sons of European and Turkish ex-pats as well as the sons of the elite Egyptians. He established specialization schools as administration school, engineering school and accounting school in addition to public secular high schools. In his era also a large number of foreign schools were founded in addition to Coptic schools that were founded by Egyptian Copts (Cochran 2012). In spite of the obvious improvement in the education system of the country, these reforms were met by scepticism from the conservative majority of the country who were educated in the traditional religious education system of the country. *"The dual system unquestionably tended to perpetuate differences between social classes by creating an intellectual elite-the cultured aristocracy-who monopolized government positions and high-income professions"* (Faksh 1980)

As a result of his efforts in educational reform, Muhamed Ali was accused of westernizing the Egyptian youth and demolishing the Egyptian religion and culture, a phenomenon that Heggy refers to as "conspiracy theory" (Heggy 2003)P. 103). The conspiracy theory is the belief that the west is determined to attack Islam and demolish the Islamic faith and culture either by force (wars – sanctionsetc) or by introducing western beliefs into the Arabic minds, as naïve as it sounds, yet many do actually believe in it. Abdennur also writes about the Arab mind's tendency towards conspiracy thinking and explains the need for this way of thinking among Arabs, the need for locating blame and taking a position and emotional expression (P. 207-208); (Abdennur 2008) Since Muhamed Ali's rule till Gamal Abdul Nasser's revolution in 1952 all attempts for educational reform have been faced by accusations of westernization until Abdul Nasser's reform which focused exclusively on expanding quantity by rapidly increasing access to all levels of education for free (El Baradei and El Baradei 2004). This discrepancy between quantity and quality of education in Egypt is the root of the current high unemployment rate and low skills of Egyptian graduates (Hargreaves 2001)

This study concludes that the higher education system in Egypt today is a carbon copy of the spread of education through 'kuttab' system in the 18th century. This may explain the unique 'malazem' phenomenon together with the spread of theoretical based learning and diploma disease in Egypt in what may be labelled as *"the modern day 'kuttab' syndrome"*. The deteriorating condition of higher education in Egypt today is the outcome of failed attempts for educational reform aiming at modernization of pedagogy and content of education, together with successful reform in terms of higher inclusion rates of Egyptians. Increasing numbers of poorly trained graduates with the replication of a very old religious based pedagogy leads to a work force with a majority of unskilled college degree holders who do not satisfy the employers' needs in a highly competitive global market.

The challenge for exporters of education from western countries, especially in programs using e-learning, is immense as students' main focus will always be on memorizing content and inventing creative ways to pass exams. Students will participate only in online activities which they are assessed for and will participate at the minimal level that would guarantee their grades. Proper assessments of learning outcomes is very difficult as students will always invent ways to memorize everything, which makes it very hard for assessors to evaluate the real learning outcomes for any program. This challenge may be overcome by commencing e-learning and practice focused learning at an early age, thus preventing the programming of students' minds towards rote learning and preparing them for a western education. When teaching Egyptian students in higher education, explaining the rationale behind the activities is important as well as relating teaching to the students' reality. Approaching teaching with a practice based centred

outcome is important and gets Egyptian students engaged in their learning process. Using assessments that are project based is better than using assessments that are Q&A based, with an active role from students in defending their projects and explaining them. All online learning activities need to be linked to some sort of reward for the students as for example being a mandatory requirement for taking the final assessment of the course or as basis for acquiring bonus points. The teacher's role is that of a transmitter of information and controller of students' behaviour in the learning environment, whether this environment is physical or virtual. The teacher's authority is based on the ability to control assessments and their results and thus teachers should have the power to make and grade assessments of the classes that they teach.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: observations and Field Notes in Vietnam

Kent College 6.12.2011 – Financial Management –

Time: 8:00 – 10:30 am

- Context:
 - o No. of students: 15 at the start and ended up with 24
 - o Size of class: 40 students
 - o Male: female = 1:2
 - o Air conditioner (fair temperature)
 - o Chairs arranged theatre like
 - o Equipment: computer and video projector
- Observations:
 - o Students make group presentations
 - o Students have their laptops in class
 - o Teacher is sitting at the end of the class watching the whole class and the presentations
 - o Teacher asks other students to comment or ask questions but no one spoke up
 - o Students send presentations to teacher before class then discuss them during the presentations
 - o Teacher asks questions in an interrogating manner in a trial to point out student's mistakes and student seems embarrassed in front of other students and whispers to her partner and they both laugh
 - o "I said this point in class before and other students too did the same mistake," the teacher says. "We had a standardized format, why didn't you use that?"
 - o There is a note on the wall saying "No food, drinks, chewing gum in class"
 - o *Observer's reflection*: this is the different from AAU where students were allowed to eat and drink in class freely
 - o Teacher adds: "for sure follow the standardized format"
 - o Teacher and students are Vietnamese but all interactions in class are in English
 - o The 2 students presenting are whispering and laughing and you can certainly feel that there is a distance between the teacher and the students

- There is no schedule for the whole course, students get weekly schedule at the beginning of each week
- Students keep coming 45 minutes after the class started
- Students keep their mobiles on and they ring in class and they take the calls during the class
- Students calls the teacher: TEACHER
- Students give assignments to teachers with both hands (as is the custom of Asians as a sign of respect and humility”
- Teacher asks the student to skip the introduction and go to the income statements and both students (2 females) look at each other and laugh
- While student is presenting the teacher is not paying attention but is receiving assignments from other students
- Teacher asks students to explain what they wrote in their presentations and they find it hard to explain it
- Teacher is looking for “The Right Answer”
- Some have their laptops in class, some are looking at presentations on their computer screens and some are opening Facebook and some are chatting
- Teacher makes fun of students’ presentations and students presenting are embarrassed and whisper to other students sitting in the first row
- While students are presenting none of their colleagues ask questions or give feedback or comment
- Teacher’s comments are “Really?” and “Are you sure” and “Oh, Gee”
- Body language of the students presenting: one of them putting her hand over her mouth while presenting and the other student is locking her hands behind her back
- Teacher comments that only 2 students wrote references in their assignments
- In all of the students’ presentations, the teacher does not listen to students but keeps receiving the assignments [researcher’s reflections: this gives the impression that he did not read the assignments at home before coming to class]
- Teacher is sitting right behind one of the students who is on Facebook and then asks her to explain what is going on “when you did your presentation they listened but when it is their turn you don’t listen to what they say
- Students can’t explain what they wrote in their presentations

- Teacher says: “didn’t I ask everyone to use the standardized formats?”
- Teacher asked a student to walk out of the classroom because she was not paying attention and was on Facebook and chatting and some other students sneaked out of the class sympathizing with her and they all stood out next to the stairs chatting
- Student who was expelled from class is allowed in class again and again she goes to her laptop and opens Facebook while the teacher is still sitting behind her in class and can see what she is doing on her computer [*looks like a rebellious attitude to me!*]
- Students seem embarrassed and clueless of what they are writing in their presentations
- Teacher made a wrong comment in class then apologized for it and corrected and some students looked at each other and laughed.
- All students are embarrassed and look ashamed when they are presenting in class
- Teacher talks about exam and again mentions the importance of using the standardized formats and templates

Interactions in class:

- One way communication from teacher to students
- Students whisper to each other in class
- Very formal relation between teacher and student
- You can clearly get the feeling that teacher is on one side and students on the opposite side in terms of interaction

Kent College 6.12.2011 – Financial Management –

Time: 10:00 – 12:30 am

Observations:

- Same teacher from previous class and same kind of interaction but with different students
- Teacher does not listen to students while they are presenting but reads the assignments (project)
- In this class, most students who have their laptops open have presentation on their laptops not Facebook or YouTube or chatting

- When one student is presenting, none of the other students either comments or asks questions
- One student gave an excellent presentation, she spoke perfect English and she seems to be very confident and knows what she is talking about. The teacher introduced her as running for “Miss Kent” and maybe this is why she seemed so confident and at first she did not seem embarrassed when she heard the teacher’s criticism about her project and presentations but at the end and after a lot of criticism from the teacher, she did get embarrassed
- It seems that both teacher and students see the responsibility of teaching to be the teacher’s responsibility and much less the student’s responsibility
- Students do not argue when the teacher criticizes them and they do not try to defend their projects

Interview with teacher:

- I asked the teacher about how he evaluates the students and he said by class participation and group assignments and individual assignments and comprehensive final exam

Kent College 6.12.2011 – Knowledge Management Systems – **Time: 02:00 – 05:00 pm**

Context:

- Size: Room for 30 students
- Attendees: 9 students (ages 18-20 years)
- Arrangement: Classroom setting
- Equipment: computer (desktop)
- A/C and room temperature is favourable

Interactions:

- Teacher explained assignment and asked if there are questions or not
- No questions by students
- Teacher makes session interactive by asking questions about previous sessions
- One student has laptop in class

- Teacher does exercise from the book → individual tasks
- 30% of students are females

Field Notes:

Most people in Vietnam speak little English even in Ho Chi Minh City which is the highest trading city in Vietnam, those who speak good English are hard to find even when people say they speak English, this sometimes means either that they know some words as “yes – no – hello – goodbye” or that they can read and write but not necessarily can understand spoken English nor can speak clear understandable English

The interpreter that we use at IBSS from Vietnam received his higher education in Australia and still he can only read and write good English but can hardly understand spoken English and we find it kind of hard to understand his English when he talks to us.

This makes studying the context of learning in Vietnam difficult and therefore this research was limited by finding classes in undergraduate private higher education institutes where English was the teaching language

In Vietnam, to go to one of the governmental universities, students must pass a very difficult exam and few actually manage to pass this exam. Those who do not pass the exam they are forced to go to private universities or colleges

The researcher is the education director of a Danish Business School and responsible for hiring full time and part time teachers and to be able to observe a class, I had to take permission from the teacher and explain my role as researcher and also reveal my role as education director and this may have affected the teaching during the observation as teachers may have tried to impress the researcher to be considered for teaching roles in the Danish Business School.

Teaching methodology in class:

- In this class, the teacher is from Singapore and that is why his teaching is different
- When doing an exercise, students keep staring in their notes and do not volunteer to answer unless forced by the teacher
- Teacher uses examples that are relevant to the topic
- Materials used by teacher: course notes (hand-outs) and writing on the board

- My impression is that students want so much to learn in class but it seems that the topics are too hard for them to understand
- Few students take notes (I only noticed one student only taking notes)
- At least 60-70% of the class is exercises that students have to finish the tasks individually first and then teacher asks if anyone wants to answer and when no one answers (it happens every time) then the teacher chooses one of the students to answer
- The teacher guides the students step by step to understand the topic but the students are not responsive I still can't figure out why? This time the teacher is assuming responsibility for the students' learning but the students don't seem to respond to his trials to engage them Some of them talk to each other trying to come up with the answers to the tasks (exercises)
- Teacher insists they work alone but they seem to me to be dying to work together

Field Notes:

- Vietnamese are a very social culture so they love to do things together. On the plane from Malaysia to Vietnam (a two hours flight) a young man around 20 years old was seated beside a western couple and his two male friends were sitting on the other side of the plane beside another western male and this young man, before the plane take off, asked the western couple if they don't mind changing their seats with his two male friends so he can spend the two hours flight sitting beside his friends and the western couple changed their seats with a smiling face
- In this class, and also in the other class I was in this morning, when students present they are not sure of themselves and are hesitating and I can't tell if this is because their English is not good or because they don't know the topic or are just afraid of the teacher's criticism
- Students who speak better English are more self confident in their presentations
- Students in this class have either iPhone or iPad or laptops

Interview with teacher:

- A teacher is highly looked up to in the Vietnamese culture although they are paid very low salaries
- Students in Vietnam are used to lectures → so the responsibility of learning is the teacher's responsibility

**University of Economics (International School of Business) –
Finance Lecture – 07.12.2011 (8:00 – 11:15 AM)**

Teacher: Hien Nguyen (Vietnamese with an American passport)

Background:

This is a public university that is running an international program for undergraduate level

Context:

- The class modern with air conditioners and video projector and sound systems and Wi-Fi Internet.
- Class is big enough for 50 students
- Attendees 30 students
- Students are informal bringing food to class and eating inside class
- Student ages 18 to 20 years old
- The class contains decorations for Christmas and drinking water dispenser

Teaching:

- Teacher reminds students of previously covered topics and asks them about them, students are interactive and respond to teachers questions
- Teachers accent is more American than Asian
- Teachers questioning of students is in the form of testing knowledge
- Students will come late to class bow slightly as a gesture of apologizing
- Course material is a textbook that is photocopied
- Teacher explains the Benes and add a behind using ratios in finance
- None of the students has a laptop in class
- Teacher uses PowerPoint slides in addition to hand-outs. Hand-outs show exercises which complements a PowerPoint slides.
- Teacher explains in a simple and understandable way using a lot of examples
- Students are generally attentive and are paying attention to the teacher and taking notes

- Teacher has an answer to the questions he asks and is looking for this right answer and maybe this is the way it should be in extremely technical subjects like finance, in other words may be accepting any answer so as not to inhibit creativity is not a correct strategy for all topics
- Teacher uses lots of examples to illustrate by asking students to solve the exercises in their hand-outs
- Teachers room is very simple and with a weak air conditioner that is complemented by a fan to get over the heat and humidity all year long in the city of Ho Chi Minh
- Students talk to each other during class usually to the person sitting next to them
- Teacher asks questions but they are all testing questions to test students knowledge
- Teacher also uses white board to explain more
- Teacher talks for 45 minutes without interruptions from students but students start talking together
- Slides that the teacher uses seem to be slides provided by the publisher of the textbook. Slides looked to me very dull and boring but because the teacher uses examples and illustrations by doing diagrams on the boards and explaining to them this makes them less boring
- After 15 minutes, students talking to each other while where we spitting at the beginning are now talking to each other with louder a voice
- Teacher has printed notes to follow from, which our pages printed from a blue
- Individual exercise, students are asked to do an individual exercise from the book but they actually work in groups
- Teacher walks around the class when students are completing the exercise to help them and see how they are proceeding
- I think that in this class both the teacher and the students assume responsibility for students learning
- Teachers tell as students that they will do an exercise in class because they do not work enough at home and do not do their homework

Cultural Considerations:

- Language is a big issue in Vietnam even in English speaking classes where students study ordered in English because students level of English language is not good enough to get along in class
- I couldn't observe any signs of different treatment for women than for men

- Vietnam's religious beliefs are not too strong in their influence but their cultural beliefs are in terms of holding a high value for parents and grandparents and dead ancestors where they celebrate the death and imagine that there sold to accompany them in some celebrations and they even pray to them. You can see in the same class Christmas decorations together with a Buddhist shrine in one of the corners of the same classroom

Gender considerations:

The number of Males in this class is 13 and the number of females is 16 students. All of them are dressed in some very casual outfits, their lives are not trying to attract attention by waiting too much make up but some of them are waiting high heels

Student interviews:

- Students prefer synchronous activities where they can see the teacher and talk to him or her and they also preferred group activity is much more than individual activities
- Some social media websites like face book are locked or band by the Vietnamese government and yet all students know ways of using proxy servers or software switch overcome this
- Photocopied textbooks are sold by the university book store to students at the average price of \$5.00 per book
- Students interview and do not think that [second life tool] is an interesting tool to use

A Class in The public section of the University of Economics – Ho Chi Minh City – 08.12-2011

A class in a public university is taught in Vietnamese with at least 500 students. It's a very small class and the students are squeezed in it and it so one-way communication lecture from the teacher to the students. The teacher uses the white boards to explain and a microphone. The class has fans, which do not help much when the temperature is 32°.

Students are writing every word that the teacher is saying why and the teacher is talking and talking without interruptions. No Student has a laptop or touch pad inside the class but many students have their laptops outside the class and are sitting in the halls of the university with their laptops to work on them. I could see one of

the students sleeping at the back of the class and the teachers didn't even notice him. All students are just listening and writing down why the teacher is talking.

National Vietnam University – Ho Chi Minh City - 09.12.2011

Field Notes:

I went to this university where I found a contact person inside it she is a young bachelor level teacher who teaches in a program provided by a French University but run under the umbrella of the local governmental university. She took me to the team to get approval to interview some of the students but the deans refused and said that I can only sit in one of the classes and observe it but I should not talk to any of the students so I just took a tour around the university. The university is huge and very expensively decorated and air-conditioned rooms for administration and air-conditioned classes for students.

From what I saw there are two very different worlds in the universities in Vietnam, first the purely public programs and second the international programs and both are under the umbrella and full control of the ministry of training and education. First the purely public universities, these are free programs and students have to undergo a lot of difficult exams and very few of them pass to in order to get into these universities and the lucky ones will pass get free bachelor's of different specialties, while the unlucky ones are either go to international programs if they can afford it or do not get any higher education if they cannot afford to go to a international programs.

Public Universities:

The classes are too crowded with no air conditioning and the teaching is in the form of a one-way the lecture where the teacher lectures 300 or 500 students using a microphone and the teacher can go on talking for 3 hours nonstop while the students keep writing after him or her, some students make even sleep in the class and the teacher would not notice but most students keep writing after the teacher. Students are not allowed to bring in any food or drinks or laptops in the classes in the public universities. No one interrupts the teacher when he or she is lecturing and no one is a loud to talk or make any noise during class consequently, the student's role in the learning process is to memorize every single word that the teachers says without questioning it and then repeating these words again in the exam. Higher levels of cognition are not used in this process, like evaluation, understanding, critical thinking and creativity. These levels are not used or acquired by students in the context of the public programs. The language of teaching in public universities is Vietnamese and teachers are all Vietnamese too.

International programs under the umbrella of public universities:

These programs are imported from international universities in countries like Australia, United Kingdom, USA, New Zealand, and other countries in Europe and local public universities run them. In a month in these classes is easy and the only criteria that must be met is good English [IELTS of at least five] and that the student can pay for the courses.

Classes are new and nice with air conditioning and video projector and a lot of facilities and the number of students attending is between 25 and 50 students. Teachers are either western or Vietnamese who had their high education in western countries. Teaching language is English and teaching methods are more interactive and activity oriented. Students enrolled in these courses all use technology for their learning and other things too and they bring their laptops or touch pads to class. Teachers ask students to prepare assignments and discuss case studies in class and teachers give students comments on their assignments in class. Students from both public and international courses share the same campus and use their laptops in the breaks.

Financial statements lecture – PUF (French BA Program in National University of Vietnam) – 09.12.2011

Class Time: 1:00 – 4:00pm

- Class can accommodate up to 120 students and attendees where 25 students and male students where equal to female students, there was one non-Vietnamese student in this class.
- Teacher starts the lecture by taking the attendance
- This is a review of class four students' assignments, teacher asks for a volunteer to start and one of the students comes up to the white boards to write his assignment on the board.
- The equipment in the class is air conditioners, video projector, sound system and screen.
- Class has good lighting and a nice view
- Only three students have their laptops open reviewing the assignment and checking e-mail
- Most students sit in there is regardless of their gender and very few of students sit on a bench alone
- Students are mostly paying attention and writing down notes and very rarely two students would be whispering to each other

- NB I have been in four different classes of the same subject financial management with four different teachers, the first was in male Vietnamese with American passport and his age was around 30 years old the second was also a male Vietnamese teacher with American passport and his age around 30 years old the third teacher was a male from Singapore and the fourth teacher was a female Vietnamese teacher and their age was around 25 years old. I did not notice any difference in students respect for the female teacher because of her gender, but maybe she is more aggressive and insecure than the male teachers that I met before.
- Two more students went to the boards to write their assignments and the teacher corrected them
- Students are asked questions to the teacher why other students are writing assignments on the board and the teacher answer the questions briefly
- Some students come 30 minutes late after the start of the class and the teacher tells them that they can wait outside the class until the break and then they can come to class after the break.
- Teacher comments on students assignments that are written on the boards and explains more on the theory with providing more examples
- Students are allowed to bring in drinks to class, hot and cold
- 45 minutes after the class started students become very noisy talking to each other while the teacher is talking and discussing with one of the students sitting in the front rows. The teacher is quite strict and she generally explains in a very simplified way.
- All students are casually and simply dressed, nothing flashy or sexy to attract attention
- No interaction between teacher and students on the personal level, she does not even call them by their names. All students talk to each other while the teacher is teaching and she has to wash out [silence please] every once in a while to make them quiet
- This is the only class that I saw some students opposing the teacher in any way, I don't know if this is because she is female or young or because the students are western educated in this group so they are used to questioning facts [critical thinking] or maybe the teaching culture of this class is different
- When I was teaching a class of Vietnamese students', they were quiet and listened so maybe it does not because of the gender

Future Research problem areas to be studied may include:

- What are the policies in public and private universities?

- How much power does the teacher have in both public and private universities?
- Do students enrolled in private universities get exceptional treatment from the teachers because they pay more money?
- What is the average salary for teachers in both public and private universities?

Field Notes from student interviews

- Another difference between public and international universities is that the curriculum that is taught in public universities contain socialist ideas that affect students' behaviour and character
- In the break students play cards gambling with money
- Students have friends in public universities and they mingled with them in dormitories, which means that these two groups are not totally segregated societies but students in international universities feel superior in terms of language skills, analytical skills, and personal skills
- One students comment was that in online learning you cannot feel the spirit of the teacher
- Fees for public universities are around 200 US dollars a year, why fees for private universities are around 2000 U.S. dollars a year
- Students have to pass a very difficult exam to be admitted into a public university, in one student's words [that university chooses the students and not the students choose the university]
- In public universities all teaching is only theoretical and students have to memorize everything and write it down in the exam
- The chances for students who graduate from private universities to be employed in multinational firms is much higher than for students who graduate from public universities
- After the interviews with students, idealized that they are more critical than other students that I met, it was clear that this university is teaching them to be more critical and Open-Minded and encourages open communication and critical thinking
- All students have photocopied textbooks
- Students assumed that the responsibility of their learning lies totally on the teacher and that they almost have no responsibility other than to do what the teacher asks them to do

Appendix B: Transcribed Focus Group In Vietnam

Focus Group 1: Kent College

Participants Initials

- 1) N. T. V. A.
- 2) N. L. T. H.
- 3) N. D. H.
- 4) H. V. M.
- 5) L. T. T. N.
- 6) N. K. V.
- 7) P. H. T.
- 8) L. T. T. X.
- 9) N. T. D. T.
- 10) T. T. A.
- 11) L. N. Th. V.

Questions Guide:

- Where did you go to college?
- What were the methods used in education?
- What did you enjoy most in the tertiary education you had?
- Did you ever use technology in your education? If yes, what kind of technological tools did you use?
- What was the most effective technological educational tool you used and why?

- In your opinion, what is the ideal learning environment that you prefer to be part of?
- What do you enjoy most in your learning activities?
- What are the electronic tools that you use regularly? Laptop – smart phone – table PC – digital audio or video player?
- How many hours do you spend on the Internet every day?
- Which websites do you spend most time of your day on the Internet? Why? What is appealing about these sites?
- How many hours of this time do you spend on learning activities?
- What kind of learning activities do you do online? What percentage do these activities represent of your overall learning/studying time?
- How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the e-learning tools that you use?
- What are the activities that you enjoy in online learning? What do you enjoy about them?
- What would you like to see in online learning tools?
- Do you have any other recommendations or comments?

Transcript

Each student introduces himself/herself

Question 1: why did you choose Kent College and why didn't you go to a public university? Some of you have been to public universities, so can you tell me the difference?

Student N0. 1 (female wearing red sweater):

In my opinion, the Vietnamese (public) universities don't have the quality of equipment they use in teaching is not enough quite good compared with the international universities in Vietnam and in an international university in Vietnam they are more modern and they use technology to support the studying, the teaching for example they use the "machine" and IT room for example for students to study

computing ...something like that . There is a big difference in the quality of the equipment they use in teaching

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Well, I have one year experience studying in private Vietnamese university and I noticed that, the one thing I like about International college that the number of students of class is few to compare with public Vietnamese universities they have over 100 students in one class and the schedule is not stable because maybe the university has to hire a teacher from another university and they have to follow the schedule of the teacher but it's too late and sometime will have to cancel the class and it is severely less convenient for the student because maybe some students live very far from the university and have to travel over 20 km to go to the university for that's why I think that it's not suitable for student

Moderator: OK, any other opinions?

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

I chose to study in an International College because of the method of teaching used in international colleges in Vietnamese universities in is a one sided teaching the teacher just say is the Information to the student and the student learns by heart in international college there is more communication between the teacher and the student and one more thing is the use of technology in international colleges like for example here in this college they tried to combine the lecturer with the technology like PowerPoint in its end we can present in front of everybody what we understand in the lecture but in the public Vietnamese universities the students have no chance to practice what the study

Question 2: what do you like most about your studying, what is the thing that you enjoy most in the learning process in your university?

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

I like most working in groups because when I work with other people and we learn from each other

Student N. 4 (Male with glasses and grey sweater):

I like most the presentations because when I present I can build up my confidence

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

Me too, because when we have a problem in our presentation other students can help us fix it

Student No. 6 [Female without glasses and white sweater]:

I also studied in public school in and now in international school but when I was studying in the public university the knowledge I get was not specific

Student No. 7 [Female without glasses and short sleeve T-shirt]:

I also like the presentation part because it gives me a chance to present my ideas and this gives me more confidence and it also gives me support for my future career because when we go to an interview they asked us to make presentations and we must show confidence. When we do a presentation we can show other people in our knowledge and our ideas and

Student No. 8 [Female without glasses and dark sweater]:

I get more knowledge from this school

Student No. 9 [Female with glasses and dark shirt]:

I like work group because I feel confident and I don't like to talk a lot but when we work in groups I can share with my friends everything and we study together

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

What I like it is working to each and impairs but also I like the activity in class because sometimes we have art or we have some place so we can experience what we haven't had before so I think it's a good thing that we do activities in class and to make the students more active and more confident

Question 3: if you have a group activity that you will need to do together online not face-to-face do you think that this will be useful or do you prefer to meet together and discuss face-to-face?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Can I talk first?

In my opinion, I think that everything has the advantage and disadvantage, the advantage about this case is that we can save the time the money so we don't need

to meet face to face we can talk by Internet and we can share and of course everything about that, but one disadvantage here is that somehow you cannot stop your friend or partner if they say something bad or do something bad because we do this on the Internet by yahoo or other tools somehow we cannot stop them when they do something bad to you I think that this is the one disadvantage about that

Can I ask them a question? Have you ever try to do a presentation about a subject using the communication by Internet with your friends before?

Because I think that it's not popular here in Kent College I don't know about other International College but it's not popular and convenient to you because we usually go to school in everyday and if we have a subject or presentation to do at home we like to share information by talking not by Internet

Question 4: what do you think of the degrees that are studied totally online? Would you study a degree that is done online?

Student No. 6 [Female without glasses and white sweater]:

I think computer and Internet are good but I prefer paper because I feel that my mind can open when I look at the paper it is more easy for me to understand and but in the study online we cannot get all the information

Moderator: and why is that?

Because we cannot ask the lecturer for if we do not understand anything not like when someone's sit beside you and talk directly to you

Question 5: if the teacher can do with the lecture by video conferencing like by using Skype for example, using videos so you can see the teacher and the teacher can see you and talk to you, do you think that this can be beneficial or you still prefer to be in the class with the teacher? Is there a difference?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Yes it's different because I think the benefits here because of time we just stay at home and we can study with the teacher, I think everything has a disadvantage as we cannot focus or if you have something you cannot focus on the lecturer or the video and if there is music in the background and of course you cannot stop the teacher and the teacher cannot stop you. I think face-to-face is the best way.

Moderator (to student No. 5): what about you?

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

I think face-to-face is better too

Student No. 6 [Female without glasses and white sweater]:

I think in Vietnam we go to school just about 10 or 15mins so it means we don't use much time. We cannot communicate with friends and that's not exciting when we study. Because we study we also meet friends and it makes the lecture be more interesting.

Student N0. 1 (female wearing red sweater):

The big difference when we study at home and study at school we condition, we study together make us more focus than study at home alone by yourself. Like she talked we will be affected by TV, music, playing game, you are also studying and playing game online. So you can be distracted.

Moderator: Any other opinions?

Question 6: Does anyone think that online learning would be better than face-to-face learning?

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

Some situations for people who are very busy, they cannot join the class, and this is the good way for them to study

Question 7: let me ask you another question. You all study in English in the university. Do you find a problem in the language? And if you do, how do you handle this?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

I think we have a period the teachers use academic words about economic and everything and it is a long word and it is difficult to understand while we are Vietnamese and we are studying in English. We have a lot of words to study and that is a way back to English and we have to study again. I think this is the disadvantage.

How about the teachers? We study in different subjects and we study with lots of foreign teachers. The way they speak, the way they talk, maybe they use some different words: the teacher from British they use another word, the American use another word so sometimes it makes the students confused about that. Because it is

still the same meaning but maybe somehow it is used in different situations. To the British you should use this word but to the American we should use this word so it's kind of difficult for us when we study with different teachers.

Moderator: *So if you don't understand something that teachers say in the class, do you interrupt them and ask them to repeat it or explain it in different ways?*

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

We will interrupt them and they will explain that word for us because it is a new word so they will explain that word for us to understand it exactly.

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

We can look up it in the dictionary if the teacher explained that word for us but I still don't understand I will go home and look up it on Internet and by that way we will learn by heart and remember

Moderator: *The materials you get from the colleges in English or in Vietnamese?*

Student No. 3: Of course in English

Moderator: *And you find it's easy for you all to translate all parts of it and understand them?*

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

Of course if we want to understand exactly we have to study at home, a lot of new words in books, we can't know all of them, we can search them in dictionary. It's very good for the lecturer on the next stage, next class.

Moderator: *Ok, so you found the good way to overcome this is by preparing before class?*

Student No. 5: Yes.

Moderator: *I think this is the good way to overcome the language problem.*

Question 8: Another question I have is what is the role of teachers in learning in your opinion and what is your role?

Student No. 2: Can you explain more for us?

Moderator: Yes. The responsibilities of your learning, it is your responsibility or the teachers' responsibility? How much of the responsibility is on you and how much of the responsibility is on the teacher?

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

I think 50-50. They also have responsibility for their works and we have to study. If we don't study even though they teach very well it's not fair.

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Well, I think it is not 50-50 I think it is 80-20. You know it depends on the teachers like if they like it – the subject, the teaching, so they will try their best to teach us but for like, we can say some lazy teachers, somehow they can not teach well, we can not understand. Of course in international school we can change the teacher but not actually we have a lot of available teachers to teach. So I think it is from our learning, it's our responsibility. But the most important from the teachers is how they can motivate the students can study. I think that is the most important because if in class they just have a short lecture how can they motivate the students can study at home and search more information at home. Because I experienced once time in my class and we don't like the teacher.

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

Moderator: Who is 80%?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Of course student is 80% and teacher is just somehow 20%.

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

But the teacher is the leader in the class in school so I think they are very important. They teach us anything

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

How can we understand if the teacher didn't have enough knowledge?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Ah what I mean here is not about the teacher doesn't have enough knowledge; it's just like how they can motivate you in class.

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

So how can the teacher improve our knowledge? I think 50-50 is better than 80-20

Student No. 6 [Female without glasses and white sweater]:

I think we are not in high school or primary school and teachers just give us knowledge and we take it. So the teacher is 50 and we are 50.

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

If we study with a good teacher with good way, good teaching and we will get more knowledge and we will pay more attention on the lecture than lazy or a bad teacher who just talks and we just sit.

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

That's the reason why I talked about the motivation. Excuse me Ms, what I mean of course we do not study in high school or primary school but we study in college and university so that's reason why I said we must be more responsibility with our study. We have to learn more for what teacher said in class. The knowledge of the teacher is very important but here is the motivation. Maybe somehow you just meet the teacher in one hour and she can not send a lot of information to you but how she/he can motivate you to look for more information at home. Just maybe by some projects, some presentations, some report.

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

For example, but if the teacher doesn't have enough knowledge to guide you how you research in the right way?

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

If you study in finance or accounting, right? If the teacher didn't guide you how to do a report, project.

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Of course the teacher teach in college they must be a master already and they have knowledge but let me ask you a question: If they have enough knowledge they guide you, right? They guide you just like a simple way, but you don't search it at home. Of course they have to guide you because you have to study more at home then the responsibility is not just make a project or like study for you

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

That's why I said it is 50-50. Just 20% is not fair for the teacher.

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

When a teacher guide you to do a project they will give you a format but when you ask teacher to explain step, step, step and teacher can't say: You can go home and search that! And how you do it?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Yah, sorry maybe I study just 4 subjects and it's just my experience in my class before. We make teacher. Because somehow they don't have motivation student we can't go back home and search information. But because you maybe study 10 subjects with different teachers and you can have your own idea. I just share my idea about 80-20.

Student No. 7 [Female without glasses and short sleeve T-shirt]:

I think at the first time teacher and student have 100% responsibility because at the side of the teacher they must think that they have the total responsibility to give information, the knowledge to the students. And at the student side, they must think that they don't want teacher teach them a lot how to do it, how to know it, how to got it. If teachers teach a lot and they have a good knowledge, good teaching but students don't think that they have responsibilities on their study it means that they can not learn even teacher is very well, very friendly. So in my thinking at the first time must think that 100% percent responsibility for this.

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

It's also responsibility of teacher and student is equal, right?

Student No. 7 [Female without glasses and short sleeve T-shirt]:

No, I don't want to think that. Must define how many percent on teacher, how many percent on students. I don't think that studying. If you think it is 50-50 equal and 80-20 and other people think that why people take a lot of responsibility and teachers has less responsibility for this. When I study I never think that. I just think at the first time you want to make a good at your style, your teaching and your study.

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Thank you so much, I learn from you a lot but I think that is a really good idea because everyone has responsibility for themselves, for their lives. And for students if they want to have a good job in the future they have to study and the teacher – if they love them, they motivate them to study. They are dedicated teachers do they have responsibilities to do that. Thank you so much.

Student No. 7 [Female without glasses and short sleeve T-shirt]:

I think as you learn about subject, when teacher give you a subject to do, many things you don't understand, is it right? But after teacher explain it you are also confused a little bit but you must try yourself to finish the subject. It doesn't depend on teacher at total but students have responsibility on your studying and teacher has totally responsibility on teaching.

Question 9: Let me move to something else related to your learning and teaching experiences. Can each of you tell me one situation that you remember very well that was your best learning experience: your best class, your best teacher and why? Why do you think so?

Student No. 6 [Female without glasses and white sweater]:

I had a best class. It's an English class at Kent College with Mr. Mike. When we study he is very strict and what he told we have to do it. But he doesn't have discrimination about students, he is equal. The teaching is also very good. He doesn't outside the lecture when we study and motivate us to learn.

Student No. 7 [Female without glasses and short sleeve T-shirt]:

Talk about Mr. Mike I think the presentation skill of my class is very good. Because Mr. Mike is very confident. He asks them to make a lot of activities and imagine he will do that and ask us to do that like him. Like he puts the name of the animal at the paper and ask them try to do something and the other people can guess that what the animal you want to explain. So I love the class.

(Video 2)

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

And he knows what the society needs and he gets us to do that. Somehow he wants us to do that and I think in the future it is very practical.

Moderator: So what does the society need in your opinion? What is it?

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

For example, confident when in front of a lot of people, we can control what we say, what we act, what we do something. Students are very shame to talk with a lot of people but he teaches us how to talk well.

Moderator: What's about you? Can you remember a member of a learning experience?

Student No. 4 [Male with glasses and grey sweater]:

Yah, I saw that Mike's class because when he teaches us, he teaches us about presentation skill. For the presentation skill, he doesn't have any topic we just make it by ourselves then go to present in nature so we can be confident and the thinking of our mind.

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

I also love Mr. Mike. He teaches us how to become a good speaker in front of everybody. He teaches us how to be confident and hide our worry. And I also like the way he teaches us how to write an essay. He is very strict and when he is teaching he is very serious. He very focus on the lecture.

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

He knows how to make us smile.

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

He makes us feel comfortable. I think he has good knowledge, he understand deeply what he teaches us.

Moderator (to student 8): What's about your experience?

Student No. 8 [Female without glasses and dark sweater]:

I also like Mr. Mike. The same thing with them.

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

Moderator (to student No. 2): What about you guys?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

We haven't study with Mr. Mike before because when we came Mr. Mike had leaved so we don't have a chance to study with Mr. Mike. We study with Mr. Monroe. He is a really funny guy. You know, he motivates us a lot in class. He teaches us of course how to present, how to work, how to stand in front of everybody, how to please people in front of you, how to make them calm down. He does not teach us just in the book, he teaches us a lot outside like: what is the changing of the world now. He teaches us a lot and he really motivates us. Like when we come back home we have to study more. If you want to have a good future we must study. And he is really a good teacher to us.

Moderator (to student 9): Can you tell us your experience?

Student No. 9 [Female with glasses and dark shirt]:

I like Mike. Because the first time I meet him he is so strict. I feel nervous and not confident when study in this class. I speak and my fluent is not good. I can't speak but the final exam I must pass. I must speak to him. He asks me: Are you ok? But I can't speak, I just: "err... I ok". But he said: "no problem, you ok. I think you can pass the exam"

Moderator (to student 10): what about your experience?

Student No.10 [Female without glasses and light green sweater]

My experience is..I like Mr. Monroe even I don't study with him anymore. When I meet him at school he always asks me "Do you have question about your subject or anything before? You can ask me anytime". He is very helpful.

Students No.11 [Male with glasses and white T-shirt]

I study with Paula. She is a good teacher. When I study with her, she teaches me how to say the word in right way, how to speak fluently and correct the sentences when I wrote wrong in the essay. She motivates some students who study well, study hard in the class. So I really like her.

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Yah I like Ms. Pam. She treats us like children in class because sometime we play games. She treats us like children, like her sisters and brothers. She is really a good teacher.

Moderator: What is your best in learning experience?

Student N0. 1 (female wearing red sweater):

I think when I study business and communication with Mr. Liem, he is a good teacher, not monk [laugh]. When he teaches he usually give examples, real example in the real situations. Like when you are supported to go to an interview or you apply a job, how can you communicate with the interviewer in the right way and get a good view. He also said some example like the way a company arranges the equipment with Chinese rule bring luck and attract more customers. Something like this. And I think it is a good example and it is close to Vietnamese tradition. So I think it is useful when I study this subject with Mr. Liem.

Question 10: My last question is do you prefer a male or a female teacher?

ALL students: Both

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

It depends on the teacher not depends on female or male.

Moderator: So it doesn't make any difference in your opinions?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

Yes, because of course in class we have male and female students too so about the teacher male or female is ok for us at least they are dedicate teacher. Everything is fine.

Question 11: Ok, any last comments about what Vietnamese students like in teaching in general?

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

You mean we say about what?

Moderator: What Vietnamese students in general like about teaching like what would they like to see in teaching?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

She 's a beautiful teacher. [laugh]

Student N0. 1 (female wearing red sweater):

I think the space of relationship between the students and teachers. Because in the Vietnamese universities, they always have a small space between the lectures and the students. When the students misunderstand, they feel shy, they don't want to ask the teacher, just ask the friends, don't want to ask the explanation from the teachers. But in the international universities, this space is smaller and something is not happened. Because the teachers are friendly, they are willing to explain when you misunderstand something.

Moderator: So you prefer the teachers to be close to you not to be distant?

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

And the equal is very important. Because somehow in class we have some good students and bad students..It's just normal here in Vietnamese universities or colleges, it's not equal and somehow if you want to pass a subject you have to give them some gifts, some money. But in international schools we don't need to do that, it's equal and it's a good way to make the students and teachers together.

Student No. 5 [Male with glasses and red sweater]:

Nowadays they should be not only teachers but also the students' friends.

Student N0. 1 (female wearing red sweater):

We also expect the teachers. It's not when the teachers and students we are closely. The students still expect the teachers. The teachers and students will become friends but they still have a limitation. Teachers are always higher than students about the knowledge. So the students still expect the teachers.

Moderator: Any final comments?

Student No.3 [female with glasses and white sweater]:

We also expect the teachers have social knowledge not only about his mature because when we study, we want ask about more realistic.

Student No. 2 (female with glasses and khaki shirt):

And I would love to study with funny teachers. If they have humorous they will make the class more active. Sometimes with the funny sensitive will make the atmosphere, the environment become more and more comfortable for the students.

Moderator: Anything else?

Student No. 7 [Female without glasses and short sleeve T-shirt]:

I think Vietnamese schools always have a distance between teachers and students. In secondary schools, high schools, universities or colleges the teachers are very strict that's why Vietnamese students get the confused about the lessons a lot but they don't want to ask because they think if they ask what teachers just said and what the result of the subject. But in international school I think the way they arrange the classrooms, the teachers' table and the students' tables are not so far. When teachers teach something, they always go around the class and pay attention to what the students got, they understand the lessons. So I think at the secondary schools, I don't want to ask teacher a lots, I just ask my sister so that's why I choose the international school to study at the college.

Moderator: Any other comments?

I think that's enough.

Appendix C: Transcribed Focus Group in Egypt (Arabic and English)

Focus group transcribed in original interview language (Arabic)

لا المحاضرات احنا مش علطول بنحضر اول السنة بنحضر محاضرات و بعد كدة مش بنحضر لاننا مش بنستفاد اوى بنجيب ملازم و كدة و نذاكر منها بتبقى اسهل .. مثلا بناخد ورق المجموعه مثلا او حاجه عشان لو نازل فيها حثت غلط .. حاجات زياده بس بنذاكر منها

هو مش مقياس يعنى احنا كنا في الاول في اول سنين كنا بناخد كورسات زى ما رانا كانت بتقول كنا معتمدين عليها .. من اول السناده حاولنا يعنى ان احنا . يعنى في ناس قالولنا ان احنا ممكن عشان السناده صعبه و كدة .. ابتدينا ناخد مجاميع مع الدكتوراه لان احنا حاولنا ان احنا نحضر محاضرات .. في دكتوراه كده انهم هو احنا جينا قبل كده كتب اللي هما الدكتوراه بينزلوها .. لاقينا ان ملهاش اهميه لاننا مبنفهمش حاجه من الشرح و احيانا كثير في دكتوراه مبييقوش مهتمين اننا ننقل وراهم اوان هما يساعدونا اننا نحل في الكتاب .. بس ابتدينا بقى بعد ما ابتدينا ناخد مجاميع و كدة معاهم اداة احسن برضو شويهو في دكتوراه من المدرجات من اللي بيخلونا نشترى كتب و بيخلونا نحل فيها بايدينا و خلونا ان احنا نبتدى لكن حكاية ان احنا نبتدى ندخل على النت او نستفاد كدراسه و بناخد كورسس و كدة

في كورس accounting special in English

او احدث كمان اللي هو تجارة English اكايمك شويه لكن اللي هو ال Set دة للحياة العملية اللي بنلاقيها لما بنيجي نشغل و طبعا رغم ان الدكتوراه هما اللي بيدونا في فرق كثير اصلا حتى هما هما نفسهم الدكتوراه بيقلولنا خدو بالكوا ان فيه فرق كثير الدراسه اللي بناخدها دي و هما اصلا متخصصين في مواد المحاسبه بس الاجرات طبعا هي عالم ثاني و نحس اننا بنفهمها هي كلها in English طبعا يعني ممكن المواد العاديه دي منجيش فيها تقديرات و دي نجيب فيها تقديرات

بالضبط كدة اة و بنحس انها سهله بنسبنا او دي الحاجات اللي بنشتغلها فعلا ... الثانيه مجرد حفظ جداول , بيانات , ممكن دكتور مثلا يبقى عامل رساله دكتوراه بيحفظك مثلا الحاجات النظرية دي يعنى الدكتور بيحيي يحفظك ...

في حاجات كثير يعنى في عيوب كثير

على حسب الدكتور

في دكتوراه مثلا بتبقى المادة كلها عملي اعلمى و نظري و بيبقوا مهتمين بالنظري اكثر بس لو عملي احنا بناخد كورسات اصلا فعلطول الدكتور

أه زى دروس خصوصيه فى سنتر مثلا او حاجة وعددنا مثلا عشرين طالب حاجة كدة بقى يقعد يحل معنا علطول نراجع علطول و فى دكترة احيانا بس هما قلة قلة جدا اللي هو يقولك ندره ندره كدة ان تلاقى الدكتور عنده ضمير و يعمل معنا الكورس اللي لما بنلاقيها بتبقى بنسبنا فرصة احسن من الكورس لان هو على الاقل عارف

بس بتختلف فى الجامعه اننا بناخد الحاجة و مبنزاجعش الكورسات بنراجع معاهم الدكتور اخره انه يخلص معنا المنهج بس مايبيراجعش معنا فى دكترة ممكن يعنى تدخل تشرح اللي هو محسيسينك ان احنا نفس المستوى يعنى

فى دكترة لما بتيجى تشرح بتحسك يعنى ان الحاجات دى المفروض ان دماغك وصلها ...أه

مش بتسهلنا او حاجة بتقول الحاجة كدة و احنا المفروض نفهم لوحدنا

و طبعا تيجى فى امتحانات طبعا ضايعة

و لدكترة اللي مينخدش معاهم مجاميع او محضرنا لهمش مثلا يجبولنا حاجات مخدناهاش او مش موجودة فى الملازم امم عشان ناخذ معاهم و كدة

لا بيبقى فى ال normal فى العادى يعنى قبل حصص ال revision بيبقى maximum اقصى عدد 12 بعدكدة بقي مثلا لما يجى revision بنبقى حاجة و عشرين

بس فيه دكترا اللي هم بتوع الكورس او حاجة اوقات لما يجى عندهم عجز فى حاجة بيبقى جزء متخلف أه بيجى يعنى يشرح جزء من وجه نظره هو ملهاش دعوه بالحياه العمليه يعنى انت لو جيتى ذاكرتيه مثلا متحسبش انه له علاقه بالواقع او غلط اصلا او فكرة غلط , بس هي دى فكرته او هو ده منهجه بس زى اللي منزله فى الكتاب فنوجه المشكله مثلا زى فى المحاسبات و الحاجات دى ممكن اصلا بنقى حبيها او ملناش فى الحفظ اصلا فما بنصدق ماده عمليه كدة , بس بنضطر اننا نحفظ و بالتالى لما نيجى ندخل الامتحان مش بنعرف نحل لو مجاش التمرين زى اللي احنا حلينهأممم و اوقات يبقوا منزلين مواضيع جديده مثلا فى اخر السنه او مثلا منزلها فى الملزمة الجديدهأه طبعا مبتلحقوش نتمرنوا عليهامثلا بيبقى جيبها فى ال revision مبنقاش ذاكرتها من اول السنه ,

بيبقى مثلا بينافس حد او عايز يعاقبنا مثلا اننا بنذاكر من ورق معين بيروح عاند معاهم ...و يروح و على فكرة بيقولونا كدة فى المحاضرات مع ان هما على فكرة بتوع الكورس دول دارسين عندنا و فيه منهم بيحضروا ماجيستير بس هما ايه بقي مش عايزين حد... عايزين مجاميع اكثر , عايزين اقبال علي المجاميع اكثر ... بس احنا برضه بنواجه مشكله ان المجموعه برضه بتبقى قريبه من عدد المدرجات فى الاخر

أه يعنى ممكن توصلبيبقى عدد كبير يعنى المجموعه ممكن توصل ل250-300

اه لا دة الكورس ال private

لا بندفع بس مش كتير يعنى زى الكورسات على فكرة يعنى هي ممكن تيجى نص الكورس

على حسب الدكتور... فى دكتراه مثلا ممكن احنا نساله و هو يسالنا ... يعنى فى ال math او حاجة زى كدة analytic مثلا ممكن ان احنا نساله هو يسالنا انما فى المواد النظرى

فى مواد الى هى العملي برضه ممكن الدكتورا يسألوا ... و فى مبيسألوش برضه اللى هو يعضوا برضه ميديكش حتى فرصه تعليمي في الكتاب يعنى حتى لو احنا جينا كتب فى حاجات زى الاقتصاد economy او كده يقعد بقولنا انا هعرف لو انت بتكتبى ورايا لو مش مركزه معايا و هنقصك فى الامتحان تهديدات كده يعنى و احنا اصلا و لا فاهمين يعنى اننا لما نروح نقرى اللى كتبناه هو مفيش امل فيها خالص. و تبقى المحاضره ساعه او ساعتين فا ايه انجز كده يعنى ممكن فى ربع ساعه تلت ساعه كده بقلينا و نمشيتملا يعنى ...

فى مواد بتبقى كده الكتور فى المجموعه بيعلمنا طريقه معينه عشان نحل بيه و بيبقى معلم الطريقه يعرف بيه مين اخذ مجموعه و مين مخدش

و اللي بيذاكر من الورق و اللي ما بيذاكرش ..

لان احبانا الورق بيبقى معنمد مثلا على ان الدكتور بيبقى مدى الجزء دة بس بطريقه تانيه السنه اللى فاتت يمكن ملزمه تنزل بتاعه السنه اللى فاتت فيها حاجه متغيره عن السنادى simple جدا يعنى بس هو بفي

بس احنا بنسمع ان هما هما نفس الدكتورا لما بيدوا في جامعات خاصه , هما هما نفس الدكتورا بيدوا في جامعات خاصه بس مش فى النظام بتاعنا اولاً خالص خالص بيدوا سكاشن مع ان ممكن برضوا بيقوا بيدوا تجاره عربي بس تحسى ... ممكن يعنى بيبقى ظروفهم....

العدد بيبقى اقل

اولا بيبقى عدد ممكن بيبقى ليهم ظروفهم يعنب اولاً الكثافه , يمكن مراتيتهم . الله و اعلم يعني بس حاجات مقصره عليهم , بس هما لازم يفصلوا يعنى احنا برضنا ملناش ذنب و اكيد في حاجات مقصره علينا انه بيعمل معانا كده زمان كنا نسال فى ناس زمايلنا جامعات خاصه هما هما نفس الدكتورا بيروحلهم ... فاسلوهم مختلف عن اسالينا

بيبقى احسن

اه طبعا شرح و مراجعات عنى فيه مثلا دكتور ينزل كتاب فيه من ورا ... اسمه ايه اللى من ورا ده

يعنى تمارين من ورا كده عشان عايز يعرف مين اشتري الكتاب و مين مشتراش و ممكن يحل التمرين دة فى اخر السنه عشان يعرف مين اللى جب الكتاب ده و مين ما جبهوش

دا ده فى المحاضره العاديه ممكن بقي يعمل حركه انه لو ادي واجب او homework فى المجموعه بيبقى عايز يعرف مين بياخذ معاه مجموعه

يعنى فى الاخر هى عمليه تجاريه بغض النظر الطالب اتعلم حاجه و لا لا

مبقوش كده زى زمان , مش زى الدكتورا بتوع زمان بس يعنى فى دكتور كويسين

الحاسب الالى ... و الرياضه البحتة سنه اولى كان كويس جدا .. كنا بنحل معاه فى المحاضرة و كده

بيشرح يعنى احنا مثلا اتعلمنا لغات اصلا المدارس بتاعتنا كانت لغات فا بالنسبالنا اننا داخلنا الكليه دي بالعربى فالحاجات اللى هى بتاعه الناس مثلا رياضه احنا كنا بنأخذ math طول عمرنا 13 سنه فى حياتنا بنأخذ expression power بال English داخلنا احنا شفاهمين حاجه المصطلحات كلها بالعربي

اللى هو احنا ايه .. طبعا فى الاول جربنا ان احنا نحضر و باقيه المواد مكناش فاهمين منها حاجه .. حتى من الدكتور , فايندينا ناخذ courses ماده زى الرياضه دى الدكتور كان كويس بيشرح جزء جزء , بيفهم حتى التفاصيل الصغيره يعنى يشرح يعنى ايه اس و كده و نحل و نوريلوا السؤاليعنى 250 طالبده لكل المجموعه و المجموعه كانت بتبقى لحد الفياةةةةةةةةةةةة اه ويراجع و يصلح الالف اه و يراجع و يصلح معنا كل حاجه

بس مايبيراجعش مبيبقاش فى وقت لكن بيبقى عايز بس ممكن يسأل على حاجات عدت قبل كده يعنى يشوف مثلا احنا مدى يعنى يوقف حد برضه و كده

فى دكتور برضه عمل كده و اداله كتاب يعنى اللى يجاوب على السؤال اداله كتاب هديه

فى نماذج بس الصراحه احنا ماينشوفش النماذج دى كتير قليل يعنى و احنا حظينا يعنى

دى بقى الدكتور ممكن بيبقى كويس معنا طول السنه و بجى فى اخر السنه يعملنا مفاجاه فى الامتحان

يعنى مثلا فى امتحان كان فيه اسئله حاجات احنا مخدناش فى المنهجبس اسئله فهم . بس خدناها فى سياسه و اقتصاد قبل كده برضه امتحان الEnglish كان كده يعنى بنحل كتير و فى امتحانات بتبقى هى النظرى بقى زى الاداره ... هى الاداره اكثر حاجه

فى مره جالنا امتحان مثلا فى مثلا ممكن الدكتور يجبلنا امتحان ميتحلش اصلا ... يعنى مثلا شلت مره ماده الدكتور كان جابلنا امتحان فى المحاسبه .. المفروض ان اصلا المحاسبه قوائم كده طول السنه بنحفظها جابلنا اربع اسئله مفاهيمش اصلا ارقام بس كان عند ..مجرد عند معنا

فى دكتور مره اشتكناه ..دخلنا للعميد اشتكناه ... جاب امتحان وحش جدا بس الحمد لله اتحل شويه

و لقيناه عاند معنا برضه فى التكاليف برضه .. لقينا فيه سؤال كامل خمس درجات مخدناش عنه اى فكرة ده فى المجموعه فى الآخر خالص

ممكن دكتور مثلا بجى يقول رساله خاصه ..يعنى الدكتور يقول مثلا انتوا لو ضيقتونى هجيبلوكوا امتحان صعب طول السنه بقى بيبقى بيهددنا مش امتحان اللى هو اصلا هيجى مواصفات معينه .. لا بمزاج الدكتور ... ممكن يجى فى الآخر برضه

و التصحيح بتاع الامتحانات ... اصلا انا كنت خارجه اول سنه ضايعه بالنسبه لى لان كنت عربي ... احنا الاتنين كنا عربي احنا الاتنين فشلنا كل واحده مادتين المفروض انى انا خارجه و متأكده انى شايه مادتين ...اه لاقتهم فى اخر السنه عاملنلى .. مدينى هديه 2 كمان هديه و الاتنين دول اصلا منهم ماده و احنا كنا حلينهم .. يعنى الدكتور قال الملغى فى المدرج و جالنا فى الامتحان جابلنا الملغى و منعرفش لاننا اصلا مكناش بنحضر يعنى الماده ديه انا متأكده مليون فى الميه انى انا حلاها , بعدين عملنا ... بنعمل حاجه اسمها التماس بندفع عليه فلوس يعنى المفروض ان التماس ده مش هيعيدوا التصحيح تانى انما هيعيد قرايه الدرجات تانى بس فى الآخر نجحت طلع انى اننا مظلومه

ملهاش مقياس فى دكتورا بتقولنا انا برمي الورقه كده مثلا ,,,,,,

بيخوفونا مفيش حاجه بتحصل ,,,,,, الورقه تيجى كده صح و تيجى كده غلط

و في دكتراة ما بتحولش انها تهتم اه ممكن حتى يفيي شرحهم كويس و كل حاجه بس مبيهتموش بالنفسيه..
 الحاله النفسيه بالنسبالنا الحاله النفسيه بالنسبه للطالب بتبقى عامله ازاي و ممكن دى تبقى في الجامعات
 الخاصه دلوقتي اكثر .. في الجامعات الحكوميه بالذات عشان الكليات اللي باعداد كبيرة مابهتموش بالحالتنا
 النفسيه ... ممكن احنا برضو مش ذنينا برضوانهم ما يهتموش بحاجه زى كدة .. فعشان كدة ممكن لآخر السنه
 ممكن من يأسنا نذاكر اخر chapter و دا الحقيقه ممكن من يأسنا طول السنه فا من الاحباط اللي احن فيه
 ممكن علي اخر الشهر.....

بنبقي واخدين كورسات عندنا فكرة عن المواضيع برضو

بس لو حد مقدرش ياخد كورسات كل حاجه بتضيع عليه بقي !!!!

بيحضروا المحاضرات و بيدوهم ملازم

هى نفس المحاضرات بس بينزله الدكتور اللي بيدى الكورس

الدكتور اللي بيدى الكورس

بس هى هى المحاضرات ... بيبقوا ميين حد يحضر المحاضرات او المجاميع

يكتب بقى ورا الدكتور .. فهى دى الملازم بقي

بس هى بتبقى بقي بقالها سنه او سنتين .. بقالها فترة فتبقى ناقصه او غلط فى الملازم

او ممكن بيبقى بيدى كل حاجه.. فيجى الكتور يلغى حاجه بعد احنا ما نكون ذاكرناها.. لان و هو بيشرح
 مبيياقش عارف ايه اللي هيتلغى اصلا .. اللي هو بيدينا كل حاجه لحد ما يجى على اخر السنه و مرة واحده
 بيبقى

اه فى الملازم نفسها بيبقى فيه شينات للمراجع بيبقى الامتحان ده جه سنه كذا و الامتحان ده سنه كذا

فى الكورسييس (courses)

عموما يعنى مش فى الدراسه .. عموماأه....بتستخدموا الانترنت

تقريبا وقت اد ايه فى اليوم ..عندكم كومبيوتر (computer) فى البيت

Sure حتى لو مفيش كومبيوتر فيه الموبيلات ... دا ده تقريبا اكثر حاجه بتضيعلنا الوقت

بتقصوا كام ساعه تقريبا فى اليوم على الانترنت

الاربعة و عشرين ساعه عشرين ...

لا برضوا كده كتير ممكن خمس , ست ساعات فى اليوم مثلا

ايه اكثر ال sites اللي بتدخلوا عليها أو الحاجات اللي بتستخدموها فى الانترنت

الفيس طبعا اساسي ال Google لو عزنا اي حاجه مثلا فى الجامعه ... احنا بناخد English courses فى ال grammar و فى الحاجات دى بنستخدموا و فى حاجات معينه بقي بيبقى ال instructor مديهولنا

يعنى فيه مواقع ممكن المدرسين يقوللكم عليها تدخلوا عليها ؟

اه ممكن فى الكورسات

لا دى كورسس خارجيه فى كورسس بناخدها دى حاجه و ال ... اه ... بس حاجه كويسه عملهلنا الجامعه ..يعنى زي مثلا شركه pearls .. pearls دى شركه عالميه منزليها بسعر مدعم للطلبة فأحنا دخلنا فيها ,,, بس الصراحه لسه احنا اصل هى السنادى الشركه ...بس حاسين انها عملت فينا حاجه يعنى .. بيدخلونا افكار جديده .. بيدخلونا ان احنا نحاول نشغليس احنا اتعقدنا لاننا طول حياتنا عاملين ناخذ كل المواد عربى عربى عربى دى الحاجه الوحيدة اللى حسستنا بدراستنا اللى فانتت... يعنى بحس ان احنا بنعيش فيها الساعات اللى كنا بنعشها كدة .

ممكن يعنى كده نسمع ان فى الجامعات الخاصه بيدخدا مواد غير اللى احنا بناخدها ... فى بعض المواد تحسي انها ترفيهيه شويه... بس احنا معندناش اى حاجه ترفيهيه , كلها Academic اممم..... فا بيخه شويه فى الحاجات اللى ممكن نعيش فيها شويه حياه كويسه ...اممم بس بيدخلونا .. يعنى احنا مثلا بناخد كورس دلوقتى بيدخلونا مثلا نعمل project عملنا ال project يعنى ال project اللى احنا شغالين فيه عملنا signs لحد جديد جاي الجامعه عملنا signs مثلا لحد مش عارف هو رايح فين ممكن بقعد يسأل و بيتوهمه كثير مثلا فأول حاجه فكرنا فيها حاجه useful للجامعه بتاعتنا اننا نعمل signs مثلا بين المباني اننا و قلنا لزميلانا اللى فى هندسه و انهم يرسمولنا المباني و الحاجات دى ... الدكتورا اساسا انبهروا و حتى ببسألونا احنا فى كليه ايه ,, و لما بيعرفوا اننا فى كليه تجارة تحسي ان هما مش متوقعنها من اننا بس بتحس انو انتوا بقي مش بتستغلونا مش مدينا مجالات اللهم التانيين عرفوا انهما يخرجوا الحاجات اللى جونا ... بس هما ما بيدخلوش ان هما يخرجوا الحاجات اللى جونا ...اممم... و كدة

بصراحه لأ ... لأننا حتى لو بنستخدم النت كثير او بنستخدموا فى دراستنا بس احنا بنستخدموا من ننا لنفسينا مش احنا اصلا مدرين .. يعنى الحكايه دى مثلا لاننا احنا ايام الدراسه فى فتره المدرسه على الاقل يعنى ايام دراستنا مكش لنا كل واحد كومبيوتر ان احنا نقعد عليه او ان احنا نستخدمة يعنى احنا طول عمرنا حتى فى الثانويه العامه و خدين على الدروس يعنى كان ممكن يعملولنا ارشادات على التليفزيون ان فيه المدرس الالكترونى على النت يعنى و كدة ... أةة... بس برضو بسبب التخلف فى التعليم بسبب مدرسين وبرضوا الامتحانات اللى زى الزفت , بيدخلونا برضو نلجى للمدرسين اللى ليهم خبره فى الحياه العمليه ... أةة... و مش متعودين ان احنا نقعد كدة .كبنا على كده . بس ممكن الاجيال اللى قبلينا او اخوتنا اللى فى المدارس ممكن لو ابتدوا يدخلوا التكنولوجيا دى فى المدارس و كدة ممكن يتدربوا و يلجوا لكورسس زى دى لكن احنا كبنا على القعه دى .. يعنى احنا كبنا اننا ندخل على النت نكلم ال instructors اللى احنا عارفهم و بيدونا ممكن ندخل نعمل معاهم chat و نسألهم او كدة .. و ممكن ندخل على sites نحل فيها grammarبس مش هيبقى فيها chat فمش هنعرف نسأل و أحنا مش متعودين على كدة

على العموم احنا كليتنا اصعب كليه على مستوى الكليات حتى لو الناس سافرت بره او كده

بس هى جامعه عين شمس اصعب جامعه فعلا فى مصر فعلا

على اد ما بنعانى كده بيبقى لنا قيمه بره مصر و كده انما جوه مصر مبيقاش لنا نفس ال value او كده

يعني عرفت مثلا ان في امريكا مثلا ان faculty of commerce دي بتاخذ اعلي حاجه .. احنا اعلي حاجه عندنا طب عندهم بقي بيهتموا بالتجارة و التنمية على اساس انهم بيهتموا بتجاره و اقتصاد البلد اللي هي اهم حاجه في البلد اللي هي ممكن توقعها او اللي هي تخلي فيها تكنولوجيا.... احنا عندنا هنا في مصر الطب و الهندسه , و احنا افضل ناس في مصر ... احنا افضل ناس في مصر... مع ان دراستنا و الله لو حد جه بدرسها , احنا بس عشان اعداد كثير ... بس دراستنا صعبه جدا مش سهله , بس هي الناس بتستقل بيها يمكن علشان مجامعها اقل من المجاميع التانيه

هي مش صعبه اوى لو ذاكرنا من اول السنه سهله حلوة انما لو ذاكرنا متأخر هي دي اللي بتبقي صعبه ...

لا انا قصدى ان ليها اهميه زى دراسه الطب متقلش اهميه عنها بس اسهل..... بس طبعا كل واحد لما بيدخل كليه بياهل نفسه ليها و بيحس ان دراسته دي احسن حاجه و بيبقي فيها حاجات صعبه بالنسباله حتى لو الاخرين شايفنها هافيه ... بس عشان انا اقلمت نفسى على ال atmosphere على ان دي حاجه صعبه فبتبقي ياه دي حاجه صعبه جدا

لا انا احب اشتغل في دراستي .. رحت training في بنك مثلا و كان حلو و في شركه و لاقيت ان البنك افضل يعني بس يعني مش حبه اشتغل في غير دراستي

لو في شركه عايزه تشتغلى محاسبه

اه عايزه اشتغل محاسبه

بصى انا هقول لحضرتك .. انا كمان عايزه اشتغل ... بس هقولك في العموم لا اله الا الله

انا في الحقيقه نفسى اشتغل في مطار يعني عايزه اشتغل مضيفه ارضيه tickets و كده او شركات طيران بس هو في العموم اغلبه اللي بيخشوا كليتنا او كليه مجموعها قليل زى كليتنا يعني بيبقي على حسب المجموع ... انما هما لو في امتحانات يعني هما لو شالوا فكرة المجموع دي خالص .. و عملوا امتحان قدرات و كده عشان يشوفوا هو مؤهل او هينفع ... يعني انا عندي واحده صحبتي خريجه كليه تجارة امنيته حياتها انها تشتغل wedding planner و ملهاش علاقه خالص بالكليه و كررها اساسا بس نجحت في الاربع سنين و خلاص خلصت بس هي نفسها تشتغل في مجال تاني هي اصلا بتحبها بس حتى هي لو فكرت تشتغل في مجال مش سهل ... يعني احنا مثلا ممكن بيبقي لينا وسائط اننا نشغل ... انما هي حتى في المجال اللي هي عايزه تشتغل فيه مش عارفه

يعني احنا حتى لو عايزين نشغل في مجال كليتنا لازم برضوا نأخذ courses

لازم اول حاجه وسطه .. تاني حاجه courses اللي هي ال skills بتاعتنا يعني مثلا كان لازم ناخذ كورس انجليزى دلوقتى مصر كلها بتاخذ كورس الانجليزى دلوقتى بقى بقى الجديد ان يكون في كورس تاني غير ال English طبعا اساسي ان يكون فيه computer skills اساسي ممكن ممكن واحد ميكونش يعني يعني يكون اهله على اد حالهم مش مؤهل ان هو ياخذ ال courses و في الجامعه برضوا يعني ممكن ال course اللي احنا بناخد ميكونش متاح لاي حد حتى لو هما منزليين التكلفة بتاعته ممكن برضوا مياقاش

بس فيه courses العاديه اللي بناخدها زى ال english تبقي ب 60 جنيه و لا حاجه بس مش مدعم من الشركات و لا اى حاجه و يا عيني هو يفضل ياخذ و هما يدفعوله و ده بيكون عبء و بعدين ميرضوش يشغلوه برضه لان الشهاده بتاعته مش معتمده .. طب هو ملوش ذنب برضه بعني هو عمل اللي عليه و برضوا مفيش فايده و اهله دفعوا و هما على اد حالهم يا عيني فهي ملهاش علاقه

هو احسن حاجه ان عدد الطلاب يبقى صغير شويه لان عدد الطلاب الوقات يعنى هنشرح لده كلة إزاي و طبعاً نرجعهم و نفهمهم يعنى مش نشرح لهم الحاجه كده و خلاص ... و لازم ندى اسئلهم و نراجع معاهم .. و نديهم sheets يحلوها فيها و كده

و الكتب لما نيجي ننزلها ننزلي الحاجات اللي فعلاً انت هتسراحيها و مش لازم نلغي مش كتابه على الفاضى

يبقى فى الكتاب الحاجات اللي هما هيخدوها الحاجات اللي هيسفيدوا بيها حاجة تتطابق مع الواقع ... الحاجات العملى اللي احنا هنشتغل فيه هو اللي يخدوه مش حاجه ملهاش دعوة بالواقع اللي هيسغلوه بعد كده

أه أه احنا بندخل مننا فينا

فيه بيحضروا و يدونا الحاجات المهمه و أحنا برضو بنديهم الحاجات المهمه

بس الدكتورا مبيقاش ليهم برضوا اى حاجة

يعنى اللي بيعمل كده طلبه مع بعض انما الدكتورا ملهمش دعوه بالموضوع

برضوا مثلاً ايام زمان مثلاً ... يعنى احنا كليتنا فى تجاره انتظام و تجاره انتساب و دلوقتي اتلغي , و فى تجاره تعليم مفتوح دى اللي موجوده .. دى بقي بيدرسوا مجرد شويه business كده مش زينا احنا بندرس كميات رهيبه دول بيدرسوا بدائيات حاجات كده متجيش حاجه فى اللي احنا بناخده

لا بتبقى زى بعض بس تعليم مفتوح فى الآخر يعنى ممكن تكون المصاريف اعلى بس

الانتساب و الانتظام بتكون تعاليمهم زى بعض الاتنين انا التعليم المفتوح هو اللي مختلف عن الاتنين حتى لو انتساب جاب فيها مجموع بقدر يحول انتظام

بس فى عيب بقى الانتظام ممكن يعملهم sections و دى بتبقى عامله زى المجاميع بتاعه الدروس بس من غير فلوس ... يعنى المجاميع شغاله انما ال sections دى بتكون زى ميزه للانتظام ... أه.... بس الانتساب ليه ميعملولهمش sections هما كمان

بتبقى مثلاً حاجه فى الميه مش واحد فى الميه لا حاجه من عشره مثلاً

مجموعهم اقل فا بدل ما بيدخلوا انتظام بيدخلوا انتساب

بس الفرق بينهم مبيقاش كبير قوى ... يعنى انتظام ممكن يبقى 84% و انا اكون جايه 83.9 % بتبقى حاجه كده عشان كده انتى ببقي ليكى فرصه انك تحولى انتظام ... انما التعليم المفتوح ده ببقي اللي جاييين مجاميع قليله خالص

اللي ببجيب تقرير بيحول انتظام من الانتساب انما التعليم المفتوح مايحولش

اكاديميه عين شمس بتبقى فيها الدكتورا هما هماهم يعنى ببقي فيها دكتورا من اللي بيدونا

لا لا لا هى تجاره برضه بس فرق المصاريف المدرجات معموله ... يعنى هما معندهمش مدرجات المدرجات دى فى الجامعات الحكوميه بس هى كلها sections عباره عن sections مش بتختلف بس فى كده .. فى

الاعداد .. فى شكل الكليه الحاجات اللى فيها .. يعنى هما عاملين لهم حاجات for fun برضوا ... لكن احنا لا .. كل ده على حسب مصاريفهم بقي

يعنى مثلا انتساب بيدفعوا فى السنه 500 او 600 جنيه انتظام بيدفعوا حوالى 100 جنيه هناك طبعاً بيتدفعوا بالافات انا قريبتى فى المعهد العالى للتكنولوجيا عارفه حضرتك الفيلم بتاع الباشا تلميذ المعهد ده هو دة المعهد العالى ... اللى هو فى العاشر اه اللى هو فيه كليات اصلا هى فى كليه تجاره هناك مثلا .. هى مصاريفها حوالى 7000 جنيه او اقل ... بس الدكتورا يعنى هما عدهم فى ال section حوالى 70 واحد . يعنى مش جايه المجموعه اللى هى بتاعتنا اساسا ... حتى نظام المذاكرة عندهم مش زى عندنا هما اولاً عندهم ثلاثه terms حتى لو two terms بالاسلوب عندهم زى امريكى شويه بيقوللهم يذكروا ازاي يعنى لو حد عايز يقسم المواد ببسيويه يختار المواد اللى هيخدها... بالضبط كده ... هو عايز يقسمها على مزاجه كميه اد ايه من المواد يعنى ايه .. يعنى مش زى عندنا لازم ناخذ المواد كلها .. سبع مواد فى الترم و يطلعوا عنينا ... و بالعكس بتجيب درجات و متفوقه جدا .. حتى ممكن يشغلهم يعملوا حاجات زى الماجستير مش بيحضروا حاجه بس بيحبوا حاجات زى كتب هى كانت شرحتلى يعنى.... بس غيرنا خالص , حتى المواد مختلفه خالص مش زى عندنا مع ان نفس الدكتورا هى هى

مش زى عندنا خالص يعنى مفيش مقارنه حاجه ثانيه خالص

على حسب فى جامعات معتمده و فى جامعات مش معتمده مش عارفه بس فى الاخر و الله الحكوميه بتبقى ليها اهميه اكثر بس اللى اتنين في الاخر لو دة واخذ كورسات و دة واخذ كورسات بيتساوا فى الشغلانه دلوقتى معدش زى زمان يقوللك الجامعه الخاصه ... يعنى الاول وقت ما كان الجامعات الخاصه اول مرة تتفتح كانوا شويه يقعدوا يقولونا دا جامعته خاصه ملهاش شغل يعنى مش هيشغلوا دلوقتى بقت عادى

اه اه طبعاً ده فيه مواد بيخدوها من الاب من الكمبيوتر بتاعهم مش زى دراستنا اساسا ممكن الاسماء تبقى متشابه شويه لكن مش زى دراستنا

بصراحه انا مش عارفه انه احسن انما طريقه الشرح عندهم يعنى ... انا برضو بغير فهم اسهل .. المواد مبسطه عندهم .. هى اصل مرات عمها دكتوراه فى الجامعه عندهم كمان فالموضوع حياه ثانيه بس احنا على ايماننا مكننش برضو اعرف ان الجامعه الخاصه ليها اهميه كده يعنى ... بس داخلنا الجامعه و الحمد لله ... بس اهلينا بدل ما يتفعولنا الفلوس دى بقوا بيعوضوها انهم يدفعولنا فلوس الكورسات ... يعنى فى كورس غالى يعنى كورس ال sample ده باربع الف جنيه و ال English برضو هما 8 levels بمبلغ برضو ب ثالث الف او كده يعنى هما برضو بيعوضولنا بس برضو بنحتاج ناخذ حاجات تاتى يعنى انا عايزه اشتغل accountant ف ال sub مش هينفع و ال english مش هينفع فى حاجه اسمها orcle دى ب 13 الف جنيه اللى بيخدوا بيشتغلوا

ممكن جدا جدا بس الجيل الاصغر لان الجيل الاصغر اتعود على الكمبيوتر من صغره يعنى فيه قرايينا 4 5 سنين و بيقدوا على الفيس و يعملوا chat و بيلعبوا العاب لدرجه انهم ممكن يعلمونا فا هينجح فى مصر جدا جدا و بالذات ان الكمبيوتر بقي منتشر جدا حتى فى ابسط البيوت بقي الكمبيوتر من الاساسيات مش زى على ايماننا كان الكمبيوتر مش منتشر اوى يعنى انا مكنتش عندى كومبيوتر و كان لازم انجح فى الكمبيوتر بس انما دلوقتى كله عنده كل حاجه حتى الاب انتشر برضو حتى ابسط البيوت فيها كومبيوتر فهينجح جدا جدا بالذات ان احنا عندنا ناس دماغها حلوه جدا جدا ممكن ناس تطلع افكار جميله جدا جدا بس احنا مش و خدين فرصه

Focus group transcript translated to English

In which year are you in University?

The third year

Explain to me how things work out in the university? I mean what is the system? First of all tell me how many students are there in each university year ?

ThousandsThousands?

Approximately how many thousand? Your University year consists of how many thousands ?

Maybe three to four thousands around this figure.

And University Halls how are they? Do you attend the lectures ?

We do not attend the lectures all the time, at the beginning of the year we attend, but later on we do not, because the lectures are not of great benefit. We buy some booklets summarizing scientific content and compare it to content of the lectures, which we copy from those, who attend the lectures in order correct any mistakes in the booklets or add additional information said during the lecture....that how we study.

It wasn't always like that in the first couple of years we tried to take some courses and buy booklets....like Rana was saying we were depending on them. But this year, because it is a difficult one, we were advised to take private lessons with the Doctors.

At first we tried to attend the lectures and we bought the books the doctors publish in the university, but they are useless as there is no clearly explaining the content.

Many of the doctors do not really care that we have enough time, to write what they say in the lectures or that we practice some examples and solve them with the doctors in the official university book. After we started taking private lessons with the doctors it got a bit better...but to be fair there are some doctors in the lectures, who oblige us to buy their published books and practice the examples, by solving them in the book, during the lecturealso some of them encouraged us to do some research in the internet or take courses on our own especially accounting in English.

Do you take these additional courses in order to develop yourselves?

The Faculty of Commerce English section is the most advanced faculty, but it is a bit academic. It is a totally different set when it get to practical work, after graduation. Even the doctors, who lecture in most of the university year, and who are experts in the field of accounting, say that the executive work differs a lot from the theoretical studies we take in the university. In the studies, which are in English and depend on practice, we score better than the other theoretical subjects

Do you mean because these subjects have more areas of practice and applications?

Exactly and that's why we feel more at ease in these subject, as this will be what we will practice in real life, the other subject depend on memorizing. For Example: A doctor might have just prepared a PhD thesis and his target is to make you memorize.

The larger the theoretical content the more difficult and less interesting it is for us.

And the subjects with more practical parts, like Accounting for example, how do you study them, do you solve a lot of exercises?

It depends on the doctor, there are doctors, who educate the entire subject through practice and there are others who educate the subject through both the theoretical and practical parts, but they put more emphasis on the theoretical part. And if the doctor is giving the subject with more emphasis on the practical part we take courses anyway with him.

What do you mean by courses, do you mean private lessons?

Yes some kind of private lessons, we meet in a private center, a group of 20 and practice solving problems. There is a minority of doctors, who have Conscience and practice and teach us how to love solve the exercises, in the university.

There is a difference between the courses and the university, in the university the doctor strives to finish the subject but there is not time to make revisions, while in the course we mainly make revisions and practice solving problems.

There are doctors, when giving you a lecture, speak on a very high level, to the extent that they give you the impression that what he speaks of is self explanatory, a piece of cake, something you should understand by common sense...you do not need to a genius to understand....and of course it is asked in the exam and then...of course you fail.

And the doctors with which we do not take courses or those who's lectures we do not attend, ask in the exams things that were either not explained or are not in the university book.

In order to take private courses with them...and things like that!!

And these courses or private lessons, the groups are composed of how many students?

Normal...usually the group consists of around 12 students and reaches its maximum in the revision lessons around 20 students.

There are doctors, those who give courses, they explain some part which are theoretical from their point of view which has nothing to do with the practical work. Also some practical subjects like in accounting, which we like very much because it does not depend on memorizing, we sometimes fail to solve the problem if it does not come in exact the same form as we practiced during the lectures... they actually do that on purpose.

They sometimes ask in new part, they add at the end of the year, or which will be in their new book.

And of course you do not have enough time to practice them...

Yes he explains it in the revision....and not during the lectures given throughout the year.

Sometimes the competition between the doctors or that we study from the booklets of the private course, so on purpose they ask questions not present there. They even sometimes say it in lectures very frank," those giving the courses are doing their studies with us and preparing their masters under our supervision...What do they want??... don't they want anyone else to give courses...We need more participation in the revision lectures given by the university". By the way we, as students, have a concern concerning these revision lectures, as the numbers are equal to those of the traditional lectures

What numbers are you speaking of?

...reaching 250-300 students.

Before you told me the number ranges from 12 to 25 students

No these are the private courses

So these courses are organized by the university, a group to help students to improve themselves.. so these cost you extra fees apart of the normal University fees?

Yes we pay but not much... it is around half of what we pay for the private courses.

Tell me more ...how does this lecture look like?...the teacher or doctor stands and explains or can you ask him and discuss things with him?

It depends on the doctor... some doctors we can ask them and they ask us like in Mathematics or in Analytics... but in the theoretical subjects it is different

In the practical subjects, as economics, some ask and some do not ask, but they do not give you any time to make any notes even if you have their book ready. They tell us “I will know if you take any notes and are not giving me your full attention, I will deduct a part of your grade” ...threats like this, any way even if we would take notes it would not make any difference, we would not be able to understand the notes. The revision lecture is around one to two hours and some of the doctors only come for fifteen to twenty minutes.. and get over with the lecture.

In some subjects the Doctor, in the revision lecture gives us a special way to solve the exercise, so that in the exam he can exactly identify who took part in the revision session and who did not.

The one who studied from the external booklets and the one who did not.

Sometimes the external booklets depend on; the parts not present in the university book, which were given by the doctor in the previous year.

It seems that you real like your Doctors very much (laugh)

But it also comes to our knowledge that the doctors also work in the private universities not only in Ain shams which is governmental one. There the system is totally ... totally different; they have sections and even give the subjects they teach in Arabic.

You can feel that there is a different way of treatment.... Perhaps the conditions are different, in term of the number of the students.

They are influenced to act in a different way and provide a better quality. God knows why, perhaps the smaller number of students and better salaries they get there, but sure there are reasons which let them teach there in better way. In the past we were students we know in private Universities, in which our doctors teach and

they always confirm that they there teaching manner is totally different to the one they show with us.

Does this mean that you know students in these private universities, who are taught by the same Doctors and are taught in a totally different manner than he teaches you here?

Yes the Doctors perform there in a better and different way.

Yes of course, they explain more and do more revisions.
At our university some Doctors put a part at the end of their published books....what is it called?

Anyway these are exercises at the end of the book to know, who bought the book and it is possible that he solves these exercises at the end of the year to know, who bought the book and who did not.

Sometimes, the Doctor makes some tricks, like giving a Homework, in those special revision groups organized by the university in order to know, who is taking part in it.

So to conclude, it is all a commercial thing, whether the students get educated or not. Am I right?

They have changed they are different from the Doctors in previous times...but there are some good Doctors.

Give me an example of subject, such a good Doctor teaches...or a subject which you really benefitted off... and in which you really learned something.

Information TechnologySimple Mathematics (Algebra) in the first year we solved some exercises with the Doctor in the lectures...and so.

What was different..Explain more....why did you find these subjects interesting and that you benefit from them?

He is explaining....we learned languages in our schools, they we language schools, when we entered this university in which everything is taught in Arabic, we faced some problems. We studied for 13 years Math in English, so for example we always said “to the power of” and here they say “OSS” which is the same in Arabic, but for us at first it we could not understand these expressions. Of course at first we tried to attend, but we did not understand anything..even from the Doctors, so we started tacking private lessons or courses. But the Doctor of the subject of simple mathematics was a great one, he explained everything part by part, he

explained even the minor details, explaining words as “OSS” and solving exercises and showing the solutions for him and asking him questions...

This means for all the 250 students

Yes for the whole group, which reached one thousand students?

Really and he revised and corrected for the whole one thousand students?

Yes he did review and correct with us, but not everything, due to the time constrain but not because he is not willing to do it. He might ask for certain areas and to what extend we understand certain issues He also used to ask us questions and lets us give the answers.

Also another Doctor gave the student who answers his questions, a book as a present.

There are some examples, but to be honest we do not see many of them

You mean very few numbers of such Doctors?

Yes, in addition to bad luck from our side

And how do the exams look like?

The Doctor can be very nice with us the whole year and at the time of the exams he surprises us.

What is the nature of the questions, are you asked to recite parts of the books or do the questions depend on testing what you really understand from the subject? are they comprehensive questions?

There was an Exam where we were asked things, which we were not studied, but depended on Understanding. We have studied the another subject, Politics and Economics..... also the English Exam was like that...we write a lot...these are subject like management , which are mainly theoretical.

Once we had an Exam...the doctor made an unsolvable Exam...once I failed in an Accounting Exam...which normally is mainly consists of equations we memorize through the whole year and the exam did not contain one single number....it was just that he was not fond of us and stubbornness.

Once we made a complaint against a Doctor... we went to the Dean...so he brought us a very difficult Exam, but I managed to solve some parts of it.

Although the fifth question, which was about Costing, we have never heard of during the lectures....just get back on us, because we complaint to the Dean.

Sometimes the Doctor give a private message...for example: "If you upset me anytime... I will prepare an extremely difficult Exam", so he continues threatening us again and again...and then you discover that the Exam has to have certain characteristics ...which he can't influence....and at the end you never know how the exam will look like.

And the Exam correction....In the first year I was sure that I will fail in two subjects because the two subject were in Arabic. At the end of the year I found myself receiving to awards for these two subjects. One of those subjects, we solved the questions, which the Doctor previously in the lectures has said, that it will not be asked in the Exam. We did not know about it, since we never attended the lectures. In the second subject I made a petition, for which we have to pay money. Normally they do not correct the exams again, they only sum up the grades again and then I was surprised that I passed the examI was the oppressed one.

There is no standard, some Doctors say: "We throw the paper in the air" , they want to frighten us, "it falls like on this side or this side in both cases you fail".

There are some Doctors, who do not even care, even if they explain in proper manner the scientific part, the do not care about the psychology of the students. Perhaps in the private universities it is different. Especially in the Governmental Universities, because of the large numbers they do not care about the students psychological condition.....but it is also not our fault that they do not care about things like that.

Being depressed and demotivated, the whole year, we only study the final chapter, the one with the exercises, this is the truth or take the private revision courses, so that we can write at least something in the exam.

But if someone cannot afford to take these private revision courses...he will lose everything and fail!!

He has to attend the lectures and they give them some notes.

What do these notes look like...does the Doctor prepare them?

These are the lectures, but prepared by the doctor who give the private lessons.

The Doctor who gives the private lessons?

Yes they send someone, who attends the lectures and the revision lectures

This person writes exactly what is said by the doctor...so this is where are the notes or booklets come from then..

Yes but they are usually one or two years old, so some parts are missing or containing some wrong information.

Or some of the Doctors giving in the private centers, they give the whole content of the subject and after we study everything...the the Doctor in the university comes and cancels part, I mean he says that these part will not be asked in the Exam.

Do you solve exams from previous yearsto be prepared for the exam at the end of the year?

Yes there are some notes collecting exams from previous years, noting this is the exam of year... or year....

And these sheets help you to answer the final exam?

Yes

Let me ask you about the Internet?....Do you use the Internet?

In the courses?

No in general, not during your study, how long do you stay on the internet.....approximately how much time per day....do you have a computer at home?

Sure ... even if there is no computer...there are the cellular phones....the internet is the main reason of losing time.

How many hours per day do you stay on the internet?

The 24 hours...20 hours...

No that is too much....let's say five ...six hours per day

What are the most visited or used sites by you?

Facebook is a mustGoogle, if we need to look for anything in our university studies. We also in sometimes take English courses and grammar...or some sites the Instructor gives us.

Does this mean the Doctors gives you sites to visit?

Yes but in the private courses not in the lectures.

In the private courses? Does this mean that you mainly receive your education in the private courses not in the governmental university?

Yes these are the private courses we take...

But recently the university made something very nice, they cooperated with a private company called..."Pears"...this is a international company giving courses with reduced prices and we took part in them.. Actually this is the first year for us....but we feel that it changed something in us. They introduce new ideas to us and motivate us to search and try to work, these courses made us flee that our studies are of benefit, since all we studied was in Arabic, Arabic, Arabic....and time was passing by without doing anything of any benefit to anyone.

We hear that the private Universities take other subjects than those which we take here..some of them are of a more entertaining nature....not like our subjects, which are all academic....hmmm...more boring...but there are some activities which they make do at "Pears", which are interesting for us.

They let us do some projects; the project we worked on recently was to make signs for students, who just newly joined the university. These signs are made to help them find their way in the University, instead of losing time and getting lost. We started to think of doing something useful for our University, we asked our fellow students of the faculty of Engineering to help us by drawing us a plan of the university with all buildings in order to know, where to put the signs and they helped us to draw the signs also....The Doctors even were surprised from our project and even asked us to which Faculty we belong. When they hear that we belong to the faculty of Commerce, you sense that this is the least thing they have expected. It is clear that the University did not give us any space and does not know how to use our ideas and energy. On the other hand the guys from "Pears" knew how to use and bring our energy and ideas. You know in the university they do not try to use or ask for our ideas...and so..

If you would have the chance to make a masters degree through the Internet...you will not be able to meet in person the Instructor at all nor your fellow students, but you will be able to video conference the instructor and your fellow students through the internet in different countries around the world.

If there is such a program would you be interested to join?

To tell you the truth ..No....even if we use the internet a lot or use it in our university studies.. We do that, through personal efforts but we do not have the required training. I think this is because, during our school time most of us did not have their own computer to work on, but we were not used to do that since, we were used to depend on private lessons, while studying for our High school diploma. They should have prepared us for that through perhaps lessons broadcasted through the Television or so...Ahhh...yes but due to the retarded educational system we have, due to the teachers and the traditional types of Exams....we were used to take private lessons with experienced teachers.....so we are not used to sit like that and study online..we are too old for that. Maybe if they start to introduce such ways of education, in the younger generation or our smaller sisters and brothers ,who still are in school, this way of education might be interesting , but for us it is to late we are too old for that. The best you can expect us to do is to go online and chat a bit with the instructors we know and who give us private courses...or try to visit some sites to solve grammar exercises but without chatting as we are not used to study like this.

The governmental university studying system is a mess and the private university system is much better.

Anyway our Faculty is the most difficult one among all the faculties even abroad.

Despite of all what we suffer here, our faculty is appreciated outside Egypt, but inside Egypt we are not appreciated the same way.

I have heard for example that in the United states of America the Faculty of Commerce is attended only by the best High School graduates.. in Egypt the School of Medicine takes the graduates with the highest scores in the Egyptian High School Diploma..there they are more interested in Commerce and Development, they care for their country's Economy and Commerce, as these are the areas which either improve or worsen a countries level of prosperity.....Here in Egypt everyone is aiming for the School of Medicine or the Faculty of Engineering.....that's why we in Egypt are losers.....that's why we are losers here in Egypt...although what we study is really hard and difficult, even for anyone from abroad if he would try to study what we study, but maybe this attitude towards us is because of our big number or the low grades needed to be achieved in the high School Diploma to enter our Faculty.

By the way it would not be so difficult if we would start studying from the beginning of the year, but usually we do not that's why is difficult.

I mean that our study has the same importance as the study in the School of Medicine, although their study is much easier...of course everyone entering a certain faculty feels, that his field is the best one and that it contains hard parts even if the others see this Faculty as trivial...sometime because you just believe that it is so hard.....it real becomes very hard.

So after you graduate, do you have plans where you want to work... in which field.....will it have something to do with what you studied?....or if you find work in a field which has nothing to do with what you studied..will you accept it?

I would prefer to work in the field related to what I studied.....I did a training in a Bank, it was nice and I made Training in a company, but I liked the bank more, I prefer more my field of study.

If there is a company, which would offer you a position as accountant, would you accept that?

Yes, accountant.. I would like to work as Accountant.

Let me tell you I want to work, but it is all Gods' will

And normally what happens?

I personally would like to work at the Airport...I would like to work as a Stewardess on the ground in the ticketing..... or in a Airline company....You know most of students, enter our faculty because they did not manage to get high grades in their High School Diploma tests....but if they would forget about these grades and make tests to discover what talents we have or discover our competencies.. This would be much better.

I have a friend of mine, who just graduated last year from the Faculty of Commerce, her dream was to become a Wedding Planner, which has nothing to do with her study, which she hates by the way, but she passed all 4 years and graduated. So now she is not able to find a job neither in her field of study nor in the field that she would like to work in. Some of us might have some influential people, which might help us get a job, but she....does not know anyone.

Even if we want to work in our field of study we need to take extra courses.

So first of all to work in the field of our study, you need first of all connections someone you know, who is influential or knows influential people in addition to the courses to get the job.

We need to take an English course, but everyone in Egypt takes English courses, what is now new and essential is taking computer courses. Some students, whose parents have limited financial resources, are not able to take these courses, even if their price is reduced or sponsored by the University.

There are some courses like the English course, which is cost around 60 Egyptian Pounds around 7 Euros, which is not sponsored by any company. It is always better to courses, which you have to pay for, although this is surely a burden for the parents, but at the end even this might be useless. At the end this might not be taken in consideration to get the job, because these courses are not certified, despite that they did all they can do and their parents paid for the courses although they do not have enough money.

Thank you very.. very much. One more question far away from what we were speaking about. If you were in a position to teach in the university, how would you teach a subject, so that the students really understand and benefit from it, if became an assistant teacher at the Faculty of Commerce when you graduate?

The best thing is to reduce number of students, to teach thousands is very difficult, and how would it be possible to make revisions with them or make them understand the subject.,,,,,,I would give them questions and train them how to best solve these and also give them exercise papers for them to solve and correct it with them.

When I publish the reference book I will put in it exactly, what I am planning explain in the lectures, I do not have to write things in order to cancel them again at the end of the year.

The reference book will contain only the subjects they will benefit from in their upcoming practical work life, especially the practical parts they will use when they graduate not things which are just theoretical and they will never use.

In the internet there are blogs and forums, belonging to the Faculty of Commerce, were students try to help each other for example; those who attend the lectures try to put the important points online, do you visit them?

Yes we visit them, there are some who attend and who give us the important things and we give them what collect and important, but the Doctors do never contribute.

Does this mean that this is an initiative done by the student alone and the Doctors have nothing to do with it?

In the past Faculty of Commerce regular and affiliated Commerce and now we have a Self study section also, they do not attend in the University, they just take some business not the huge amount of content we take in the regular Faculty of Commerce, what they study is very basic compare to what we study.

Is there a difference between the final graduation degree you receive and the one the students of the self study receive?

No they are the same, but the difference is only perhaps that their studying fees are higher. It differs that the affiliated type can transfer to a regular Faculty of Commerce, as both are allowed to attend the revision lectures, which are similar to private lessons. But the sections are only for the regular students, these sections are to practice and solve exercises. The self study student are not allowed to attend any of the above only the final exam.

Who are those, who enter the University as self –study, what make the difference one regular and the other self study?

There is a difference in the percentage they got in there High School diploma but not 1 % no it is 10% or more?

Let us say it is like that, the difference in the achieved percentage in the High School diploma between the regular and the affiliated students is relatively small, regular (84%) and affiliated (83.9%), and that's why they are allowed to transfer to be regular students if they achieve good grades. In contrary to that for the Self study students there is a big gap.

You tell me your friends are in a private University?

No my relatives

What kind of a University?

Ain Shams Academy, where they have the same Doctors we have.

Is this Academy like Commerce English Section in Cairo University?

No No No... It is a faculty of commerce, but there is a big difference in the studying fees....they do not have such big Lecturing Halls as we have, they have more of a classroom style "section". They differ in the numbers..how the University looks like... and they have things for fun and entertainment... but we do not have all of that...the difference in the fees can be clearly seen.

Affiliated students pay between 500 to 600 Egyptian Pounds, regular students pay 100 Egyptian Pounds, and in the private Universities they pay thousands of pounds.... My relative, is in the Higher Institute of Technology.... In 10th of Ramadan City, where the film “Pasha Telmeez” was filmed, she pays 7000 Egyptian Pounds or a bit less. They are 70 persons in the lecture called “section”, which is similar to the number of students in the private lesson at our University. Even the way they study is different, they have 3 or 2 terms, they have a system close to the American style, and they can choose which subject and how many subjects they want to study in each term. This is totally different to how we study; we have to study all the subjects in the term, 7 subjects in each term...to make our life to hell. And she, my relative, is doing great having high grades and she is very successful,... the university even helps them to get employed or do further post-graduate studies like masters...they also do not attend but they buy books, she once told me, even the content of the subjects is different not like the ones we have, although the Doctors are the same, who teach both of us.

And how do the Exams there look like?

Not like our Exams at all ...no way to compare.....something totally different.

And their Certificate... is there any difference?

It depends there are some private Universities, which are accredited and others which are not. I do not know but ultimately the governmental University degree seems to have a better reputation...but at the end if both students have taken courses they are equal chances...not like in the past when the private Universities were still new..and they were saying that the graduates will never find job, no now it is normal and there is no big difference when it comes to get a job.

Do you have any idea if they use the internet in their studies in the private Universities or not?

Yes sure there are some subjects they study on their Laptop and each one each one of the students is registered (code), not like us where we are recorded by our names where names can be similar.

I do not know if its better or not but it is a different and easier way to understand....even the subjects are presented in a simpler way.... One of her relatives is a Doctor there and this makes everything different there for her...life is nicer...In the past I did not know that a private University would make a difference..but anyway we entered a University also....thank God.....Our parents pay the same money not in the University, but in the private courses we need to take to find a job... the “samp” course cost is 4000 Egyptian Pounds and the English course of 8 levels is around 3000 Egyptian Pounds...so our parents try to

compensate us by giving us these courses, we also need other courses...I for example want to become an Accountant ...so the “English” courses and the “SUB” courses will not be of great benefit....there is a course called “Oracle” with 13000 thirteen thousand pounds....those who take him find work easily.

But Oracle is a type of the study of Computer Science...what does this have to do with Commerce?

No this is Financial Oracle not “Oracle”, this is something different from what we study in the University.

To be honest our Dean is a very respectful man, the one we complained to about the Doctor , who brought an Accounting exam without one figure and he said there will be an administrative action.

Do you think that Online studies have a chance in Egypt?

Yes it is very much possible, but with the younger generation, because they are more used to the computer technology, and are raised with it since they were kids, I have relatives 4 or 5 years old kids and they sit on Face book and they chat and play games to the extent that they could teach us things. I think such an approach will succeed in Egypt very much, especially that computers are widely spread now, and even very modest people have a computer now in their home. Nowadays a computer is an essential device in our homes and not like in older times, I personally did not have a computer and I had to pass computer exams. Now I have everything, even the laptops are now also widely spread...and yes I think this approach has a chance now most homes have a computer, even the ones with weak financial abilities, we have brilliant people, who can have great ideas....all we need is a chance.

Thank you very much.



SUMMARY

This industrial PhD research is a study that is co-funded by the Danish Agency For Science Technology and Innovation and International Business School of Scandinavia. The main problem area addressed in this study is the challenges faced in the export of blended learning educational programs across national, cultural and linguistic borders. The study attempts to shed a light on the differences in the learning practices of students in different countries, by using a mix between ethnography and grounded theory methodologies, to explore the different educational systems and learning practices in the three countries under study in this research. The results of this study aim at helping exporting educational institutions to understand how these differences in learning practices affect students' approach to learning and consequently their acceptance of new tools used for learning as e-learning.